

A CONVERSO IBERIAN AGENT IN ROME AND THE POLITICAL USES OF LITERARY TEXTS: BALTASAR DEL RÍO (1480-1541)

by Marta Albalá Pelegrín

In 1504, two Spaniards discussed whether it was worth moving to Rome in the hopes for a better life. One of them, Cristino, had lived there for some time. Embittered and skeptical, he described how difficult it was to prosper in the city, how hard it was to find a cardinal's household in which to serve, and how tough it had become to obtain a good canonry back at home. To obtain a benefice, Cristino highlighted, it was essential to maintain constant communication with one's homeland and to get insider knowledge about new vacancies. After having sold all his possessions and closed down his own business, the newcomer Silvano soon learned that any aim at climbing the social ladder to become a well-positioned clergyman would be almost hopeless. Arriving in Rome with a bill of exchange from a bank that had just gone bankrupt, he carefully listened to the advice of his fellow compatriot.

This conversation marks the beginning of Baltasar del Río's *Tratado de la corte romana* (*Treatise on the Roman Court*), a short humanist dialogue published in Rome in the Castilian vernacular.¹ It deals with a frequent situation at the time, that of the newcomer or "bisogno" who has just arrived in Rome, only to find all his illusions dispelled by a "plático", in our case an experienced compatriot who, by tending him a hand, also warns him of the unexpected hardship a newcomer would have to face in an unfamiliar city. Such a common scenario between two Spaniards situates the text and its readership in the context of the important

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¹ The treatise is only preserved in an extant copy, B. del Río, *Tratado de la curia Romana*, Roma: Johann Besicken, 1504, a2-c6. BC, Toda1-III-8. For a modern diplomatic edition, see C. J. HERNANDO SÁNCHEZ, *Un tratado español sobre la corte de Roma en 1504: Baltasar del Río y la sátira anticortesana*, in *Roma y España un crisol de la cultura europea en la edad moderna*, Madrid, Sociedad estatal para la acción cultural exterior, 2007, pp. 224–237. Baltasar del Río's biographical details can be found in J. GOÑI GAZTAMBIDE, *Río, Baltasar del*, in *Diccionario de la historia eclesiástica de España*, a cura di Q. ALDEA VAQUERO, et alii, vol. Suplemento I, Madrid, CSIC Instituto Enrique Florez, 1987, pp. 647–649; J. A. OLLERO PINA, *Una familia de conversos sevillanos en los orígenes de la Inquisición: Los Benadeva*, «Hispania sacra», XL, 1988, 81, pp. 45–105; J. GIL, *Los conversos y la Inquisición sevillana*, vol. II, Sevilla, Universidad de Sevilla: Fundación El Monte, 2000, pp. 51–65; 118–120.

community of Iberians who had come to Rome mainly in search of curial benefits, but also fleeing persecution or to find new opportunities.²

Self-gain through political or ecclesiastical benefits attracted clergy and laymen to a city that allowed them to promote divergent ideas in a period marked by Spanish political hegemony, often labeled as Spanish Rome.³ Some of these newcomers soon engaged in producing literary pieces that contributed to the political, humanistic, and cultural revival of Rome.⁴ Others engaged in their consumption and reading (silently or aloud to others), creating a market for literary works in the Castilian vernacular.⁵

Grounded in the intersection of literary studies, book history, intellectual history, and new diplomatic history, this article analyzes how Iberian agents made use of fictional literary texts as well as non-fictional literature (letters, news pieces, sermons, etc.) to advance religious, political, and aesthetic ideas. It explores how authors saw learned interventions as a way to position themselves in current literary, political, social and spiritual matters.⁶

² On the presence of foreigners in Rome and the members of the different “naciones”, see: M. SANFILIPPO, *Roma nel Rinascimento: una città di immigrati*, in *Le forme del testo e l’immaginario della metropoli*, a cura di B. BINI, V. VIVIANI, Viterbo, Sette città, 2009, pp. 73–85; M. SANFILIPPO, P. TUSOR, *Gli agenti presso la Santa Sede delle comunità e degli stati stranieri*, Viterbo, Sette città, 2020. For the Spanish community, see M. VAQUERO PIÑEIRO, *La renta y las casas: el patrimonio inmobiliario de Santiago de los Españoles de Roma entre los siglos XV y XVII*, Roma, L’Erma di Bretschneider, 1999; Idem, *Viaggiatori spagnoli a Roma nel Rinascimento*, Bologna, Pàtron, 2001.

³ T. JAMES DANDELET, *Spanish Rome, 1500-1700*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001; M. A. VISCEGLIA, *Roma e la Monarchia Cattolica nell’età dell’egemonia spagnola in Italia: un bilancio storiografico*, in *Roma y España un crisol de la cultura europea en la edad moderna*, Madrid, Sociedad estatal para la acción cultural exterior, 2007, pp. 53–77. C. J. HERNANDO SÁNCHEZ, *Introducción. ¿Roma española? Razones para un congreso*, in *Roma y España un crisol de la cultura europea en la edad moderna*, Madrid, Sociedad estatal para la acción cultural exterior, 2007, pp. 19–24, 37.

⁴ For the different factions of the Spanish Monarchy in Rome and the importance of their diplomatic and political endeavors, M. A. VISCEGLIA, *Roma papale e Spagna: diplomatici, nobili e religiosi tra due corti*, Roma, Bulzoni, 2010; A. FERNÁNDEZ DE CÓRDOVA MIRALLES, *Alejandro VI y los Reyes Católicos: relaciones político-ecclesiásticas, 1492-1503*, Romae, Pontificia Universitas Sanctae Crucis, Facultas Theologiae, 2005; Idem, *Fernando el Católico y Julio II: papado y monarquía hispánica en el umbral de la modernidad*, Madrid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2019.

⁵ See R. CHARTIER, *Leisure and Sociability: Reading Aloud in Early Modern Europe*, CAROL MOSSMAN (tradotto da), in *Urban Life in the Renaissance*, a cura di S. ZIMMERMAN, R. F.E. WEISSMAN, Newark, NJ, University of Delaware Press, 1989, pp. 103–120; B. RICHARDSON, et alii, *Interactions between Orality and Writing in Early Modern Italian Culture*, London, Routledge, 2016; S. DALL’AGLIO, B. RICHARDSON, M. ROSPOCHER, *Voices and texts in early modern Italian society*, Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, 2017.

⁶ For a detailed rendering of the developments and trends of the new diplomatic history, see P. VOLPINI, *La diplomazia nella prima età moderna: esperienze e prospettive di ricerca*, «Rivista storica italiana», CXXXII, 2020, 2, pp. 653–683. For the importance of factions, see M. A. VISCEGLIA, *Diplomazia e politica della Spagna a Roma: figure di ambasciatori*, Roma, CROMA, Università Roma Tre, 2008. On the importance of news pieces, see: J. RAYMOND, N. MOXHAM, *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, Brill, 2016; J. W. KOOPMANS, *News and politics in early modern Europe (1500-1800)*, Leuven, Peeters, 2005. For the importance of patronage, see: R. DESCIMON, J. F. SCHAUB, B. VINCENT (a cura di), *Les figures de l’administrateur: institutions, réseaux, pouvoirs en Espagne, en France et au Portugal, 16e-19e siècle*, Paris, Editions de l’École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1997. About informal diplomatic personnel, agents, secretaries, and servants, see C. FLETCHER, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome: The Rise of the Resident Ambassador*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 94–97. Working on a later period, Carrió-Invernizzi has stressed the importance of cultural history and visual materials. D. Carrió-Invernizzi, *A New Diplomatic History and the Networks of Spanish Diplomacy in the Baroque Era*, «The International History Review», XXXVI, 2014, 4, pp. 603–618, p. 606. See also M. A. VISCEGLIA, *Roma centro della diplomazia internazionale tra Quattrocento e primo Cinquecento: questioni di metodo e prospettive di ricerca. Una introduzione*, in *Roma centro della diplomazia internazionale tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento*, a cura di A. FARA, E. PLEBANI, Roma, Roma nel Rinascimento, 2019, p. IX; I. LAZZARINI, *Una «nuova storia diplomatica», una «nuova storia politica»: studi e tendenze su*

The microhistory of Baltasar del Río (1480-1541), a bishop of converso lineage, illustrates the different strategies that a prelate who often took on diplomatic tasks would deploy to promote a literary scene both in Rome and Seville. In Rome, Del Río engaged in the production of Latin and vernacular works, both Castilian and Italian. In Seville, he founded a confraternity and established a biannual literary competition that fostered Seville's cultural life. He promoted the production of Latin epigrams, a genre that had been in vogue among Roman sodalities for almost a century, but also vernacular Castilian poetry and the delivery of Latin sermons. Del Río used his privileged position as a prelate in his successive roles as secretary, notary, envoy, governor, and patron of the arts, to inform about the expansion of Lutheranism, the Spanish-North African War, and the arrival of silver and gold from Peru.⁷ Traveling from Seville to Rome and from Rome to Seville, he helped conversos advance their careers in Rome and back in Seville. There, he was praised by poets as a patron and cultural ambassador, while in Rome he used his rhetorical and literary skills to negotiate papal privileges that secured his position back at home.⁸

The “Spanish” Literary Scene in Rome

Baltasar del Río's *Tratado de la corte romana* may be the first in a series of works in the Castilian vernacular that focus on censoring Rome's institutional and social life in a parodic and satirical tone.⁹ Addressed to Enrique de Toledo, the brother of the second Duke of Alba, the *Treatise* described the misery and abundance of Rome through an account of “the things that in this court, courtiers like us, dwelling here, are accustomed to suffer” in a moment, after the death of Pope Alexander VI, in which Spaniards felt less welcomed in the city.¹⁰ Del Río's *Treatise* took pride in unveiling Rome's corrupt bureaucracy, paying special attention to recent changes in the curial administration that required a good deal of money for prelates and servants to secure a position. Moreover, it provided an informed guide for those seeking pleasure, or «secret women».¹¹ The treatise had a precedent in a body of literature that criticized courtly life in an irreverent, amusing, or satirical tone, often produced both at the core and at the margins of the court as an outlet to its tensions. An inquiry into possible models for Baltasar del Río's text cannot be separated from the increasing circulation of oral,

pratiche e linguaggi della diplomazia in Italia tra tardo medioevo e primo Rinascimento, in *Roma centro della diplomazia internazionale tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento*, a cura di A. FARA, E. PLEBANI, Roma, Roma nel Rinascimento, 2019, pp. 1, 8–9.

