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From *Jew* to *Converso* in Portuguese Literature

Lúcio de Sousa

Introduction

This paper examines the forced assimilation of Iberia's Jewish minority through conversion to Christianity. This process and the "cleaning" of traces of Jewish culture in Iberia remains controversial, and after several centuries it is difficult to understand the transition from Jew to New-Christian or Converso (*tornadiço*, *cristão-novo*, *marrano*, and *baptizado em pé*) and to analyze the impact of this abrupt and radical change in society.

One of the most direct ways to understand this phenomenon is through popular Christian literature of the time that refers to Jews and later to conversos living in Portugal. Although limited in scope, this literature offers a window into these transformations in mentality while also reflecting the irrational beliefs of the Christian majority who perceived Jews and conversos as enemies who should be exterminated, both ideologically and physically. This paper aims at identifying how this type of Christian literature initially recognizes and mirrors the Jewish minority according to popular belief and later, through a similar process, recognizes and mirrors the

conversos. A selected group of works by famous authors from the end of the 15th century and the first half of the 16th century that were widely distributed in Portugal will be discussed.

1.1 Jewish Portrayals in Resende's *General Songbook and Miscellany and Variety of Stories*

The first literary work to be analyzed is the *Cancioneiro Geral* (General Songbook) published in 1516 by Garcia de Resende (c. 1470–1536). This work includes poems by 286 authors who lived in the 15th and 16th centuries, written in Portuguese and Castilian, covering the medieval literary period and the beginning of the Renaissance period. The editor of this compilation, Garcia de Resende, in addition to being a poet, chronicler, musician, draftsman, and architect, was also secretary to King João II of Portugal (r. 1481–1495)¹ and to King Manuel I of Portugal (r. 1495–1521). As a courtier and privileged witness to events that profoundly marked the future of the Jewish minority in Portugal, the literary texts compiled by Resende in the form of an anthology cover the period prior to the expulsion of the Jews, the general conversion of 1496, and the post-conversion period. It also includes the reigns of the Portuguese kings Afonso V (r. 1438–1481), João II (r. 1481–1495), and Manuel I (r. 1495–1521). Among the works from the phase prior to the forced conversion of Jews to Christianity, the poets Francisco Silveira, Diogo de Silveira, Jorge de Silveira, Álvaro de Brito Pestana, Rui Moniz, Nuno Pereira, João Manuel, and Henrique de Almeida stand out. These authors

¹ For example, when referring to the life of King João II, he states that he was present at many of the events he narrates:

“Que muytas das cousas vy e foy presente a ellas: por ser de menino criado do dito senhor em sua camara e aceito a ella: e o seruiço em cousas de muyta fieldade atee a ora de sua morte a que era presente e dormia em sua camara”:

Garcia de Resende, *Lyvro das obras de Garcia de Resende* (Lisbon: Luiz Rodrigues, 1545), fl. 8v.

all share the peculiarity of reflecting the growing ethnic, cultural, and religious hostility in Portuguese society from the reign of Afonso V (r. 1438–1481) to Manuel I.

Francisco Silveira begins by describing the court Jews, emphasizing the conflicting relationship between the powerful Sephardic Jewish oligarchy and the Christian oligarchy, rooted in a multi-century political and economic competition.² Álvaro de Brito defends the need to purify a Christianity contaminated by Judaism. The same line is followed by de Brito in the poem he dedicates to Lisbon, describing it as a perfect city, where Portuguese and foreigners aspire to live, yet it is infested by bad air, dirt, and pollution. The metropolis (Lisbon) is a symbol of Christian purity and Christianity itself, which is at risk, contaminated by the *Jewish ways* adopted by its inhabitants.³

² The author uses court Jews as a target for criticism:

Pois que cuydam todo o ano
Mas cuydam em dar seu pano,
mais do que val a la fê.
Cuidam no arrendamento
Quando cuydam de acampar,
E cuydam que é perdimento
Quando cuydam que por cento trinta hé pouco ganhar.

³ Maa ora vymos Judeus,

& os seus modos viuentes

Aprendemos

(...)

Nossa ley, nossa vertude,

nossa onrra, nosso bem

auorçemos

Garcia de Resende, *Cancioneiro Geral*, Eduard Heinrich von Kausler (ed.) (Stuttgart: Gedruckt auf Kosten des litterarischen Vereins, 1846), vol. 1, p. 191.

The poet Rui Moniz attacks Jewish medicine by portraying a humorous episode in which a Christian suffers from headaches inflicted by a Jewish doctor. The same criticism is repeated by the nobleman and poet João Manuel,⁴ and by the poet Álvaro de Brito Pestana. Manuel, in his *Palavras Morais* (Moral Words), compares Jewish doctors to pimps (*alcoviteiros*): “no safer pimp than the Jewish doctor” (“nem mais certo alcovyteiro que o fysico judeu”).⁵ Pestana, meanwhile, openly opposes Jewish doctors and characterizes Jewish medicine as “Hebrew lies” (“bulras hebraicas”).⁶

If, on the one hand, all these texts share an anti-Semitic tone, on the other hand, they also reveal the social importance of Jews, who are consulted by Christian scholars who want to hear their opinions on politics, finance, humanities, religion, or medicine, and where Christians themselves are patients of the Sephardic Jews. Another conclusion that can be drawn from this Christian literature is that these authors, whether

⁴ Chief steward (*Camareiro-mor*) of King Manuel. Resende, *Cancioneiro Geral*, p. 394.

⁵ Resende, *Cancioneiro Geral*, vol. I, p. 395.

⁶ Bulras abraycas sotys

danam verdades latynas,

emsayando

agudos costumes vvs,

desenssynos por doutrinas

emsynando.

(...)

Nysto caem os letrados

& os outros entendidos:

todos qurem

dos Judeus ser auisados,

servidos & perçebidos

Resende, *Cancioneiro Geral*, vol.I, pp. 190–191.

consciously or unconsciously, clearly demonstrate that the Jewish minority has an important role in Portuguese society, which apparently constitutes a threat:

atormentarem os christãos e por se terem feito senhores onde, naturalmente, são servos). ⁷	tormenting Christians and for having made themselves masters where, of course, they are servants.
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Another interesting aspect that stands out in popular medieval and Renaissance literature is the lexicon. Many Hebrew words entered the Portuguese language, such as *ahanyim* (אָהאַנים *useless man*), *tafalym* (תַּפְּלִים *prayer*), *minaha* (מִנְחָה *minkhá*, prayer), *baraha* (בְּרָכָה *prayer/blessing*), *ssaba* or *sabá* (שַׁבָּת *Saturday*), *adonay* (אֲדֹנָי *God*), and *bezys* (בִּיצִים “eggs,” a euphemism for testicles), as did some expressions such as *Baru ata adonay eloeno* (בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ) *blessed be the Lord*) and *amoc̃y lehamin ariz* (מִי שֶׁמַּעֲנִיק לָחֶם יוֹמִי “he who grants the daily bread”).⁸ The Portuguese word *sinagoga* (synagogue), of Greek origin (συναγωγή *sunagógē*), was rendered in Judeo-Portuguese as *asynoga* *esnoga*, *synoga*, and/or *soga*.⁹ Other Judeo-Portuguese words that are of obvious Hebrew origin include:

Table 1.2 Judeo-Portuguese words of Hebrew origin

<i>Abraão</i> (אַבְרָהָם) <i>Avraham</i> , Abraham)	<i>Massó</i> (מַצָּה <i>matsa</i> , <i>matzo</i> or <i>matzah</i> , unleavened bread)	<i>Quidus</i> (קִידוּשׁ) <i>Kiddush</i> , blessing over the wine)	<i>Sefardi</i> or <i>Sefaradi</i> (סְפָרְדִי <i>Sephardic</i> , singular)
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⁷ Alexandre Herculano, *História da Origem e Estabelecimento da Inquisição em Portugal* (Lisbon: Bertrand, 1879), p. 113.

⁸ The poem by Luís Henriques is found in Garcia de Resende, *Cancioneiro geral: alportugiesiche Liedersammlung des Edeln Garcia de Resende*, Eduard Heinrich von Kausler (ed.) (Stuttgart: Literarischer verein, 1848), vol. II, pp. 288–292.

⁹ In Hebrew, a synagogue is usually called *bet kneset* (בֵּית כְּנֶסֶת *house of assembly*) or *bet tefilá* (בֵּית תְּפִלָּה *house of prayer*).

<i>Anusim</i> (אָנסיים) <i>anusim</i> , Anusim, “coerced,” Jews forced to convert)	<i>Meguilá</i> (מגילה) <i>megillah</i> , Megillah, scroll)	<i>Quipá</i> (כיפה) <i>kipá</i> , kippah or yarmulke)	<i>Sefardim</i> (ספרדים) Sephardim, Sephardic Jews)
<i>Bar misvá</i> (בר מצוה) bar mitzvah)	<i>Moisés</i> (מוֹשֶׁה) <i>Moshé</i> , Moses)	Rabi (רבי) <i>rābbi</i> , “my rabbi,” rabbi)	<i>Séfer</i> (ספר) <i>sefer</i> , book)
<i>Cabala</i> (קבלה) <i>kabbalah</i> , Kabbalah, “correspondence,” “reception,” or “tradition”)	<i>Mikvé</i> (מקוה) <i>mikvé</i> , bath in ritual immersion)	<i>Rassim</i> (ראשים) <i>rashīm</i> , heads)	<i>Seferim</i> (ספרים) <i>seferim</i> , books)
<i>Cadós</i> (קדוש) <i>kadosh</i> , holy)	<i>Mitsvá</i> (מצוה) <i>mitzvah</i> , commandment, law)	<i>Rós</i> (ראש) <i>rosh</i> , head)	<i>Selicot</i> (סליחות) <i>selichot</i> , <i>Selichot</i> , penitential poems and prayers)
<i>Hanucá</i> (חנוכה) <i>hanuká</i> , Hanukkah)	<i>Pessá</i> or <i>pessach</i> (פסח) <i>pessach</i> , Passover)	<i>Rós codés</i> (ראש חודש) <i>rosh</i> <i>chodesh</i> , Rosh Chodesh, “Beginning of the Month,” the first day of every month marking the birth of the new moon)	<i>Sisit</i> (ציצית) <i>tzitzit</i> , <i>tzitzit</i> , knotted ritual fringes attached to the four corners of the tallit)
<i>Casér</i> and/or <i>cóser</i> , plural <i>casherut</i> (כֶּשֶׁר)	<i>Piyut</i> (פיוט) <i>piyyut</i> , <i>Piyyut</i> , liturgical	<i>Rossaná</i> (ראש השנה) <i>rosh</i>	<i>Sucot</i> (סוכות) or סֻכּוֹת <i>sukkōt</i> ,

kosher, plural כשרות kash(e)rut), ¹⁰	poem)	<i>ha-shanah</i> , Jewish New Year)	Sukkot)
<i>jessibá</i> (ישיבה) <i>yeshiva</i> , religious school)	<i>Piyutim</i> (פיוטים) <i>piyyutim</i> , liturgical poems)	<i>Sedacá</i> (צדקה) <i>tzedazah</i> , charity)	<i>Talet</i> (טלית) <i>talit</i> , tallit, fringed prayer shawl)
<i>Jerusalém</i> (ירושלים) <i>Yerushalaym</i> , Jerusalem)	<i>Purim</i> (פורים) <i>purim</i> , Purim)	<i>Séder</i> (סדר) <i>seder</i> , Seder, Passover meal)	<i>Talmud</i> or <i>Talmude</i> (תלמוד) <i>talmud</i> , Talmud)
<i>Joseph</i> , <i>Josep</i> , or <i>José</i> (יוסף) <i>Yosef</i> , Joseph)	<i>Queilá</i> (קהלה) <i>qehillah</i> , congregation)	<i>Sefarad</i> (ספרד) Sepharad, the Iberian Peninsula)	<i>Torá</i> (תורה) <i>tūrah</i> , Torah); <i>Yad</i> or <i>yade</i> (יד) <i>yad</i> , “hand,” pointer used to read the Torah)

According to Alan D. Corr   and, after him, Joseph Abraham Levi,¹¹ in Portuguese the use of *dera* (pluperfect indicative: it/he/she gave) plus the indirect object pronoun (*me*, *te*, *lhe*, *nos*, *vos*, or *lhes*) instead of “*se*” (if) and the imperfect subjunctive, is a calque (literal translation) from the Hebrew **מייתן** [May I ... /How I wish that ...], as in the sentence: Ah se eu pudesse ser rico! => Quem me dera ser rico! / Quem me dera que eu fosse rico (How I wish I were rich!).