⁷ In 1504, Del Río was a secretary to Cardinal Jaime Serra. In 1514, he was a notary, *cubiculario*, and *comensalis continuus* to Pope Leo X. ASV. XXXIX. T. 30, 94r. In 1530, he was the master of ceremonies to Clement VII.

⁸ Although this article deals with Baltasar del Río's individual role as a cultural agent, del Río's extended family network helped him attain his position at the curia. His twin brother Francisco, then a *canonicus*, and his brother Alfonso, a doctor in canon law, acted as attorneys (*procuradores*) for Del Río in 1513. ACR, *Mandati*, LXVI, 79.

⁹ For a study of the biting satirical tradition during Julius II's papacy, see M. ROSPOCHER, *Il papa guerriero: Giulio II nello spazio pubblico europeo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2015.

¹⁰ B. del Río, *Tratado de la curia Romana*, a2. The treatise aimed at describing “everything that takes place in Rome concerning high and low gentlemen, their courtiers and their servants”, a3. The choice to dedicate the work to Enrique de Toledo allowed the text to convey criticism in a safe way, preventing its interpretation as an attack to any particular curial household. Enrique, who knew the city well, would become a character in one of Bandello's novels. C. J. HERNANDO SÁNCHEZ, *Un tratado español*, pp. 203, 206.

¹¹ Del Río dedicates Chapters Six to Nine, almost a third of the work, to describe how to find and serve women in Rome. With an abundance of details, the treatise advises about «señoras secretas» and ranks a variety of women who sell their services in the city, while providing interesting advice to enhancing or hiding one's identity (including crossdressing). See the transcription of those pages in Ivi, pp. 232–236.

manuscript, and printed compositions. A case in point would be that of the verses produced for the literary gatherings organized by the Neapolitan Cardinal Oliviero Carafa (1430-1511) around the figure of Pasquino. Around 1501, Carafa had recovered a mutilated ancient sculptural group and installed it in the neighborhood of Parione. The statue soon became known as “Pasquino”.¹² Every year in the day of Saint Mark (April 25), painters and *familiars* of Carafa’s household dressed up the statue in the guise of a different mythological character. Unveiling and celebrating Pasquino’s ephemeral identity became a major event for poets and students of the *Studium Urbis* encouraged to write poems on the subject. The feast encompassed the life of the *botteghe* and left a distinct memory in the city.¹³ In the early cinquecento, encomiastic compositions prevailed. By 1510, several years after Del Río’s treatise, Pasquino’s compositions evolved to biting first-person anonymous satire that censured Roman political and ecclesiastical figures.¹⁴

Contemporary authors who often performed their compositions or circulated them in manuscript or printed form may have also influenced Del Río. These included Serafino Aquilano, Niccolò Campani called lo Strascino, and Vincenzo Colli, known as il Calmeta, who worked for the Borgia and frequented Paolo Cortesi’s circle of poets. A previous generation of humanists, such as Enea Silvio Piccolomini and his work *De curialium miseriis* (composed in 1444, copied, printed and translated copiously afterwards) and Alfonso de Palencia’s bitter satire against administrative failures contained in his epistles to Hernando del Pulgar, may have served as models.¹⁵ The growing body of Castilian burlesque literature (or *coplas de burlas*) circulating in manuscript copies in the Italian and Iberian Peninsula and printed afterwards in poetic compilations, as well as works like *Celestina*, attest for an interest in recording sexual practices and marginal spaces. Lastly, another possible influence for Del Río’s are the numerous editions of classics such as Apuleius, Persius, and Juvenal, as well as the plays of Plautus and Terence, that circulated in cardinal households and Roman piazzas.¹⁶

¹² M. SPAGNOLO, *Pasquino in piazza: una statua a Roma tra arte e vituperio*, Roma, Campisano Editore, 2019, p. 22.

¹³ Ivi, pp. 26–28. Pasquino’s disguises emulated the ancient costume of dressing statues described in Plinius’ *Natural History*. See, K. CHRISTIAN, *Empire Without End: Antiquities Collections in Renaissance Rome, c. 1350-1527*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2010, pp. 185–186.

¹⁴ M. SPAGNOLO, *Pasquino in piazza*, pp. 46–47.

¹⁵ The *Curialium miseriis* could be considered a Renaissance bestseller. It was printed in Rome by Stephan Plank ca. 1488-1490 and by Eucharius Silber in 1490. N. ALGABA, *Introducción*, in *Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Tratado de la miseria de los cortesanos, traducción de Diego López de Cortegana*, Ulzama digital, Instituto de Estudios Auriseculares, 2018, p. 25. The work was translated into Spanish in 1520 by Diego López de Cortegana and printed together with Cortegana’s translations of Erasmus *Somnium de Fortuna* and the *Querella Pacis*. In 1518, López de Cortegana was part of the commission chosen to decide the place of Del Río’s chapel in the cathedral of Seville. C. J. HERNANDO SÁNCHEZ, *Un tratado español*, p. 200. On López de Cortegana’s role as a humanist, see F. J. ESCOBAR BORREGO, S. DÍEZ REBOSO, L. RIVERO GARCÍA (a cura di), *La «metamorfosis» de un Inquisidor: el humanista Diego López de Cortegana (1455-1524)*, Universidad de Huelva, 2012. For Palencia’s use of satire, see J. LAWRANCE, *Alfonso de Palencia como «cultor ueritatis»: la historia y la sátira*, «Atalaya. Revue d’études médiévales romanes», XVII, 2017, [https://journals.openedition.org/atalaya/2282].

¹⁶ An interesting case is that of the editorial labor of Filippo Beroaldo. Working from Bologna, Beroaldo soon populated the Italian and French market with editions of classical authors such as Persius, Juvenal, Cicero, Pliny, and others. Also interesting is the case of his relative Filippo Beroaldo junior, who studied and worked with him and was a member of the Pomponian Academy and that of Johann Goritz. Interestingly, the Spanish humanist Elio Antonio de Nebrija published in Seville on 1503 an annotated edition of Persius. M. DEL AMO LOZANO, *Aelii Antonii Nebrissensis grammatici in A. Persium Flaccum, poetam satyricum, interpretatio. Edición y estudio*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2011, p. 36. As Gouwens has reminded us, it is important to study how literary and learned societies in Rome and Naples, influenced each other, as the contact among their members was frequent. K. GOUWENS, *Institutions and Dynamics of Learned Exchange, in A Companion to Early Modern Rome, 1492-1692*, a cura di P. M. JONES, et alii, Boston, Brill, 2019, pp. 503–504. The role and connection of

In this context, modest but active literary initiatives with ties to the Iberian Peninsula took root. By the late fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth, especially during the pontificate of Alexander VI (1492-1503), the papal chapel hosted a considerable number of Iberian musicians.¹⁷ Fictional and non-fictional works thrived wherever and whenever politics happened: in the college of cardinals, the “national churches”, private palaces, the synagogues, or during the Roman carnival. Texts were attached and torn off from walls. They were edited, translated, and published in a city that often played the role of a loudspeaker for the Christendom.¹⁸ The traces of migrating communities and their movement were effectively embedded in the ability of literary compositions to move from one language to another. Some of these pieces came off the presses of Johann Besicken, Eucarius Silber, or Antonio Martínez de Salamanca. These last two printers were also instrumental for the publication of editions and translations of Castilian works.¹⁹ During the papacies of Julius II and Leo X, Bartolomé Torres Naharro initiated his career in Rome, becoming one of the founding fathers of Castilian theater.²⁰ After having seen everyone in Rome involved in “fiestas de comedias”, he depicted a diverse Iberian community in his plays, satires, and *capituli*, in which soldiers, laundresses, sex workers, cardinals, and servants often took prime stage. These Castilian, Catalan, and Andalusian characters who come to life again a few years later in Francisco

Neapolitan circles, such as a that of Il Panormita and his successor Pontano, merit further explanation in relation to Del Río.

¹⁷ Among them were Alfonso Troya, and Francisco de Peñalosa, who may have had a role in the importance that *villancicos* played in Del Río’s confraternity in Seville. J. GIL, *Los conversos*, vol. II, p. 59.

¹⁸ A. FERNÁNDEZ DE CÓRDOVA MIRALLES, *Alejandro VI y los Reyes Católicos*, p. 307.

¹⁹ A. TINTO, *Gli annali tipografici di Eucario e Marcello Silber. (1501-1527)*, Firenze, Leo S. Olschki, 1968; M. MIGLIO, a cura di A. MODIGLIANI, *Saggi di stampa: tipografi e cultura a Roma nel Quattrocento*, Roma, Roma nel Rinascimento, 2002; A. MODIGLIANI, *Hernando Colón acquirente di libri a stampa. Note sul mercato librario romano*, «RR. Roma nel Rinascimento. Bibliografia e note», 2000, pp. 51–62; P. FARENGA, *Non solo classici: politica, cronaca (e storia)*, in *Alessandro VI dal Mediterraneo all’Atlantico*, a cura di M. CHIABÒ, A. M. OLIVA, O. SCHIENA, Roma, Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, 2004, pp. 235–253; P. FARENGA, *Editori ed edizioni a Roma nel Rinascimento*, Roma, Roma nel Rinascimento, 2005. On Antonio de Salamanca, see V. PAGANI, *Documents on Antonio Salamanca*, «Print Quarterly», XVII, 2000, 2, pp. 148–155; J. L. GONZALO SÁNCHEZ-MOLERO, *Antonio de Salamanca y los libros españoles en la Roma del siglo XVI*, in *Roma y España: un crisol de la cultura europea en la edad moderna: actas del Congreso Internacional celebrado en la Real Academia de España en Roma del 8 al 12 de mayo de 2007*, a cura di C. J. HERNANDO SÁNCHEZ, vol. I, Madrid, Sociedad estatal para la acción cultural exterior, 2007, pp. 335–365; F. GERNERT, *Antonio Martínez de Salamanca, impresor, y Francisco Delicado, corrector. Libros españoles en la imprenta a través de sus ilustraciones*, in *Nápoles--Roma 1504: cultura y literatura española y portuguesa en Italia en el quinto centenario de la muerte de Isabel la Católica*, a cura di J. GÓMEZ MONTERO, F. GERNERT, Salamanca: Kiel, Seminario de Estudios Medievales y Renacentistas, 2005, pp. 205–242; M. C. MISITI, *Antonio Salamanca: qualche chiarimento biografico alla luce di una indagine sulla presenza Spagnola a Roma nel ‘500*, in *La Stampa in Italia nel Cinquecento. Atti del convegno. Roma, 17-21 ottobre 1989*, a cura di MARCO SANTORO, vol. II, Roma, Bulzoni, 1992, pp. 545–563.

²⁰ For Torres Naharro career in Rome, see: L. DE ALIPRANDINI, *Studio introduttivo. La Tinellaria nella cultura italiana del primo Cinquecento.*, in *Comedia Tinellaria. Riproduzione anastatica della editio princeps*, Bologna, Arnaldo Forni, 1985, pp. 5–73; Idem, *La representación en Roma de la Tinellaria de Torres Naharro*, in *El teatro durant l’Edat Mitjana i el Renaixement. Actes del I Simposi Internacional d’Història del Teatre sobre «L’Edat Mitjana i el Renaixement en el Teatre»*, a cura di F. MASSIP, Barcelona, Universitat de Barcelona, 1986, pp. 127–135; T. CIRILLO SIRRI, *Plurilinguismo in commedia: B. de Torres Naharro e G.B. Della Porta*, Napoli, Morano editore, 1992; F. PIGNATTI, *Le commedie romane di Bartolomé de Torres Naharro*, in *Il teatro a Roma prima della Cortigiana (1525) di Pietro Aretino*, a cura di G. CRIMI, Roma, Roma nel Rinascimento, 2020, pp. 115–140; R. GUARINO, *Lo spazio dello spettacolo recitato dai pomponiani al Peruzzi*, in *Il teatro a Roma prima della Cortigiana (1525) di Pietro Aretino*, a cura di G. CRIMI, Roma, Roma nel Rinascimento, 2020, p. 144.

Delicado's *Lozana Andaluza* have a precedent.²¹ Torres Naharro's and Delicado's portrayal of marginal spaces seem to have originated in the aforementioned *Tratado de la curia romana*.²² Baltasar del Río, Juan del Encina, and Bartolomé Torres Naharro shared acquaintances and most likely knew each other.²³ Similar topics were also circulating by 1506 in the Italian translation of the *Tragicomedia di Calisto e Melibea*, or *Celestina*, published in Rome by Eucario Silber, a work that was maybe staged in Rome by ca. 1501. In 1504, Del Río himself made a reference in his *Treatise* to a certain "Celestina" inhabiting the curial spaces. This could be one the earliest mentions of the literary character in Rome.²⁴

Ambassadors, agents, prelates, secretaries, and exiles were often involved in the many Iberian literary enterprises. Competition, disillusion, conquest, and "glory" were some of the literary topics of those humanists and laymen. Some were able to prosper; others failed. Be that as it may, the different cultural setting found in Rome allowed for the reinvention of Iberian politics. Even the most radical institution, the Castilian Inquisition, had no jurisdiction in Rome. On the contrary, an appeal to the papacy was often used to mitigate its effects. It is in this context that Baltasar del Río joined the ranks of those converso prelates who viewed

²¹ For *La Lozana Andaluza* and its connections with Rome, see F. DELICADO, a cura di C. PERUGINI, *La Lozana Andaluza*, Sevilla, Fundación José Manuel Lara, 2004; F. DELICADO, a cura di J. JOSET, F. GERNERT, *La lozana andaluza*, Barcelona, Galaxia Gutenberg, 2006; I. BURSHATIN, *Rome as Andalusia: Bodies and Borders in Francisco Delicado's Retrato de la Lozana Andaluza*, «MLN», CXXIX, 2014, 2, pp. 197–218; M. ALBALÁ PELEGRÍN, *La Lozana andaluza: migración y pluralismo religioso en el Mediterráneo*, «Revista canadiense de estudios hispánicos», XLI, 2016, 1, pp. 215–242.

²² C. J. HERNANDO SÁNCHEZ, *Un tratado español*, pp. 228–231.

²³ Both Torres Naharro and Baltasar del Río engaged in the publication of works that either pleased Bernardino López de Carvajal, the Cardinal of Santa Croce (in the case of Naharro) or were produced by him. For Torres Naharro's relationship with Carvajal, see M. ALBALÁ PELEGRÍN, *Humanism and Spanish Literary Patronage at the Roman Curia: The Role of the Cardinal of Santa Croce, Bernardino López de Carvajal (1456-1523)*, in «Royal Studies Journal», IV, 2017, 2, pp. 27–31. Juan del Encina traveled to Jerusalem with the Marquis of Tarifa, Fadrique Enríquez de Rivera. Enríquez de Rivera started his trip in Seville in 1518 and stayed in Rome for three months upon his return from Jerusalem, leaving the city on May 5, 1520. In Rome, he enjoyed the company of Del Río. His account was printed after his trip, in the same volume with Juan del Encina's own *Viaje de Jerusalem*, a work that Encina had likely composed during or short after their trip. See F. ENRÍQUEZ DE RIVERA, *Este Libro es de el viaje que hize a Ierusalem de todas las cosas que en el me pasaron desde que sali de mi casa de Bornos, miércoles 24 de noviembre de 1518 hasta 20 de octubre de 1520 que entre en Sevilla.*, Lisboa, 1608, p. 337. Enríquez de Rivera, a bibliophile and a collector, dedicated part of his stay in the Italian peninsula to purchasing books, commissioning translations, and collecting coins, statues, maps, musical instruments, and astrological devices. Upon his return, he deposited the items in the Casa de Pilatos, in Seville, and commissioned a fresco representing classical figures (Homer, Cicero, Livy, Horace, Quintus Curtius, etc). See G. LAZURE, *Albores de un humanismo vernáculo: el entorno catedralicio y la traducción de libros en la Sevilla de principios del siglo XVI*, in *La «metamorfosis» de un Inquisidor: el humanista Diego López de Cortegana (1455-1524)*, a cura di F. J. ESCOBAR BORREGO, et alii, Huelva, Universidad de Huelva, 2012, pp. 93–94.

²⁴ A detailed study of the Italian *Tragicomedia* and the contextualization of Del Río's allusion to *Celestina* can be found in O. DI CAMILLO, *Algunas consideraciones sobre La Celestina italiana*, in *Rumbos del hispanismo en el umbral del Cincuentenario de la AIH*, a cura di A. GARRIBBA, et alii, vol. II, Bagatto Libri, 2012, pp. 218–219, 225–226. See also, Idem, *Of Roasted Eggs and Other Issues in the «Celestina»*, in *Docta y sabia Atenea. Studia in honorem Lía Schwartz.*, a cura di S. LÓPEZ POZA, et alii, A Coruña, Universidade da Coruña. Servizo de Publicacións, 2019, pp. 253–254; Idem, *When and Where was the First Act of La Celestina Composed?: A Reconsideration*, in *De ninguna cosa es alegre posesión sin compañía: estudios celestinescos y medievales en honor del profesor Joseph Thomas Snow*, a cura di D. PAOLINI, vol. I, New York, The Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 2010, pp. 91–157; Idem, *Hacia el origen de la Tragicomedia: Huellas de la princeps en la traducción de Ordóñez*, in *Actas del Simposio Internacional 1502-2002: Five Hundred Years of Fernando de Rojas' Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea.*, a cura di J. C. CONDE, New York, Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 2007, pp. 115–145. See also the pioneer study by K. V. KISH, *An Edition of the First Italian Translation of the Celestina*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1973.

Rome as a place to further develop their ecclesiastical, literary, and cultural aspirations, and one from which to regain prestige in Castile.

Baltasar del Río: A Converso Writer Documenting the Curia and its Margins

Del Río's life exemplifies the journey of a prelate who built a diplomatic and ecclesiastical career upon his education, rhetorical skills, and literary reputation. His father was Alvaro del Río, an apostolic notary and secretary to the archbishop of Seville, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza. He was burnt at the stake by the Spanish Inquisition.²⁵ In 1496, thanks to the intercession of the archbishop, Del Río and his family were rehabilitated, a process that granted them inquisitorial pardon. He is believed to have traveled to Rome, probably in the retinue of a high-ranking ecclesiastic or a nobleman, sometime at the turn of the sixteenth century. In 1504, by the time his *Treatise on the Roman Court* was published, he was highly familiar with Roman society and its way of living. Praise of the treatise came from his colleague and friend Marcellino Verardi of Cesena: "He who does not know the customs of the curia /Should read you: and having read you, he will become an expert".²⁶

Both Baltasar del Río and Marcellino Verardi were secretaries at the service of Cardinal Jaime Serra, who exercised a great influence as a patron of the arts in Rome.²⁷ Verardi had been working for the Spanish faction in Rome for at least a decade. In 1493 he had praised Ferdinand of Aragon in his tragicomedy *Fernandus Servatus*, composed in Latin verse to dramatize the monarch's attempted assassination in Barcelona.

Del Río was still living in Cardinal Serra's household in 1513, when a play by Juan del Encina was performed in Spanish on the day of the Epiphany.²⁸ Vernacular comedies were often performed during or after dinner, with prelates, diplomats, and noblemen lingering on drinks. They were part of the program of entertainment and could end in nights punctuated by sexual encounters. To conjecture that Baltasar del Río embraced this type of life is quite feasible. Agnolo Firenzuola, a friend of the famous satirist Pietro Aretino, made reference to a certain bishop of Scala who had contracted syphilis. The reference appears in a chapter in which Firenzuola complains about the money he had spent in trying to overcome that illness:

How much money I have spent for my cures
that it would have been better to bet on a game of cards.
So, for all that, at the end one can safely say
that I have used an entire pharmacy.
I have taken in my days as many enemas

²⁵ JUAN GIL, *Los conversos*, vol. II, p. 80.

²⁶ C. J. HERNANDO SÁNCHEZ, *Un tratado español*, p. 223.

²⁷ For a concise biographical account of Jaime Serra, Ivi, pp. 192–193.