Alas, Judeo-Portuguese, Portuguese Ladino, or Lusitanic Portuguese is a dead language. Unlike Spanish Ladino, which withstood the adversities of time,

¹⁰ As of the last decade of the 20th century, it has become common practice in Portugal to use the plural form *kasherut* instead of the singular *kosher*.

¹¹ Alan D. Corr  , “A Comparative Sephardic Lexicon,” *Hispania Judaica*, 3 (1984): 37–60. Joseph Abraham Levi, *Portuguese Grammar* (Boca Raton, FL: Bar Charts, 2006).

Judeo-Portuguese succumbed to man-made acts of violence, the last ones being those inflicted on the Sephardic community residing in the Balkans that was decimated by Nazi forces.

As can be seen from the figure below, Judeo-Portuguese is a direct descendant of *La'az* (Judeo-Latin) and has interesting interconnections with other Judeo-Romance languages as well as Judeo-Arabic, both for diasporic sociopolitical reasons.

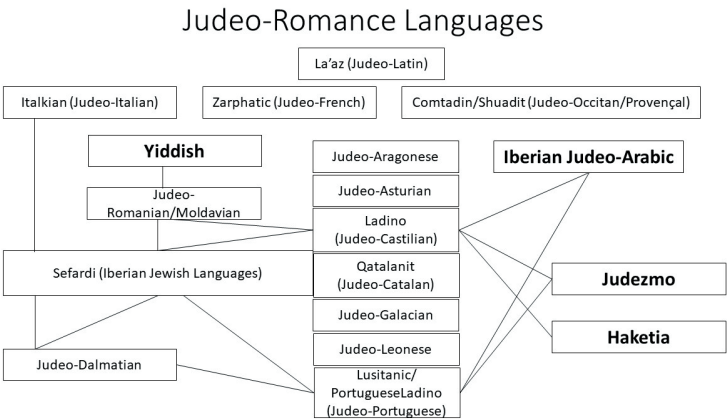


Figure 1 Judeao-Romance Languages

The aforementioned *Cancioneiro*, in addition to containing a segment of literature that mirrors the Christian ideology prevalent in Portuguese society in relation to Jews, also contains a segment of literature that describes the environment surrounding the publication of the December 5, 1496 expulsion edict. One example is a joint text by several poets about the love relationship between a Christian, Pero de Sousa Ribeiro, and a Jewess of unknown name. Pero de Sousa Ribeiro enters Lisbon’s Jewish quarter illegally in order to order a party dress (*louçainha*) to be made by a Jewess (living there). Through the poets Henrique de Almeida, Francisco Silveira, Diogo de Silveira, Jorge da Silveira, Francisco da Silveira, and Nuno Pereira, it is possible to understand

the climate of social instability among the fragile Jewish community in the city on the eve of the expulsion. While initially the poet Henrique de Almeida focuses on the love affair between Pero de Sousa Ribeiro and the unknown Jewess, in the course of the literary composition the central character is removed to the background and Lisbon's Jewish quarter takes the central role. In this phase, extraordinary astronomical events are taking place in Lisbon's Jewish quarter. No one knows why; hence, several astrological explanations are suggested.¹² Only near the end of the poem does the real reason become clear, when reference is made to the arrival of Queen Isabella in Lisbon for her marriage to Manuel I of Portugal. It was this event and the imminent expulsion of the Jews that had forced Pero de Sousa Ribeiro to "hurriedly enter" ("meter-se apressadamente") the Jewish quarter to consummate his love for a Jewish lady:

S'arrainhanam viera com sua donzelaria, este Cristamnamtenera tanta pressa, nem metera em doylo a Judiaria .	Se a rainha não visse com as suas donzelas, este cristão não teria tanta pressa, nem meteria em confusão a Judiaria.	If the queen had not come with her group of maidens. this Christian would not be in such a hurry, nor would he put the Jewish quarter in an uproar.
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Marginally, the same poem shows the inability of the Jewish community to defend itself against attacks by Christians during the period of expulsion:

Dizem quem vem & quem vai, c'ouuem grande arroido, cham Judeus: adonay!	Dizem quem vem e quem vai, Que ouvem grande ruído. Os judeus dizem: Adonai	They say who comes and who goes, who hears loud noise, Jews say: adonay! (God)
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¹² It is important to remember that the court physicians were also astronomers/astrologers and that the court nobility relied heavily on astrology. Most likely this aspect is overemphasized in order to ridicule the Jews portrayed in this poem.

as Judias dizem: goay com Cristamtam atrevido! Ualha-nos deu verdadeiro, Pois justiça hinamhaa	As judias dizem: Góí Com cristão tão atrevido! Valha-nos Deu(s) verdadeiro, pois não há justiça aí.	the Jewess say: goay (gentile) with so bold Christian! Help us the true Deu (God), for there is no justice there
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Although prejudice and discrimination against Jews are manifested in different ways in this poem, the poem also contains subtle traces that lead us to conclude that the authors are experts in Jewish culture, for example, the inclusion of Hebrew words such as *Adonay* (אֲדֹנָי God) and *Goay* (גוי gentile), and the particular form that Jews used to refer to “God” in the Portuguese language: “Ualha-nos deu verdadeiro” (Help us true Deu “God”). The hypothetical plurality inherent in the word “Deus” (God), being understood in the spiritual sense as one, led medieval Jews to pronounce the word “Deus” (God) without including the “s”. In this way, in the common language of the Portuguese Jews it was pronounced “Deu” and not “Deus,” the latter of which was used by Christians.