²⁸ The public attending a performance in Rome on the day of the Epiphany seems to have displeased the Mantuan ambassador Stazio Gadio. In a famous letter dated January 11 and addressed to Isabella D'Este, Federico Gonzaga's mother, Gadio remarked that on January 6 two thirds of the audience were Spaniards, but Spanish courtesans («putane» in Gadio's words) outnumbered the Italian spectators. Among the notables attending that cultural event were the young duke of Mantua Federico Gonzaga, the Spanish ambassador, and a number of Spanish bishops and prelates. The same letter noted how three days later, on January 9, Federico had dinner at the house of the cardinal of Mantua, Sigismondo Gonzaga, with the Roman courtesan Albina, the buffoon Fra Mariano, and other poets, prelates, and notables of the Roman society. F. CRUCIANI, *Teatro nel Rinascimento, Roma 1450-1550*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1983, p. 363.

as the bishop of Scala when he was alive.²⁹

Firenzuola, who had lived with syphilis for years, made an explicit reference to the bishop of Scala that can be understood either as a reference noting that the illness had also affected the bishop of Scala, or to the bishop's homosexuality. The date of this text is unclear, making it difficult to ascertain whether Firenzuola was referring to Baltasar del Río or to his predecessor, a certain Fernando de Castro who came from Cordova, attended the Lateran Council, and was bishop of Scala from 1511 to the year of his abdication in 1515.³⁰ The knowledge of sex life in Rome displayed by Del Río in his *Treatise* makes him a suitable candidate.³¹

«*In the Dangerous Gulf of Princely Courts*»: *Del Río as an Orator and Informant*

In 1541, a sick Del Río reflected on Seneca's thoughts on the brevity of life as he wrote his last will in Seville. He envisioned his upcoming trip to Rome with little strength, and recalling Seneca one more time, he looked for calm, «tired of having spent many years in the dangerous gulf of princely courts».³² Del Río had indeed aimed at earning the favor of dignitaries and rulers with his knowledge and oratorical skills, and had succeeded in doing so up to a certain extent. After hearing his 1512 oration on the *Pasion and Death of Christ*, Cardinal Lorenzo Pucci (1458-1531), then an apostolic datary and a literary and artistic patron, invited Del Río to speak at the V Lateran Council.³³ On the seventh session, held on June 18, 1513, Del Río delivered his oration *De expeditio contra Turchas [sic] ineunda*. It called for restoring the peace among Christian Kingdoms and for organizing a joined expedition led by Ferdinand of Aragon to put an end to the expansion of the Ottoman empire, which at the time posed a serious threat to Hungary and Poland.³⁴ The *oratio*, punctuated by apocalyptic overtones, belongs to a corpus of political texts that since the 1480s had portrayed the Spanish Monarchy as the leading force, first in the Granada War, and later in a “crusade” against the Turks. Del Río's eloquence gained him a number of lucrative benefits, among them a new canonry and an annual pension from the vicariate of the parish of São Miguel de

²⁹ D. Ma. Manni, a cura di D. Romei, *Vita di Angiolo Firenzuola abate vallombrosano*, Banca Dati «Nuovo Rinascimento», 2012, p. 19. Testo elettronico a cura di D. Romei www.nuovorinascimento.org immesso in rete il 26 settembre 2012.

³⁰ G. CAPPELLETTI, *Le chiese d'Italia della loro origine sino ai nostri giorni*, vol. XX, Giuseppe Antonelli, 1866, p. 613.

³¹ It is worth noting that in his will Del Río left alms for a hospital in Seville that specialized in treating patients of syphilis, known in the city as «hospital de las bubas» (literally, the hospital of skin ulceration). ACS Sign. 10024, 9v.

³² ACS Sign. 10024, 4v. The Cordovan Philosopher was often claimed by humanists and writers of Italian or Iberian origin who sided with the Spanish factions at the curia, such as Paolo Pompilio or Francisco Delicado. M. ALBALÁ PELEGRÍN, *Spanish Rome and Roman Spain: Reconstructing the Past of Rome and Cordova in Early Modern Rome*, in *Cultures and Practices of Coexistence from the Thirteenth Through the Seventeenth Centuries: Multi-Ethnic Cities in the Mediterranean World*, I, a cura di M. FOLIN, A. MUSARRA, Milton, Taylor and Francis, 2020, pp. 187–204.

³³ C. J. HERNANDO SÁNCHEZ, *Un tratado español*, p. 194. Lorenzo Pucci sponsored and befriended many artists and men of letters in the curia, including Michelangelo, Raffaello, Rosso Fiorentino, Pietro Bembo, Jacopo Sadoleto, and Erasmus, who dedicated to him his *Annotazioni sulle opere di S. Cipriano* (1519). V. Arrighi, *Pucci, Lorenzo*, in *Dizionario Biografico Degli Italiani*, LXXXV, 2016, [[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lorenzo-pucci_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lorenzo-pucci_(Dizionario-Biografico))].

³⁴ B. DEL RÍO, *De expeditione contra Turchas [sic] ineunda habita Roma(e) in Basilica S. Io. Lateranen() in septima Sesio(e) celebrata. Die XVIII. Iunii. MXDXiii*, Roma, Iacobum Mazochium, 1513, air. C. J. HERNANDO SÁNCHEZ, *Un tratado español*, p. 195.

Torres Vedras, in the diocese of Lisbon. Subsequent promotions would ensue. On October 22, 1515, Pope Leo X consecrated him as bishop of Scala, a promotion that was praised by Bartolomé Torres Naharro.³⁵ Around that time or a little earlier, Del Río was appointed archdeacon of Niebla, a post he reclaimed in 1516. The council of canons of the cathedral of Seville tried to oppose the pope's decision, contending that his father had been condemned and executed by the Inquisition. Resistance to his nomination came from the most radical sector made up of Dominican Inquisitors who traditionally fought any integration of conversos into high ecclesiastical positions. In Seville, Blood Purity statutes, which prevented anyone with Jewish or Muslim ancestry from taking office, had been approved in 1515.³⁶ In spite of his high ecclesiastical position and his powerful connections at the Roman curia, Del Río's relationship with his own diocese, the cathedral of Seville, remained conflictive at times on account of the shifting composition of the council of canons.³⁷ These conflicts did not prevent Del Río from engaging in Seville's cultural life and were no obstacle to his frequent trips from Rome to Seville.³⁸

In addition to his role as orator, Del Río was always attentive to the exchange of information between the curia and the Iberian Peninsula. From his well-connected position, he was able to relate relevant news from the curia to Iberia and from Iberia to the Curia. Among his informants and addressees were Cardinal Cisneros, the Marquis of Tarifa Fadrique Enríquez de Rivera, Charles V, and Pope Clement VII. Del Río's activity is to be situated within that of those agents and informants writing "cartas de nuevas" and sending them to the presses.³⁹ These printed letters anticipated the news genre of *avvisi* and modern journalism.⁴⁰ In 1509 and in his role as secretary to Cardinal Jaime Serra, Del Río translated into Italian a letter recounting the conquest of Oran. The letter had been sent by Jorge de Baracaldo, a secretary to Cardinal Cisneros, to the protonotary and composer Alfonso de Troya, who was

³⁵ The reference to Del Río appears in Naharro's *Capítulo II*, composed in Rome and printed in Naples in 1517 as part of his compilation of works *Propalladia*.

³⁶ J. GIL, *Los conversos*, vol. 2, p. 51.

³⁷ C. J. HERNANDO SÁNCHEZ, *Un tratado español*, p. 197.

³⁸ The reconstruction of Del Río's biography is still fragmentary, and does not allow for a detailed account of his travels. One thing is clear, however: Del Río traveled frequently between the Italian and the Iberian Peninsula, and most often between Rome and Seville. Del Río was in Seville from 1516-1518. At the beginning of 1518, he went back to Rome, to come back to Seville in 1520. During 1521-1522 he was again in Rome. From there, he was sent to communicate to Adrian of Utrecht, then on Iberian soil, his election as pope. In 1529, he was back in Rome; he returned to Seville in 1531, and then back to Rome again in 1540.

³⁹ Pieper calls these letters "cartas de nuevas" while Bulgarelli classifies them as "avvisi a stampa". None of Baltasar's letters figure in Bulgarelli's text, but the titles of the letters contained there are similar to Del Río's letters. T. BULGARELLI, *Gli avvisi a stampa in Roma nel Cinquecento: bibliografia, antologia*, Roma, Istituto di studi romani, 1967; R. PIEPER, *Cartas de nuevas y avisos manuscritos en la época imprenta. Su difusión de noticias sobre América durante el siglo XVI*, «Cuadernos de Historia Moderna. Anejos», IV, 2005, pp. 83-94. For early newspaper pieces and the circulation of information, see B. DOOLEY, *From Literary Criticism to Systems Theory in Early Modern Journalism History*, «Journal of the history of ideas», LI, 1990, 3, pp. 461-486; M. MESERVE, *News from Negroponte: Politics, Popular Opinion, and Information Exchange in the First Decade of the Italian Press*, «Renaissance quarterly», LIX, 2006, 2, pp. 440-480; E. SOLA, *Literatura de avisos e información: por una tipología de una literatura de frontera*, «Les Cahiers de l'ILCEA», XVIII, 2013 [https://journals.openedition.org/ilcea/2047].

⁴⁰ For an assessment of the contributions of the *avvisi* and pasquinades, see G. FRAGNITO, *Rinascimento perduto: la letteratura italiana sotto gli occhi dei censori (secoli XV-XVII)*, Bologna, Società editrice il Mulino, 2019, pp. 245-246; M. ROSPOCHER, *L'invenzione delle notizie? Informazione e comunicazione nell'Europa moderna*, «Storica», LXIV, 2016, pp. 95-115; U. ROZZO, *La strage ignorata: i fogli volanti a stampa nell'Italia dei secoli XV e XVI*, Udine, Forum, 2008. For Del Río's letter, see: R. C. GONZALO GARCÍA, M. FERNÁNDEZ VALLADARES, *La Carta de Cisneros sobre la Toma de Orán (1509) y la difusión de la victoria en Italia por Baltasar del Río: más relaciones post-incunables recuperadas*, pp. 427-429.

also serving as an agent of Cisneros in Rome.⁴¹ In the Italian translation, Del Río stated his interest in reaching a wide audience of diplomats and Italian noblemen in Rome, so that the news of Oran's capitulation might arrive to all the corners of Christendom. «The things of Spain are so worthy of praise», Del Río claimed, that not communicating them «would show a great cruelty and little love towards other [Christian] nations, which are eager to learn about new things».⁴² It is evident that Del Río's translation also aimed, among other goals, at promoting in the curia the North African campaigns of Ferdinand of Aragon and Cardinal Cisneros.⁴³

About ten years later, Del Río addressed Charles V and Castilian notables in a number of private and public documents often dealing with the propagation of Lutheranism. On May 17, 1521, he was present in one of the gatherings or “spiritual banquets” that the Cardinal of Santa Croce, Bernardino de Carvajal, regularly hosted after lunch.⁴⁴ Del Río took the lead in memorializing the gathering and had it sent to the press. The printed leaflet contained a letter from Charles V and Carvajal's response to it, precisely the discourse he gave at the gathering, as well as a preface authored by Del Río.⁴⁵ The preface, punctuated by the use of maxims from Seneca's works, described how Carvajal responded to the letter that Charles V had sent to Rome on April 19, 1521 against the Lutheran “heresy”. Del Río informed that the letter was read with great satisfaction at the college of cardinals on May 10, and discussed at Carvajal's gathering a week later.⁴⁶ Carvajal made use of his historical and scholastic knowledge to congratulate Charles V on his condemnation of Luther and his encouragement to direct his efforts to the “Turkish menace”. The meeting was attended, among other participants, by Giovanni Battista Bonciani, bishop of Caserta, and Tommaso de Nigris, bishop of Scardona, for whom the stakes against Martin Luther and the Ottoman expansion were high.⁴⁷

⁴¹ For a consideration of Del Río as one of the agents in what has been called the “círculo cisneriano”, see C. J. HERNANDO SÁNCHEZ, *Un tratado español*, p. 194.

⁴² *Noua Lettera de la presa de la Cipta de Orano in Affrica [...]*, [Roma?, s.n. 1509], 1v.

⁴³ For a contextualization of the letter, see M. I. HERNÁNDEZ GONZÁLEZ, *El taller historiográfico: Cartas de Relación de la conquista de Orán (1509) y textos afines*, London, Queen Mary and Westfield College, 1997, p. 16.

⁴⁴ Paolo Cortesi described in his *De Cardinalatu* the readings “post prandium” that usually took place in Carvajal's household. These consisted of a type of discourse called *acroamaticon*, of a primarily theological nature, which summarized arguments in a dialectical fashion. P. Cortesi, *Pauli Cortesii Protonotarii Apostolici De Cardinalatu libri tres* (Castro Cortesio, 1510), lxviii and M. ALBALÁ PELEGRÍN, *Humanism and Spanish Literary Patronage at the Roman Curia*, pp. 23–24.

⁴⁵ B. López de Carvajal, B. del Río and Charles V, *Epistola reverendiss. domini car. s. [Crucis] ad inuictis Carolu[m] in Imp. E. Sup. Declaratione M. Suae Co[n]tra Luth. facta* [Roma, s.n. 1521], 1v-2r. In the preface, Del Río declared to be following the maxims of Seneca, as he would do in his last will, 1r-1v.

⁴⁶ Ivi, 1v-2r. The leaflet was printed on June 6. Del Río dedicated this edition to the Duke of Sessa, Luis Fernández de Córdoba.

⁴⁷ For the bishop of Caserta Giovanni Battista Bonciani, the advance of Lutheranism might involve losing one of his recently acquired benefices, a canonry (canonicato) at the cathedral of Münster, a benefice that was contested there. See, P. BALAN, *Monumenta Reformationis Lutheranae. Ex Tabulariis Secretioribus S. Sedis. 1521-1525.*, Ratisbona, S. Sedis Apostolicae Typographi, 1884, p. 48; I. CERVELLI, *Bonciani, Giovanni Battista*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. XI, 1969 [[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-battista-bonciani_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-battista-bonciani_(Dizionario-Biografico))]. The bishop of Scardona, Tommaso de Nigris, was concerned about the Ottoman expansion. At the fifth Lateran council (1512), he had spoken harshly against the Ottoman conquests and, particularly, about the crimes against the citizens of Split. Nigris held diplomatic missions in Venice, Zagreb and Hungary, as secretary to the archbishop of Split. He spent years appealing to the pope, the emperor, and other rulers, elaborating on the difficult position of Croatia and the need for a crusade against the Turks. He held other ties with Carvajal, as he was in charge of teaching the catechism to the diplomat and geographer al-Hassan ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Wazzan, Leo Africanus. Carvajal, together with Leo X, Cardinal Lorenzo

On January 1522, in his capacity as *nuncio* of the college of cardinals, Del Río was elected to communicate to Adrian of Utrecht, the confessor to Charles V, his election to the papal See.⁴⁸ Adrian was in Spain, and by the time Del Río arrived, another messenger, Blas de Ortíz, had gotten there first. On March 7, Del Río wrote to Charles V from Zaragoza to congratulate him for the election.⁴⁹ He also noted the reasons that had prevented him from communicating the news earlier. He had been detained at sea and robbed by French troops. Hoping for compensation, Del Río reminded the emperor of his faithful service. Assault and detention had cost him “great travails and money, although [he] suffered them with great respect”.⁵⁰

On October 20, 1530, Del Río addressed to the Marquis of Tarifa, Fadrique Enríquez de Rivera, a first-hand narration of the calamities that occurred during the recent flooding of Rome. The letter ended with a note on the advance of Lutheranism. Del Río had spent some time in Rome with Enríquez de Rivera when he visited the city in 1520.⁵¹ A copy of the letter was printed in Burgos by Juan de Junta a few months later. This letter gave readers a wealth of information regarding the damage caused by the flood, how it affected several cardinals’ palaces, the safety of the pope, and that of Baltasar himself. From his actual residence in the house which used to be that of Giovanni Battista Pallavicino, Del Río rode to Monte Cavallo (the Quirinal), where the Cardinal of Bologna lived, and joined the Cardinal of Osma, García de Loaysa y Mendoza, who was staying there. Many of the Spaniards, about a thousand men and five hundred women who were affected by the flood, sought refuge in another house that belonged to the Cardinal of Bologna in Campo de’ Fiori.⁵² The letter not only described in detail the catastrophic event, and how it affected dignitaries and the Spanish community, but also reinterpreted the natural calamity in a political and spiritual key. It compared the present flooding with that occurred at the time of «the unfortunate pontiff» Pelagius, «when, because of Arius’ heresy, the ship of San Peter was sinking in waves similar to the ones now caused by Luther». ⁵³ It was also a denunciation of ongoing internecine turmoil, as Del Río closed the letter informing Enríquez de Rivera that the duke of Saxe-Lauenburg (Magnus I) had just turned Lutheran, just as, in the Spanish past of centuries ago, the Visigoth King Leovigild had

Pucci and Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo had acted as godfathers in al-Wazzan’s most likely forced Christian baptism that took place in Rome on January 6, 1520. See, N. ZEMON DAVIS, *Trickster travels: a sixteenth-century Muslim between worlds*, New York, Hill and Wang, 2006, pp. 63–64.

⁴⁸ L. VON PASTOR, *Storia dei papi dalla fine del Medio Evo [...] vol. IV. II. Storia dei papi nel periodo del Rinascimento e dello scisma luterano dall’elezione di Leone X alla morte di Clemente VII (1513-1534)*, Roma, Desclée [DCPUBLISHER], 1929, pp. 19–20.

⁴⁹ T. DE AZCONA, *El privilegio de presentación de obispos en España concedido por tres papas al emperador Carlos V (1523-1536)*, «Anuario de historia de la Iglesia», XXVI, 2017, pp. 185–215, p. 188. The election of Adrian as pontiff had a strong impact among Roman and Italian prelates, which feared the increased power of Charles V, not only in the empire but also on spiritual matters. L. VON PASTOR, *Storia dei papi*, p. 19. Baltasar del Río shared these thoughts, but for him it was a motif of celebration rather than sorrow. In the letter he sent to the emperor he used the evangelical quote: “Pater in me et ego in Patre”, “so that your Majesty is now in the Holy Father and the saint father is in the Cesarean majesty”. BRAH, *Colección Salazar y Castro*, A-24, f. 36

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵¹ *Traslado de dos cartas que embiaron al muy illustre señor el marqués de Tarifa. Una que embio de Roma el muy reverendo y magnifico señor don Baltasar del Río, obispo de Escala, maestro de cerimonias de nuestro muy Santo Padre, en que recuenta mas por entero todo lo que en el espantoso diluvio acaecio. Y la otra que le embiaron de Portugal, en que le hazen relación del muy espantoso y estraño terremoto y temerosas señales de gran admiración que fue y se vieron en la mar y en la tierra* [Burgos: Juan de Junta, 1531], aiv-air. In this letter, Del Río is credited as the pope’s master of ceremonies. He was also probably a governor of the city, a title that he held for a short time. C. J. HERNANDO SÁNCHEZ, *Un tratado español*, p. 199.

⁵² *Traslado de dos cartas*, aair.

⁵³ Ivi, aiiiv.

become an Arian. The letter can also be read as an indirect piece of advice for the emperor on how to proceed next with the Lutheran “heresy”.⁵⁴

On January 28, 1534, Baltasar sent a letter to Clement VII from Seville, informing the pope of the arrival of the first ship carrying gold and silver from Perú, and denouncing the inappropriate seizing of riches by those involved in the conquest. The letter is preserved in a leaflet printed in Rome, titled *Copia de una lettera mandata alla S. N. S. delle ricchezze e thesoro ritrovato in India*.⁵⁵ Del Río both described the quantity and weight of boxes of gold and silver that had gone to the “Casa de la contratación” or Customs, after having been carried from one of Francisco de Pizarro’s ships to a small Cordovan boat. The treasure was such that Sevillian citizens hurried to the port to see the huge pieces of gold, among which an idol «big as a six-year-old child», two medium-size gilded drums, and a silver eagle. Captains, soldiers, and factors, Del Río notes, had all taken more than they should, leaving Charles V with much less than he had agreed on. The letter ended informing the pope that, should Charles V not intervene, the whole province of Andalusia will multiply its population so greatly that “the wealth of the newly found Indies will be diminished”.⁵⁶

It is unclear why Del Río overstated the wealth coming from Perú and understated the part that Charles V would receive. In any case, Clement VII was glad to receive this information. The pope congratulated the bishop on March 25, 1534, for the news he had sent about the new discoveries.⁵⁷ Del Río may have had first-hand information about the Viceroyalty of Peru, as some of his family members may have embarked in Pizarro’s ships.⁵⁸ In Seville, he also had befriended the Genoese shipmaster Franco Leardo, who, as we will see, participated in the poetic contests organized by Del Río. His interest in the New World could run deeper than what is attested by extant writings. Del Río’s chapel in Seville, to which I will refer shortly, contained objects from the Americas, including a feather “from the Indies” displayed on the altar together with other objects (a tiara, a host box, a perfume container, and several angels) made from silver and gold, perhaps from Peru.⁵⁹ A year before the letter, on February 2, 1533, a petition by Del Río to bring to Spain six male and three female natives to instruct them in the Catholic faith was approved and signed by the queen in Madrid. The document stated that the natives had to be free and come by their own will. Until further documentation appears, this episode opens more questions than answers: What was the extent of Del Río’s interest in the Americas? Did these individuals make it to Seville? How were they instructed in the Catholic faith? Did they become members of Del Río’s confraternity? What were the circumstances regarding their trip? Did they really embark, if ever, of their own will?

⁵⁴ Ivi, aivr. The relationship between Del Río and Enríquez de Rivera must have been close. Del Río recognized him as his lord in his last will, and named him executor of his will, were he to die in Seville. ACS Sign. 10024, 10r-10v.