The next work to be analyzed is *Miscellania e variedade de Historias* (Miscellany and Variety of Stories), also composed by Garcia Resende. Resende describes in the first person the abrupt and forced conversion of Jews to Christianity (“the Jews saw here transformed in a single moment Christians”—“Hos judeus vij caa tomados todos nuo tempo christãos”) and the destruction of synagogues and mosques, which were transformed into holy and blessed churches (*igrejas santas e benditas*), as Portugal was Christianized (“a kingdom without pagans”—“ho reyno sem pagãos”).¹³

¹³ Hos judeus vij caa tomados

Todos nuo tempo christãos,

Hos mouros entã lançados

Fora do reyno passados,

Despite the predominantly anti-Semitic tone of the previous text, Garcia de Resende himself also portrays the exodus of Iberian Jews to North Africa with great compassion. He recalls with nostalgia the royal dances and festivals where Jews, Muslims, and Christians peacefully commingled in Portugal:

Vijmos ha destruyçam Dos Iudeus tristes errados, Que de castella lançados Forãcõgramaldiçam A horeyno de Feez passados De Mouros forã roubados, Deshonrados, abiltados Que filhos, filhas, & mães Lhe incestavão esses cães, Moças, & moços forçados ¹⁴ .	Vimos a destruição dos judeus tristes e errados Que de Castela expulsos Foram com grande maldição Para o reino de Fez Dos mouros foram roubados, Desonrados, aviltados Que filhos, filhas e mães Lhe incestavam esses cães, Moças e moços forçados	We saw the destruction of the sad and mistaken Jews That from Castile were expelled and went with great curse to the kingdom of Fez From the Muslims they were stolen, Dishonored, humiliated The sons, daughters, and mothers were infested by these dogs,
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& ho reyno sem pagãos,

Vijmos synogas mezquitas,

Em q sempre erã dictas

E pregadas heresias,

Tornados em nossos dias

Igrejas sanctas benditas

Garcia de Resende, *Miscellanea e variedade de historias, costumbres, casos, e cousas que em seu tempo aconteceram*, (Coimbra: França Amado, 1917), p. 51

¹⁴ Resende, *Miscellanea e variedade de historias*, p. 51.

		girls and boys were abused
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Vijmos grades judarias, Judeus, guinolâs, & touras, tambem mouras, mourarias, seus bailos, galantarias De muitas fermosas mouras, Sempre nas festas reaes, Serão hos dias principaes Festa de mouros avia, Tambem secta se fazia Que non podia ser mais ¹⁵ .	Vimos grandes judarias, Judeus, guinolâs, e toras, também mouras, mourarias, seus bailos, galantarias De muitas formosas mouras, Sempre nas festas reais, Serão os dias principais Festa de mouros havia, Tambem <i>seta</i> se fazia Que não podia ser mais	We saw great Jewries, Jews, <i>guinolâs</i> , and Torahs, also Muslim women, <i>Mourarias</i> , ¹⁶ their dances, grace Many beautiful Muslim women, always at royal parties, In the important events there was a Muslim party, Also <i>seta</i> ¹⁷ was practiced Until we're exhausted
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Both the *Cancioneiro* and the *Miscellanea e variedade de Historias* focus predominantly on the period prior to the 1496 Decree of Expulsion, but after the forced conversion period the allusions to Jews and Judaism in Portuguese popular literature continued. In this context, the playwright Gil Vicente, one of the fathers of the Portuguese and Castilian Renaissance theater,¹⁸ who dedicates several parts of his plays to Jews and one play to a *converso*, will be highlighted. There are Jewish characters in the *Auto da Barca do Inferno* (Act of the Ship of Hell, 1517), the *Farsa de Inês Pereira* (Farce of Inês Pereira, 1523), the *Diálogo sobre a Ressurreição*

¹⁵ Resende, *Miscellanea e variedade de historias*, p. 52.

¹⁶ *Mouraria*: A section of a Christian city predominantly inhabited by Muslims and their descendants.

¹⁷ Wooden rod, armed with an encased in iron

¹⁸ Paul Teyssier, *La langue de Gil Vicente* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1959).

(Dialogue on the Resurrection, 1526), the *Auto da Lusitânia* (Act of Lusitania, 1531), and the *Auto da Cananeia* (Act of Canaanite, 1534), and there is a *converso* character in the *Farsa do Juiz da Beira* (Farce of the Judge from Beira, 1525).¹⁹

1.2 Jews and *Conversos* in Gil Vicente's Theater

Gil Vicente's date and place of birth are uncertain (c. 1460s). It is known that he married Branca Bezerra (d. 1533) and that the couple had two sons: Gaspar Vicente (c. 1488–1519) and Belchior Vicente (c. 1504/5–c. 1552). After his wife's death, in 1517, Gil Vicente married Melícia Rodrigues (also spelled Roiz), with whom he had three children: Paula Vicente (c. 1519–1576), Luís Vicente de Castro (c. 1520–1592/95), and Valéria Borges (c. 1530–after 1598). Luís and Paula helped organize their father's literary production and eventually published it.²⁰ His first-known work was the play *Auto da Visitação* (Act of the Visitation), also known by the title *The Monologo do Vaqueiro* (The Monologue of the Cowboy), which was performed in the rooms of Maria of Aragón and Castile (1482–1517), Queen of Portugal (1500–1517), wife of King Manuel I, to celebrate the birth of the prince (the future king João III), on the night of June 8, 1502. From this date on, Vicente was responsible for the organization of cultural events at the Portuguese Court. In his plays, Gil Vicente portrays popular and Christian values of medieval life in the Iberian Peninsula. Gil Vicente composed his works in Portuguese and Castilian. Even though they were performed at court to

¹⁹ Gil Vicente, José Victorino Barreto Feio, and J. C. Monteiro, *Obras de Gil Vicente: Das farças. Das obras varias* (Hamburg: Langhoff, 1834).