⁵⁵ B. del Río, *Copia de una lettera di Mosignor Vescovo della Schala mandata alla S. di N. S. della ricchezze thesoro novamente ritrovato i() India cõ() la Armata della Cesarea Maesta. Et particolarmente di loro argento mã()dato ala Citta di Sevilla*. (Data in Sevilla alli XXVIII. de Gienaro 1534.). [Rome] (1534)

⁵⁶ Ivi, a ivr.

⁵⁷ Regarding Pope Clement VII’s answer, see L. VON PASTOR, *Storia dei papi*, vol. IV, p. 533; J. GIL, *Los conversos*, vol. II, p. 57. I was unable to consult the papal brief in which Clement VII congratulated Del Río. According to Pastor, the brief is incorrectly placed in volume 46, dating to 1533, and its actual date is March 25, 1534. In it, Clement VII thanks Del Río for the news about the new discoveries, considering them important for the increasing of the faith, «Agimus igitur Deo omnipotenti gratias quod in dies temporibus nostris illud propheticum implere dignatur: In omnem terram ex. son. eorum». Juan Gil considered Clement VII’s reply directly related to Del Río’s printed letter. However, Pastor’s summary of the reply seems to be referring either to another letter by Del Río or to a longer manuscript letter of which the printed letter was only a part.

⁵⁸ AGI, Contratación, 5536, L.2, F.175, 3.

⁵⁹ ACS Sign. 10024, 8r-9v.

As we have seen, Del Río's role in disseminating news was intrinsically linked to his desire to share information that might result in political action. His letters contained abundant details, were often peppered with funny anecdotes, and ended on a change of the initial subject that led those receiving them (and readers going through the printed editions) to look upon a particular problem that needed to be addressed.

Literary and Ecclesiastical Patronage: Poetic Competitions in Seville

Thanks to the privileges Del Río acquired in Rome, he was able to obtain a chapel for his own burial in the cathedral of Seville, known still today as the Chapel of Scala. Although Del Río's intentions to be buried in his chapel never materialized, its funerary monument is still tied to Del Río's image today.⁶⁰ The chapel hosted a confraternity funded by Del Río, the *Confraternity of our Lady of Consolation and of the Twelve Apostles (de la Consolación y de los doce apóstoles)*, whose major aim was to assert the social and spiritual position of his members, most of them of converso origin.⁶¹ In owning a private chapel, Del Río followed an increasingly fashionable trend among distinguished prelates and those rich enough who worked in the papal curia in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century.⁶² The phenomenon extended beyond Rome to other cities in which capital flowed, such as Florence, as well as the native cities of high-ranking churchmen, noblemen, and merchants who decided to return to their places of origin. Leaving a mark on a sacred space attested to both the spiritual and earthly achievements of one's life. In the Iberian Peninsula, Seville was becoming a crucial center of commerce. Favored by its unique position in the Transatlantic trade, the city was undergoing economic growth and a rapid increase in the endowment of chapels and chaplaincies by city merchants and wealthy noblemen and noblewomen. Conversos who had climbed to high social, political, and religious ranks seized the opportunity to buy their entrance into the nobility or literally inscribe their spirituality into their sepulchers and in sacred walls.⁶³ In the cathedral of Seville alone, over ten new chaplaincies were endowed by men and women of converso origin during the sixteenth century. They were often accompanied by family burials, inscriptions, and a customized number of prayers for the souls of the deceased that made converso names resound proudly within its walls.⁶⁴ Private chapels

⁶⁰ Del Río's will bears witness to the importance that he assigned to his burial place. He instructed his servants on how to dispose of his body, were he to die in Rome. They were to take out all the internal organs and bury them on a nearby church. After preserving the rest of the body, they were to prepare it and bring his remains to Seville. This should be done with the utmost secret and without declaring to anyone what they were transporting. Del Río's fear was well founded. It was widely known that during the long journey villagers would often steal the body, thinking that they were transporting the relics of a saint. See P. J. GEARY, *Furta sacra: thefts of relics in the central Middle Ages*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1978. Although the study deals with the Middle Ages, thefts of bodies continued well into the early modern period. According to Del Río's instruction, if they were unable to mummify his body, they should bring just the bones to be deposited in the mausoleum he had built in Seville. ACS Sign. 10024 6r-v. Del Río's will, however, was not carried out, and he is buried together with his brother, in the Church of Santiago de los españoles in Rome.

⁶¹ For an analysis of the chapel, see T. FALCÓN MÁRQUEZ, *Baltasar del Río, Obispo de Scala, y su capilla en la Catedral de Sevilla*, in *Patronos y modelos en las relaciones entre Andalucía, Roma y el Sur de Italia*, Málaga, Universidad de Málaga, 2012, pp. 59–89.

⁶² J. MARA DESILVA, *Appropriating Sacred Space: Private Chapel Patronage and Institutional Identity in Sixteenth-Century Rome. The Case of the Office of Ceremonies*, «The Catholic historical review», XCVII, 2011, 4, pp. 653–678, p. 657.

⁶³ For the case of the funerary chapel of the Contador Saldaña in Valladolid, see NICOLA JENNINGS, *The Chapel of Contador Saldaña at Santa Clara de Tordesillas and the Fashioning of a Noble Identity by an Early Fifteenth-Century Converso*, «Hispanic research journal», XVII, 2016, 5, pp. 363–383, pp. 363–364.

⁶⁴ JUAN GIL, *Los conversos*, vol. II, pp. 22–37.

could serve to extend the patron's identity, carve an institutional image and assert the owner's position in the social and spiritual hierarchy of the city. In the case of conversos, to endow and participate in the religious ceremonies of a confraternity, often associated with a chapel, was a way to publicly manifest religious beliefs and claim nobility; in brief, their civic and religious behavior, sincere or simulated, were ultimately aimed at reinforcing converso presence and voices within the spiritual life of the city.

Baltasar del Río was not the first converso to establish a confraternity in the cathedral. The apostolic protonotary micer García de Gibraleón, a contemporary of Del Río whose father had also been burnt at the stake, had already acquired a private chapel for his burial and established the *Confraternity of the Annunciation* or *Confraternity of the Maidens* (de las doncellas).⁶⁵ The confraternity helped poor maidens of married age, most of them also of converso origin, by providing money for their dowries. Del Río's confraternity took the lead in feeding the poor, allowing for wealthy *conversos* to carve a pious image of themselves. For this purpose, Del Río urged Lorenzo Pucci, then Cardinal bishop of Palestrina, to bestow upon it a series of privileges, some of them aimed at enabling *conversos* to join the clergy. Among other things, the privileges approved on June 12, 1532 allowed the prior and the chaplain to absolve of all sins except those reserved the Holy See; most importantly, the "familiares" and servants of the chapel would be able to join the clergy even if they were born out of wedlock or from parents convicted by the Inquisition.⁶⁶ This particular privilege sought to counteract the Blood Purity statutes, promulgated in 1515 by the council of the cathedral of Seville, which prevented *conversos* from taking on ecclesiastical positions. Del Río's confraternity was a safe haven through which confraternity members and servants of *converso* origin could become part of the clergy. Whoever tried to go against these privileges would have to face Baltasar del Río or the Holy See directly.⁶⁷

Soon enough, the confraternity counted with some of the most distinguished converso members of the city. Both men and women could join, although married couples counted as a single member. Its popularity, as well as Baltasar's status, was certainly high when in 1537 King Charles V and Isabel of Portugal became its effective members.⁶⁸

Baltasar del Río's confraternity had a strong presence in Seville's cultural life. By the end of 1531, Del Río created a bi-annual poetical competition that was to become an important event in Seville beyond Del Río's lifetime, enjoying a lasting popularity well into the eighteenth century.⁶⁹ There are several sources that allow us to reconstruct the competition,

⁶⁵ Ivi, pp. 37–38; JOSÉ ANTONIO OLLERO PINA, *Micer García de Gibraleón († 1534), an ecclesiastical broker in Renaissance Rome*, «Hispania (Madrid)», LXXVI, 2016, pp. 356–357. Baltasar del Río clearly recognized the ties between both converso institutions. In his last will, the *Cofradía de las Doncellas* was the only confraternity besides his own to which Baltasar del Río left alms. ACS Sign. 10024, 9v.

⁶⁶ J. GIL, *Los conversos*, vol. II, pp. 55–56. Other privileges included that on exceptional occasions the priest could celebrate two masses on the same day. The confraternity could celebrate four times a year, both inside and outside the church, a procession carrying the sacred host in a transparent tabernacle, enjoying the same privileges that one could obtain by attending the procession on the feast of the Corpus Christi.

⁶⁷ Ivi, p. 56. The enforcement of those principles was entrusted to the *ministro* or prelate of the Monastery of the Trinidad, the prior of the Monastery of Santa María de las Cuevas, and the *official* or *provisor* of Cordova.

⁶⁸ J. GIL, *Los conversos*, vol. II, pp. 56–57. «Que la dicha cofradía sea de número de quatroçientos cofrades, contando marido y muger por uno solo de los que fuesen casados». Other notable members of the confraternity were the archbishop of Seville, Alonso Manrique, and the duke of Medina Sidonia, Juan Alonso Pérez de Guzmán.

⁶⁹ F. COLLANTES DE TERÁN Y DELORME, *La capilla de escalas en la Santa Metropolitana y Patriarcal Iglesia de Sevilla*, Sevilla, Tipografía de C. Torres y Daza, 1890, p. 112.

among them the compilations of selected poems from the contests, printed in Seville in 1531, 1532, 1533, 1534 and 1541, and a copy of the confraternity statutes, dating from 1545.⁷⁰

The title page of the printed chapbooks usually bore a woodcut portraying the chosen saint, indications about where and when the competition took place, and, sometimes, a coat of arms.⁷¹ For every competition, the confraternity's chaplain chose a female or male saint to be honored.⁷² Students could participate in three categories: delivering and oration in Latin, presenting Latin epigrams, or vernacular verse ("coplas"). Soon other participants were allowed to join as well. It is difficult to ascertain, however, what were the practices that inspired Del Río's poetic competitions, from among the many that may have witnessed or heard about. Literary sodalities in late 15th- and the early 16th-century Rome were few but important. Poets often met in gardens, lauded statues, and shared their compositions to celebrate special occasions. Among them, one can name the informal gatherings of the Pomponian Academy, which after the imprisonment and release of some of its members was re-founded as a religious sodality in 1470, and which is said to have featured competitions for students.⁷³ Other examples were the circle of poets around Paolo Cortesi or Angelo Colocci. Some of these literary groups revolved around cardinal households and gardens, such as the one that Del Río's friend Lorenzo Pucci used to hold in his Olive villa.⁷⁴

Other competitions were celebrated in the vicinity of a university, as those of the feast of Saint Mark (April 25) and the one of Pasquino, celebrated in the neighborhood of Parione. Students from the adjacent *Studium Urbis* and occasional poets wrote compositions based on the costume and identity selected for Pasquino that year. Starting in 1509 and almost every year, a volume of selected *carmina* was printed after Pasquino's feast. This enabled a certain

⁷⁰ The statutes of 119 early modern confraternities, based chiefly in Seville, can be consulted in J. SÁNCHEZ HERRERO, S. M. PÉREZ GONZÁLEZ, *CXIX reglas de hermandades y cofradías andaluzas: siglos XIV, XV y XVI*, Universidad de Huelva, 2002. Through this comparison, Del Río's confraternity stands out for its focus on literary competitions and musical performances. It also conceded great importance to the celebration of the Epiphany and the biannual proclamation of indulgences. See, J. C. ARBOLEDA GOLDARACENA, *La religiosidad de las cofradías en la Sevilla de los siglos XIV al XVI: sacramentos, ciclo litúrgico y prácticas devocionales*, «Historia Instituciones Documentos», XLIII, 2016, pp. 11-30, pp. 18, 22-23. The confraternity's statutes declared that every day during Easter the person with the most beautiful voice should sing a villancico before the *Benedicamus*. The unusual nature of these practices seems to have called the attention of a 17th-century reader. JUAN GIL, *Los conversos*, vol. II, pp. 59, 92.

⁷¹ The title page of the 1531-1532 edition had in its center an image of John the Evangelist, the saint honored on this occasion. Decorative woodcut blocks with Renaissance motifs, reminiscent of the style of the carvings of Del Río's funerary monument, framed the image of the saint. Baltasar del Río's coat of arms as bishop of Scala was placed between two pillars at the bottom of the page. The competition was celebrated on the first day of December. The 1532 woodcut bore the coat of arms of the archbishop. The 1532-1533 leaflet contained a woodcut with the coats of arms of the pope, Charles V, and Del Río as bishop of Scala. The one of 1533-1534 included some editorial innovations: the figures representing the chosen saints, Saint Paul and Saint Catherine, were accompanied by an image of the Virgin Mary with the cathedral belltower of Seville. There figured also the coats of arms of the pope and Charles V, as well as that of Del Río, placed in the *colophon*.

⁷² ACS. Sign. 1011. 263, 11v. *Estatutos y ordenanzas de la capilla de Escalas*, dated December 20, 1545.

⁷³ K. CHRISTIAN, *Empire Without End*, p. 129. In 1441, Leon Battista Alberti organized a *Certame Coronario* to show that poetry in the vernacular deserved the same recognition as the one written in Latin. See L. BERTOLINI, *De vera amicitia: i testi del primo Certame coronario*, Modena, Panini, 1993. In the fifteenth century, the poet Enrique de Villena organized a poetic competition in Barcelona. J. F. ALCINA ROVIRA, *La poesía latina del humanismo español: un esbozo*, in *Los humanistas españoles y el humanismo europeo: IV Simposio de Filología Clásica*, Servicio de Publicaciones, 1990, p. 27.

⁷⁴ S. P. REVARD, *Lampridio and the Poetic Sodalities in Rome in the 1510s and 1520s*, in *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Bariensis: Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Bari, 29 August to 3 September, 1994*, a cura di J. ALCINA ROVIRA, R. SCHNUR, (*Medieval & Renaissance texts & studies; v. 184*), Tempe, AZ, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998, pp. 506-507.

sense of competition for students, as those who excelled in their poetry were honored with the publication of their poems.⁷⁵ The same happened with Del Río's poetical competitions starting in 1531. It is noteworthy that in 1541, immediately after Del Río's death, the chapbook's woodcut honored the bishop, much in consonance with the *Carmina* dedicated to Pasquino (in 1511, the year of cardinal Carafa's death, the woodcut portrayed Pasquino dressed in black clothing, in sing of mourn).⁷⁶

Another important circle of poets congregated since 1512 around the figure of the apostolic protonotary Johann Goritz to praise the statue of Saint Anne. Poets met on Saint Anne's day (July 26) near the Church of Saint Augustine, and appended poems near the statue.⁷⁷

Other Roman gatherings centered around the production of discourses in Latin, such as the one taking place in the household of Bernardino de Carvajal, in which, as we have seen, Del Río had also participated. Discourses and Latin delivery were part as well of Del Río's poetic competitions.⁷⁸

In Del Río's lifetime, the poetic competitions took place in different locations. In 1531-1532, they were celebrated in the palace of the archbishop Alonso de Manrique, recently created a cardinal. In 1533-1544 they took place in the palace of the Duke of Béjar, where Baltasar lived. Dates also changed. Initially they happened on the first day of December and on the first Sunday of January after the Epiphany.⁷⁹ The preface to the printed volume of the first competition made reference to the intentions behind the establishment of the contest.⁸⁰ It was primarily founded to encourage, through public recognition and awards, young students

⁷⁵ M. SPAGNOLO, *Pasquino in piazza*, pp. 27–30. As Spagnolo has noted, the first feasts of Pasquino involved students, occasional poets, booksellers, copyists, prelates, shopkeepers, and humanists linked to the Parione neighborhood. This helps us to understand how much these celebrations could have had in common with the poetic competitions organized by Del Río, which also had an educational and scholastic aim, and sought to foster Seville's cultural life and the education of young students.

⁷⁶ Ivi, p. 28. The practice of printing a woodcut bearing the honored saint in Del Río's competitions somehow resembles the practice of printing the *Carmina* dedicated to Pasquino, in which the statue appeared dressed as a mythological or historical character: Janus in 1509, Hercules killing the Hydra in 1510, etc.

⁷⁷ Ivi, p. 29. It is important to note that both the celebration of Pasquino and that of the Goritz circle revolved around Saint Mark and Saint Anne respectively, something that brings them closer to the custom in Del Río's competition of choosing a saint to be honored. Johann Goritz's literary circle also produced a compilation of works. Although one might say that Del Río's competition shared the dissemination strategies of these Roman literary circles up to a certain extent, it is important to note a significant difference in the nature of the texts disseminated. The compositions for the feasts of Saint Mark and Saint Anne were written mostly in Latin, and only a few vernacular verses are preserved connected with those celebrations. The leaflets printed after Del Río's poetical competitions contained almost exclusively Castilian verse. Although Del Río's poetic competitions focused on the production of Latin discourses and epigrams, these works were left mostly unpublished, in part because of their poor quality.

⁷⁸ In addition to these influences, confraternities, guilds and literary circles beyond Rome and Seville of which Del Río may have heard established literary competitions for students and guild members. For a comparative study of learned societies, see A. VAN DIXHOORN, S. SPEAKMAN SUTCH, *The Reach of the Republic of Letters. Literary and Learned Societies in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, vol. I, Boston, Brill, 2008.

⁷⁹ J. PASCUAL BAREA, *Los certámenes de poesía latina en la España del Renacimiento*, in *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Budapestinensis*, a cura di K. ENENKEL, et alii (*Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies*), Arizona, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 2010, p. 1. In subsequent years after their establishment, they were celebrated coinciding with the festivities in honor of Saint Peter and Saint Paul (June 29), Saint Andrew (November 30), Saint Jerome (in 1549) etc. The celebration of Saint Peter and Saint Paul was certainly exploited on the Confraternity's behalf. Among the relics that Del Río had acquired in Rome for his Sevillian Chapel were pieces of bones allegedly belonging to Saint Peter and Saint Paul. They came from the Church of Santa Maria del Popolo, together with others bones from some evangelists, Saint Catherine and Saint Bibiana. See F. COLLANTES DE TERÁN Y DELORME, *La capilla de escalas en la Santa Metropolitana y Patriarcal Iglesia de Sevilla*, pp. 66–67.

⁸⁰ S. MONTOTO (a cura di), *Justas poéticas sevillanas del siglo XVI (1531-1542)*, Valencia, Castalia, 1955, p. 35.

of rhetoric and poetry from the colleges of Santa María de Jesús and Santo Tomás. By participating in the contest, students had the opportunity to be noticed by the archbishop, as well as by important prelates and notables of the city. It was viewed as a decisive opportunity to show their knowledge and oratorical skills, which were essential requirements for future employment. The literary event brought together distinguished citizens, judges, and theologians, who passed judgment on the poems and the students' recitations in order to cast their votes.

After the first competition, a different type of awards was reserved for poets of any age, degree, status, gender, and condition. Their participation was aimed at improving the quality of the Latin epigrams with an eye on their publication.

In the printed editions of the competitions, and most likely to avoid conflict but also as a playful subterfuge for the readers, printers decided not to signal the winners of the published Castilian poems, so that readers may judge and claim their favorites. It is noteworthy that most of the compositions selected for publication were composed in Castilian, mostly by Sevillian poets. Many of the discourses and epigrams composed by students or poets never made it into print. The students who won in those categories received a mention in the chapbooks. However, their compositions remained for the most part unpublished, and, according to the leaflets, were preserved in the Confraternity's coffer.⁸¹

Although the compilations were published only once, a selection of the poems there contained enjoyed greater circulation when they were included in the 1535 edition of the *Cancionero General*, originally published by its compiler Hernando del Castillo in 1511. In this edition, several poems from the 1531-1534 competitions were featured in a new section entitled «obras devotas», that came to replace that of «obras de burlas», or burlesque and satiric poetry, which featured in earlier editions of the *Cancionero*. In the new section, Baltasar del Río received credit as the founder of the competitions.

Besides fostering the production of devotional poetry, these were maybe the first recurrent poetic competitions in Latin that took place in the kingdom of Castile, and it is most likely that they served as inspiration for other cities such as Alcalá de Henares.⁸² While in Seville, Del Río traveled to the University of Alcalá. On November 13, 1532 he was among the attendees in the graduation of Agustín de Cazalla.⁸³ Cazalla, who was most likely of *converso* origin, would become the famous ill-fated preacher of Charles V.⁸⁴

The 1545 charters of the confraternity provided additional information about the functioning of the competitions, which might reflect earlier practices. About twenty days before, posters were to be hanged in places of the city in which people were likely to see

⁸¹ I have been unable to find these poems. However, at the ACS there is a codex with epigrams dating back to 1549. It is worth noting that in these Latin texts, as is also the case with the few epigrams printed in the chapbooks originating in the poetic competitions, mythological and ancient references are abundant. This is in stark contrast with the mostly Castilian devotional verses printed there.