²⁰ Anselmo Braamcamp Freire, *Vida e obras de Gil Vicente: Trovador, Mestre da Balança* (Lisbon: Ocidente, 1944). António José Saraiva, *História da Cultura em Portugal* (Lisbon: Jomal do Fôro, 1955), vol. II, p. 232. José Augusto Cardoso Beranrdes, *Sátira e Lirismo no Teatro de Gil Vicente* (Lisbon: INCM, 2004). José Augusto Cardoso Beranrdes, "A Copilaçam de todalas obras: o livro e o projecto identitário de Gil Vicente," *Diacrítica. Ciências da Literatura*, 18–19 (2004/2005): 179–198.

serve as entertainment in the evenings to the king and the nobility, his works were also very popular among the populace. He authored 45 dramatic works—44 from the *Copilaçam* (1562)²¹ and the *Auto da Festa* (Act of Festivity),²² in which he criticizes the society of his time through satire, often aggressively, including the pope and the king himself.

In his first five plays, the character of the Jew is presented as an outcast and is ridiculed, but in the sixth play the Jews are humanized for the first time. This does not mean there are no references to the Jewish universe in other plays. In fact, it is possible to identify references to Jews and Judaism in 19 of his plays. This shows the influence of the Jews in 16th-century Portuguese society.²³

The first play to be discussed is the *Auto da Barca do Inferno* (Act of the Ship of Hell, 1517), in which several traces of anti-Semitism can be identified. In this work, all the main characters are dead, and their spirits seek redemption from the sins they committed during their lifetime. The final wish of all these sinners is to travel to Paradise where they will live happily ever after. Only one obstacle prevents them from achieving this objective: judgment of their actions during their lifetime. They meet the angel, representing the forces of good, and then the devil, representing the forces of evil. Unlike all the other characters, who speak first to the angel to convince him of their purity, the Jew goes directly to the devil's vessel, making no effort to receive absolution

²¹ Gil Vicente, *Compilaçam de todas as obras de Gil Vicente, a qual se reparte em cinco livros. O Primeyro he de todas suas cousas de devoção. O Segundo as comedias. O Terceyro as tragicomédias. No Quarto as farsas. No quinto as obras meudas* (Lisbon: Joam Alavrez, 1562).

²² The *Auto da Festa* was discovered in 1906 by the Count of Sabugosa, who found it in a private library at the Calvary Palace, where it appeared in a mix of printed texts from the second half of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century. Gil Vicente, *Auto da Festa* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1906).

²³ Manuel Simões, *A Crítica e o "Tipo" do Judeu em Gil Vicente* (Lisbon: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1980), p. 3.

for his sins from the angel. The Jew carries with him a goat, an animal associated with the devil, instead of a lamb, a symbol of purity and human sacrifice to God. In the dialogue that the Jew establishes with the devil, he is characterized as a usurer, a heretic, as a person urinating inside Christian churches and graves, or as a person eating meat on holy days. He also uses his money to corrupt others: he tries to corrupt the devil and take him on the boat to Hell in exchange for money.²⁴ The Jew also uses variations in language that differentiate him from the Christians.²⁵ In the end, the devil refuses to take him on his vessel; hence, he is dragged behind the boat to Hell.²⁶ In addition to the Jew, there is another character that can also be identified as belonging to the Jewish universe: the matchmaker (*alcoviteira*) named Brízida Vaz, who, rather than arranging marriages, entices young virgins into prostitution.²⁷

In the *Farsa de Inês Pereira* (Farce of Inês Pereira, 1523), the Jewish characters, Brass and Vidal, are both matchmakers who are interested in making money rather than in the happiness of those who use their services. References to money are based on the common Christian perception of the Jewish minority. Economic thinking based on ethical theology supported by the Catholic Church had a strong and prolonged influence on the Iberian secular world. In other words, there was a strong belief in the virtues of charity and the accumulation of wealth was discouraged. For Christians, material poverty was recommended, since the latter was a necessary condition for the salvation of the spirit and the subsequent entry into Paradise. For Jews, instead, the accumulation of wealth was seen as a grace granted by God to better serve the divine

²⁴ “Passai-me por meu dinheiro”: <http://www.cet-e-quinientos.com/autores/free/42/nemigalha/False/True>.

²⁵ “por el deu que te sacuda”: uses the word *Deu*, “God,” in the singular:
<http://www.cet-e-quinientos.com/autores/free/42/nemigalha/False/True>.

²⁶ Vicente, Barreto Feio, and Monteiro, *Obras de Gil Vicente*.

²⁷ Jose I. Suarez, “Characterization of the Elderly in Vicentine Drama,” *South Atlantic Review*, 62/1 (Winter 1997): 44.

intentions; hence, it was not harmful to the salvation of the spirit. In this play, the Christian perspective on money is quite evident. In the *Farsa de Inês Pereira* the language is used again as a means of distinction. For example, the character Vidal mentions “Deos” (God) in the singular “Deu.”²⁸

In Gil Vicente’s *Diálogo sobre a Ressurreição* (Dialogue on the Resurrection, 1526), Jews, the wars of Charles V (Holy Roman Emperor, King of Germany and Italy 1519–1556; King of Spain 1515–1556; Archduke of Austria 1519–1521; and Lord of the Netherlands 1506–1555), the papacy (Clement VII, r. 1523–1534), and the Medici are used as a backdrop to depict the European political landscape of the time. Three rabbis are featured in this play, namely Rabbi Levi, Rabi Samuel, and Rabi Aroz. Once again, the issue of trade and money is highlighted. It is no surprise that, in a dialogue between Rabbi Levi and Rabbi Samuel, the God of the Jews is depicted as money and economic power:

Fundemo-nos todos em haver dinheiro, porque quer seja nosso, quer seja alheio, é Deus verdadeiro. ²⁹	Let us all focus on having money, because whether it be ours or someone else’s, it is true God.
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These rabbis claim that Christianity and the resurrection of Christ are lies.³⁰ The Jews are recognizable in this play also by the way they speak. Portuguese scholar Manuel

²⁸ Nome del Deu aqui somos. (...)

Si somos juro al Deu. (...)

Juro al Deu aí somos nós. (...)

bento o Deu de Jacob

bento o Deu que a faraó

espantou e espantará

bento o Deu de Abraão

<http://www.cet-e-quinientos.com/autores/free/42/nemigalha/False/True>.

²⁹ <http://www.cet-e-quinientos.com/autores/free/42/nemigalha/False/True>.

³⁰ “[T]udo he bulraria.”

Simões draws attention to the fact that the Portuguese diphthong “ou” was replaced by “oi” as a way to show their Jewish origin. For example, the word “few” in Old Portuguese, “poucas,” is replaced by its archaic allophone “poicas,” whereas the word “other” in Old Portuguese, “outras,” is replaced by its archaic allophone “oitras.”³¹ Incidentally, the feature of choosing more archaic forms of the language or specific words that the majority has already abandoned is typical of all minority languages, regardless of their ethnicity and religious background, in this case the Portuguese vernacular spoken by the Jewish communities in Christian Europe.³²

In the *Auto da Cananeia* (Act of Canaanite, 1534), a commissioned work,³³ there is a shepherdess named Hebrea (lit. Hebrew) who is guarding her cattle. The cattle are a metaphor for the Jewish people. When referring to her cattle in the form of a song, the shepherdess alludes to the Jewish diaspora and, at the same time, condemns the Jews by characterizing them as foxes and wolves (and not sheep), as well as false and sinful people.³⁴

Sempre pace em mesa alhea. E sabes que gado é? Tudo raposos e lobos e eu te dou minha fê	I always stroll at someone else’s table. And do you know what my cattle are? All foxes and wolves, and I give you my certainty
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³¹ Manuel Simões, *A Crítica e o “Tipo” do Judeu em Gil Vicente* (Lisbon: Císalpino-Goliardica, 1980), p. 14.

³² This happens with all languages, whereby the use of a vowel (e.g., “i” vs. “e,” or “o” vs. “u”), a diphthong (e.g., “oi,” vs. “ou,” “uo” vs. “o”), a cluster made of a vowel and a consonant, a cluster made of two consonants, and/or words that are no longer used by the majority of the population alerts people that the speaker belongs to a different ethnic or religious group. In Latin-based cultures, this means not being mainstream (i.e., 100 percent white) and/or not being Catholic (e.g., Jewish, Muslim, or Protestant).

³³ By Dona Violante, Abbess of the convent of the Monastery of Odivelas, on the theme of the Gospel.

³⁴ Simões, *A Crítica e o “Tipo” do Judeu em Gil Vicente*, pp. 15–16.

que é a mais falsa relé que há i nos gados todos. Nunca m'ouvirão cantar que meu gado é tão erreiro que sempre o verás andar dum pecar em outro pecar de cativoiro em cativoiro.. ³⁵	which is the most false rabble that there is no worse cattle. Never heard me sing, that my cattle are so wild, that you'll always see him walk from one sin to another sin, from captivity to captivity.
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Later in the act, referring to her Jewish cattle, the shepherdess Hebra states that the cattle were chosen by God and that they became wicked. Hence, if the founders of Judaism were heavenly cattle, and the ancient prophets were lambs, the patriarchs and prophets of the present had become wolves.

Isso são gados perdidos os meus foram escolhidos e fizeram-se perversos. Os patriarcas primeiros eram gados celestiais ovelhas, santos carneiros e os profetas cordeiros e os d'agora lobos tais.. ³⁶	These are lost cattle mine were chosen and they became wicked. The first patriarchs were heavenly cattle sheep, holy rams and the prophets were lambs and the ones of the present times are wolves.
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Surprisingly, in *Auto da Lusitânia* (Act of Lusitania, 1532), an allegorical fantasy, the Jew is presented from a completely different perspective. Although the play was performed in 1532, the reality it reflects is of the period of the arrival of Jews from the Kingdoms of Castile and Aragón to Portugal between 1492 and 1499, with reference made to Abraham Zacuto.

³⁵ <http://www.cet-e-quinientos.com/autores/free/42/nemigalha/False/True>.

³⁶ <http://www.cet-e-quinientos.com/autores/free/42/nemigalha/False/True>.

The initial scene focuses on the daily life of a Portuguese Jewish family. Unequivocally, Gil Vicente expresses sympathy for the Jews.³⁷ The plot is centered on the relationship between Jews and Christians, which is characterized by coexistence and harmony. With the help of other Jewish community leaders, and upon meeting with the *Regedor*,³⁸ the father of a prominent Jewish family organizes a celebration of the arrival of the royal family in Lisbon. His daughter, named Lediça, is courted by a Christian knight.

Another unique aspect in the presentation of the relationship between Jews and Christians is that the characters are religiously moderate, and there is a tight-knit relationship between Portuguese and Castilian Jews. Lediça mentions that she is highly regarded by Isaac Abravanel, Rabbi Abraham Zacuto, Donegal Colonel, and Luna de Cosiel.

Assi ãas primas minhas e toda esta vizinhança todos tem amor comigo. Dom Izagaa [A]barabanel e rabi Abrão Çacuto e Donegal Coronel e dona Luna de Cosiel e todos me querem muito. ³⁹	Assim umas primas minhas e toda esta vizinhança todos gostam de mim. Dom Izagaa [A]barabanel e rabi Abrão Çacuto e Donegal Coronel e dona Luna de Cosiel e todos me querem muito.	So some of my cousins and this whole neighborhood everyone likes me. Izagaa [A] barabanel and Rabbi Abrão Çacuto and Donegal Colonel and Luna de Cosiel and everyone likes me a lot.
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Lediça's father and her brother Saulinho sing a song about the city of Valença, mixing

³⁷ Something that would also be repeated not in the theater, but in real life, with the letter he writes to the king in defense of the *conversos* of Santarém. Barbieri, *Judeus e cristãos-novos*.

³⁸ *Regedor* was the representative of the central administration in each parish.

³⁹ <http://www.cet-e-quinientos.com/autores/free/42/nemigalha/False/True>.

together Portuguese and Castilian words.⁴⁰

At the beginning of the play, the knight presents himself, claiming to be of Christian lineage; yet, because he is in love, he wants to be a Jew (“I wished that Abraham’s blood flowed through my veins”—“folgara de ser de Abraão o sangue de minhas veas”).⁴¹ This statement is extraordinary, given that it is 1532, just four years before the introduction of the Inquisition in Portugal (May 23, 1536—March 31, 1821). Lediça starts an argument with her mother and threatens to convert to Christianity, be baptized, and use a Christian name.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ai Valença guai Valença

de fogo sejam queimada

primeiro foste de moiros

que de cristãos tomada.

Alfaleme na cabeça

en la mano una azagaya

guai Valença guai Valença

cómo estás bien asentada

antes que sejam três dias

de moiros serás cercada.

<http://www.cet-e-quinientos.com/autores/free/42/nemigalha/False/True>.

⁴¹ Cortesão

Senhora sam cortesão

e da linagem de Eneas

e por vossa inclinação

folgara de ser de Abraão

o sangue de minhas veas.

<http://www.cet-e-quinientos.com/autores/free/42/nemigalha/False/True>.

⁴² Mãe amiga eu queria

In Gil Vicente's works, anti-Semitism is always present. The only form of redemption is Jewish conversion to Christianity. However, in this play there is also an attempt to humanize Jews, representing the daily life of a Jewish family as if it were that of any Christian family.

A unique example of the representation of Jews in the Iberian imagination of the 16th century appears in a work by Francisco da Costa (1533–1591), the *Auto da Ressurreição* (Act of Resurrection, 1583)⁴³ and features the devil, an angel, faith, gentiles, and Jews. The main debate takes place between gentiles and Jews. In the end, the truth is revealed to the gentiles and the Jews, whereby the latter discover that the initial revelation of Judaism had already materialized with the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Even so, the Jewish people stubbornly reject Christianity. Ultimately, the Jews are convinced through the words of the Apostle Luke, who approaches the Jews and removes the veil that covers their spiritual vision (“approaches the Jew and removes the veil”—“chegão ao judeu, tiraolhe o veio). Having been given a clear spiritual vision, the Jewish people accept the final truth of faith: Christianity. The play ends with gentiles and Jews embracing faith, looking at the angels, and accepting that Jesus is the Messiah revealed to the Jews. Although this piece is deeply influenced by the Vincentian theater, the characterization of Jews undergoes many changes. For the first time the Jew is defined as “the natural heir to the message of Jesus Christ” (“herdeiro natural da mensagem de Jesus Cristo”). Another

que cesseis de me assacar

que sairei de siso um dia

e poer-m'-ei nome Maria

ou Felipa ou Guiomar.

<http://www.cet-e-quinientos.com/autores/free/42/nemigalha/False/True>.

⁴³ James Nelson Novoa, “A imagem do judeu no *Auto da Ressurreição* no *Cancioneiro de Francisco Costa* (1583),” *Península, Revista de Estudos Ibéricos*, 4 (2007): 105–129.

important aspect is the fact that, contrary to what happened in the earlier Portuguese anti-Jewish literature, Jews are not accused of being responsible for the death of Jesus Christ⁴⁴

If, so far, we have presented a comprehensive reading of the prejudice and discrimination practiced against Jews in Portugal, as evident in Christian literature, from 1497 onwards “Jews” officially ceased to exist (Edict of Expulsion) and were replaced by *conversos* who, until 1536, could privately practice their faith and customs without being questioned by the royal authorities. This crypto-Judaism allowed Iberian Jews to maintain spiritual links with Judaism, something that attracted the curiosity and criticism of the Christian majority, which was reflected again in popular literature.

The *Farsa do Juiz da Beira* (Farce of the Judge from Beira, 1525) is the first play written by Gil Vicente to include a *converso* character, and it is only one in which the *converso* is exploited and exposed.⁴⁵ Indeed, here Gil Vicente clearly differentiates the Iberian *conversos* from the Christians, using the *converso* as a counterpoint to the central characters to accentuate their ignorance and corruption. Old Alonso Lopez Çapaio, born in Carrión, recalls his youth in Castile where as a wealthy Jewish merchant he traded at the famous Medina del Campo fair. After immigrating to Portugal, his old age was characterized by poverty. Alonso is the prototype for an entire Jewish community from Castile who, upon converting to Christianity, went to live in Portugal. The second striking feature of this character is that although he has lived in Lusitanian lands for many years, he has not become assimilated since he still speaks Portuguese with a heavy Castilian accent and uses an admixture of both languages, thus clearly betraying his provenance.

Upon analyzing the *Farsa*, one can conclude that the Jewish people in Portugal did not represent a homogeneous group. In addition to being discriminated against by the

⁴⁴ Nelson Novoa, “A imagem do judeu,” 129.

⁴⁵ The Portuguese did not use the word *converso*, but rather *Cristão-novo*, New Christian.

Christian majority, internally there was also a gap between, on the one hand, the Portuguese *conversos*, who spoke correct Portuguese, making it difficult to differentiate them from Portuguese Christians unless they chose to use the minority-language features mentioned above; and, on the other hand, the Castilian-speaking *conversos*, who through their speech revealed their Castilian and Jewish origins. Hence, the Castilian *conversos* were doubly discriminated against in Portuguese society because of their nationality and their Jewish religion.

Another author who included a *converso* character in a play was the Christian Henrique da Mota, in the *Farsa do Alfaiate* (Farce of the Tailor), written between 1497 and 1506.⁴⁶ Like Gil Vicente, Mota also satirizes *conversos* as having an excessive love of money and for their attachment to their ancestral faith. In this play, Mota does it through the tailor Manuel. The first trace of his attachment to money is when he loses a *cruzado*,⁴⁷ the product of six months of sewing. Initially this loss is accepted by the character as a punishment inflicted by God for having converted to Christianity without conviction.

certo eu naci má hora em pior fui bautizado pois dêś entam até ‘gora sempre em mim mofina mora sempr’ andei atrevesado. ⁴⁸	certo eu nasci em má hora e em pior fui batizado pois desde então até agora sempre em mim infelicidade mora sempre andei atravessado.	I am sure I was born at a bad time and in worse time I was baptized because from then until now I always have unhappiness in me I have always been crossbred.
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Later, convinced that the Christian João de Belays was the perpetrator of the robbery, he accuses him in front of the judge. The latter ends the trial by saying that if Manuel

⁴⁶ Anna Matheson, "The Subversion of Hate Literature in Anrique Da Mota's Farce of the Tailor."

Portuguese Studies 32, no. 1 (2016): 23-47.

⁴⁷ Former currency unit.

⁴⁸ <http://www.cet-e-quinientos.com/autores/free/42/nemigalha/False/True>.

lost his cruzado, nothing could be done, because it was won without fear of God. At the same time he denounces the *converso*, stating that despite being recently converted to Christianity, he remains deeply Jewish.

It is also possible to identify numerous Hebrew-Portuguese words in the play. The tailor refers to God using the word *Adonai*,⁴⁹ and when translating the name into Portuguese he pronounces “Deu” without including the “s.” It is also interesting to note that the tailor Manuel describes himself as “crossbred” (“atrevesado”), that is, he is neither a Christian nor a Jew. Additionally, he defines “Christianity” as a “Lei Nova” (New Law) as opposed to Moses’ “Velha Lei” (Old Law).

tomei de grado esta lei nova de graça ⁵⁰	Aceitei contente esta lei nova de graça	I gladly took this new law for free
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During the play, when he enters into dialogue with a Christian, the tailor Manuel changes his language, as if temporarily changing his identity. The inside is replaced by the outside and the truth by the appearance: the Jewish God, “Deu,” is replaced by the Christian God, “Deos”; and regarding the Holy Ghost, the *converso* tailor confesses that he does not know him but says he believes in him because they forced him to believe (an obvious allusion to forced conversion).

Ó tu senhor sant’Espírito posto que t’eu nam conheça de ti senhor me é dito que és um Deos infinito	Ó tu senhor santo Espírito posto que eu não te conheça de ti senhor me é dito	Oh you, Holy Spirit since I don’t know you of you, Lord, I am told that you are an infinite God
--	--	--

⁴⁹ Guaias que sam destroçado

ai adonai que farei?

jur’em Deu nam calarei

(...)jur’em Deu em me comer

<http://www.cet-e-quinientos.com/autores/free/42/nemigalha/False/True>.

⁵⁰ <http://www.cet-e-quinientos.com/autores/free/42/nemigalha/False/True>.

e mo metem em cabeça. ⁵¹	que és um Deus infinito e me o metem na cabeça	and they put this inside my head
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In short, the main characteristics that all the authors use to differentiate between Christians and Jews, and later, during the process of forced social assimilation, the *converso* minority, are religious behavior, economic interests, and linguistic structures.

Conclusion

What emerges from the sources treated here is therefore a double movement. On one side, these works reiterate a repertoire of accusations and caricatures⁵² through which Jews (and later New Christian / Conversos) are positioned as threats to the spiritual and civic body. On the other, the same texts inadvertently record the intimacy of everyday entanglement: Jews appear not at the margins of society but within its practical circuits of medicine, finance, courtly life, urban labor, and language itself. This ambivalence is not an analytical inconvenience; it is the historical substance of the problem. Forced conversion did not dissolve the minority into an undifferentiated Christian mass. Rather, it produced a liminal social figure - the *converso* - whose “visibility” depended on unstable signs, rumors, and anxieties, and whose interiority was imagined as perpetually at odds with outward conformity. In the literature, the *converso* becomes a test case for a broader question: what counts as truth in a society that compels performance as proof? In this process, language is not an accessory detail but a privileged diagnostic technology. The texts show how difference was heard, staged, and narrated (how pronunciation, lexical choice, and code-switching could be made to carry moral weight, turning speech into a presumed index of belief). The alternation between “Deu” and “Deos,” the retention of minority lexical residues, and the dramatic depiction of a *converso* modulating language according to audience all point to a

⁵¹ <http://www.cet-e-quinhetos.com/autores/free/42/nemigalha/False/True>.

⁵² Economic predation, heresy, profanation, duplicity.

culture in which faith is imagined as both audible and falsifiable. In these moments, literature becomes a record of “micro-boundaries”: small linguistic and behavioral markers through which a dominant society attempted to render interior religion publicly legible, and through which minority subjects⁵³ could preserve traces of affiliation under the pressure of compulsory sameness. Yet the corpus also makes clear that this symbolic regime was not monolithic. Even within a broadly hostile environment, certain scenes complicate the reduction of Jews and *conversos* to mere stereotype: gestures of sympathy, portrayals of domestic normalcy, and moments of psychological texture reveal fractures in the dominant script. These exceptions matter not because they *redeem* the literature, but because they demonstrate contestation inside the Christian imagination itself—competing impulses to ridicule, to domesticate, to convert, to remember, and to mourn. The minority is alternately demonized and humanized, mocked and made familiar, expelled and kept narratively present. Such oscillation suggests that anti-Jewish discourse functioned not only as an instrument of exclusion but also as a means of managing unresolved coexistence: a way to speak about proximity while denying equality. Seen from this angle, popular literature becomes a historically specific archive of social cognition. It registers how conversion was made thinkable, how difference was rebranded rather than eliminated, and how the category *converso*/ *new Christian* emerged as a solution that reproduced the problem it claimed to solve. The texts reveal a society trying to convert bodies while distrusting minds; trying to enforce unity while multiplying suspicion; trying to suppress Jewish visibility while generating new forms of detection and denunciation. In short, these works illuminate forced assimilation as a cultural process as much as a legal or theological one: a sustained effort to refashion persons into symbols, and to read symbols back into persons. Finally, the afterlife of this process is not confined to the sixteenth century. Even as Judeo-Portuguese faded as a living vernacular, the

⁵³ Whether consciously or not.

present study has shown that linguistic residue, dramatic convention, and inherited stereotypes preserved an imprint of Sephardic presence within Portuguese cultural memory. The violence of erasure did not produce silence; it produced echoes, embedded in idioms, theatrical types, and narrative habits that outlived the communities they helped to marginalize. By tracing how Jews become *conversos* in literature - how the named Jew becomes the suspected *New Christian* - this study clarifies a broader historical mechanism: when a state compels assimilation, culture often compensates by inventing new signs of difference. And it is precisely in those signs that the social history of forced conversion becomes most legible.