⁸² J. PASCUAL BAREA, *Los certámenes de poesía latina*, pp. 2, 7–8. Interestingly, many of the participants in the poetic contest of Alcalá de Henares, which was most likely inspired by Del Río's competitions, were of *converso* origin. Among the winners could have been Catalina Pérez, who according to García Matamoros was the only woman to have won numerous prizes for her Latin poems in Seville and Alcalá de Henares.

⁸³ R. RAMIS BARCELÓ, P. RAMIS SERRA, *Actos y grados de la Universidad de Alcalá (1523-1544)*, Madrid, Dykinson, 2020, pp. 51, 227.

⁸⁴ Cazalla was sentenced to death in 1559. He died in an *Auto de Fe* in Valladolid, together with other family members and collaborators accused of heresy and Lutheranism. Charles V, already retired in Yuste, asked his daughter Juana, then acting as a regent, to treat Cazalla and his allies as political prisoners. J. BURRIERA SÁNCHEZ, *Cazalla Vivero, Agustín de., c 1510-1559*, in *Diccionario biográfico español. Real Academia Española* [<http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/14735/agustin-de-cazalla-vivero>].

them.⁸⁵ The confraternity charters also established that several days before the event, all poems were to be reviewed by a theologian to make sure that none of them contained views and opinions that could be construed against the Catholic faith. Poetic competitions could take place at the “alholí”, the house in which the confraternity stored the wheat.⁸⁶

The poems of these learned men and women reveal a wealth of information on the motivations behind Del Río’s initiatives. One of them was to promote the pronunciation of Latin in the way it was spoken in Rome. In a Latin epigram composed for the 1532 poetic competition, Franco Leardo, a Genoese banker and poet who had settled in Seville, praised the bishop’s attempts at encouraging young students to improve their Latin phonetics. «How useful, good shepherd, your spectacles are to the people», Leardo noted. By participating in the competitions and striving for their laurels, students «became learned (euadent docti) and learn Latin». The Genoese banker further referred to the ongoing debate on the best pronunciation of Latin and agreed with Del Río’s belief that the Latin spoken in the Latium, and consequently in Rome, had suffered less corruption through the centuries.⁸⁷ Following Leardo’s poem, a Latin *carmen* of a certain Miguel de Soto, greeted Del Río for having brought the springs of Minerva to Seville, taking care of the cultivation of Latin among the youth.⁸⁸

These Latin compositions allow us to reconstruct the social dynamics of the competitions, in which learned poets, and especially those with a command of Latin, ended up serving as models and encouraging students in their attempts. The pronunciation that Leardo was referring to, also mentioned by de Soto, would have been the one that they would have used when delivering their Latin compositions. Further social dynamics that bring us back to early sixteenth century Seville could be traced in the devotional vernacular compositions written in honor of the saint celebrated in the competition. In them, the conflation of past and present became notorious. To name just a few, the Bachiller of Céspedes made ample use of mining and commercial metaphors when praising Saint John in a 1531 vernacular composition. The golden eagle, symbol of the evangelist, was the treasure of a high mine, while the «casa de la contratación» became the place in which King Solomon registered his wealth, a clear sign of the importance that mining and the Sevillian institution that acted as Customs had in the

⁸⁵ The flyers announcing the competition contained information about the precise date and the saint that would be honored. They also specified the types of composition (*oratio*, epigram or Castilian verses or “coplas”) in Latin and Castilian, as well as the type of awards. S. MONTOTO, *Estudio preliminar*, in *Justas Poéticas Sevillanas del siglo XVI (1531-1542). Reimpresas por vez primera del ejemplar único, con un estudio preliminar de Santiago Montoto.*, Valencia, Castalia, 1955, p. XIV. Del Río established a printing press in Seville in which pamphlets were printed. These contained, among other news, information about fundraising campaigns for the confraternity and other causes. These pamphlets featured elegant gothic characters, and were returned with the quantities collected annotated on the back. It is very likely that some of the flyers regarding the poetic contests were printed there as well. F. COLLANTES DE TERÁN Y DELORME, *La capilla de escalas en la Santa Metropolitana y Patriarcal Iglesia de Sevilla*, p. 58.

⁸⁶ ACS, Sign. 1011. 263. *Statutes and ordinances of the chapel of Scalas*, 11v. See also J. GIL, *Los conversos*, vol. II, p. 59.

⁸⁷ J. PASCUAL BAREA, *Le banquier génois Franco Leardo, un poète latin de Séville dans la première moitié du XVIème siècle*, in *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Bariensis*, a cura di E SCHUR, et alii, Arizona, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1998, p. 481. In the poem, Leardo noted how Iberian pronunciation of Latin had been corrupted, and praised Del Río for trying to impose the one spoken in the Latium, even though Spanish pupils often went back to their local pronunciation. See S. MONTOTO (a cura di), *Justas poéticas*, pp. 127–128.

⁸⁸ S. MONTOTO (a cura di), *Justas poéticas*, pp. 129–130.

minds of Céspedes' contemporaries.⁸⁹ Diego Quirós likened Saint John's labor to that of a chronicler («coronista»), and a certain priest portrayed the evangelist as a lieutenant of God.⁹⁰

The leaflets printed after the literary competitions also serve to trace who were the local poets of Seville around 1531-1541.⁹¹ Del Río provided a venue for a literary circle of Sevillian poets that regularly attended the competitions. Here I will attempt to draw some hypotheses on the affinities and intellectual interests of some of them, namely their interest in the revival of the classics, and their involvement in the transoceanic trade. I will focus on Diego López de Cortegana (1455-1524), Lázaro Bejarano, and the above-mentioned Franco Leardo. In 1518, Diego López de Cortegana was one of the chaplains in the cathedral of Seville in charge of choosing a place for Del Río's chapel.⁹² Cortegana had a career as a humanist and translator in Seville and has been regarded as a conciliatory mediator between old and new Christians. He produced Castilian versions of Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*, Erasmus' *Somnium de Fortuna* and *Querela Pacis*, as well as Silvio Piccolomini's *De curialium miseris* (1520). He also commissioned a translation of the Latin text of Ludivico Varthema's *Itinerarius*.⁹³ In addition to his humanistic endeavors, Cortegana profited from the transatlantic commerce of silk and enslaved individuals.⁹⁴ Lázaro Bejarano is credited as one of the poets who participated in the poetical competitions organized by Del Río from 1531 to 1534. By 1531, Bejarano had just arrived in Seville from Santo Domingo.⁹⁵ Upon his return to the Caribbean, he might have spent some time in Curaçao (ca. 1538-1541), and probably held an encomienda.⁹⁶ Besides the devotional poetry he composed for the poetic

⁸⁹ Ivi, pp. 38–39.

⁹⁰ Ivi, pp. 44, 111.

⁹¹ Among the participants were Bernardo de la Torre, Martel de Mariño, Diego de Quirós, Captain Salazar, Lázaro Bejarano, Pedro Mexía and the above mentioned Bachiller Céspedes.

⁹² J. GIL, *Los conversos*, vol. II, pp. 55, 89.

⁹³ While in Milan, Bernardino López de Carvajal had also been interested in the *Itinerarium* and in 1511 he had asked Arcangelo Madrignani to translate it from the vernacular to Latin. Madrignani's milanese edition served as the base for a number of vernacular renderings. V. CALVO FERNÁNDEZ, *El cardenal Bernardino de Carvajal y la traducción latina del 'Itinerario' de Ludovico Varthema*, «Cuadernos de filología clásica: Estudios latinos», XVIII, 2000, pp. 303-322, p. 305.

⁹⁴ J. GIL FERNÁNDEZ, *Apuleyo en la Sevilla renacentista*, «Habis», XXIII, 1992, pp. 297-306, pp. 302–303. At the time of his death, Cortegana had eight enslaved servants working in his household, including West African and morisco individuals.

⁹⁵ C. C. GARCÍA VALDÉS, *Un erasmista y poeta satírico en el Caribe colonial: Lázaro Bejarano*, in *Poesía satírica y burlesca en la Hispanoamérica colonial*, a cura di ANTONIO LORENTE MEDINA, IGNACIO ARELLANO, Frankfurt a. M., Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2009, p. 173. Bejarano was married to Beatriz de Ampíes, daughter of Juan de Ampíes, regidor of Santo Domingo, “founder” of Coro in Venezuela, and a trader involved in Curaçao, Aruba, and Bonaire. Ampíes is a controversial figure: for some he is akin to Bartolomé de las Casas, for others a man of fortune who traded with natives, as he held the “privilege” of being able to make captives in war, and thus *de facto* to enslave those who resisted his orders. Lázaro Bejarano was involved in some of the negotiations granting Ampíes these privileges. L. ALOFS, *Koloniale mythen en Benedenwindse feiten: Curaçao, Aruba en Bonaire in inheems Atlantisch perspectief, ca. 1499-1636*, Leiden, Sidestone Press, 2018, p. 87. Among Ampíes' possessions, that his daughter and Bejarano could have inherited, were several houses in Santo Domingo, five hundred mares and two thousand and eight hundred rams and sheep, and a sugar *ingenio* (mill), near Nigua, eight miles from Santo Domingo, which had a substantive unpaid debt. Ampíes is known to have criticized the enslavement of Caribbean natives. He, however, was not against the forced enslavement of Black Africans. At the time of his death, Ampíes had seventy enslaved individual of Sub Saharan origin. See: *Juan Martínez de Ampíes*, in *Diccionario biográfico español*, [http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/11891/juan-martinez-de-ampies]; S. B. SCHWARTZ, *Tropical Babylons: sugar and the making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2004, pp. 19, 103; M. RATEKIN, *The Early Sugar Industry in Española*, «The Hispanic American Historical review», XXXIV, 1954, 1, pp. 1–19.

⁹⁶ For Bejarano's involvement in the Caribbean, see: L. ALOFS, *Koloniale mythen* pp. 95–102; C. FELICE CARDOT, *Curazao hispánico; antagonismo flamenco-español*, Caracas, 1973, p. 55.

competitions, he seems to have written an *Apologetic Dialogue Against Ginés of Sepúlveda*, now lost. In 1558, the ecclesiastical council of Santo Domingo accused Bejarano of being a Lutheran, making fun of devotional poetry, and mixing the Holy Scripture with profane verse. A summary of the actual accusations he received was more in line with Erasmist than Lutheran ideas.⁹⁷ Lastly, the presence of the Genoese shipmaster and poet Franco Leardo within Del Río's circle of poets, and the importance conceded to his epigrams, further speaks about the connection of Del Río with figures interested in Latin humanistic endeavors and involved in transatlantic commerce. Franco Leardo was aware of the importance of poetry as an expedient tool to carve for himself a lasting image within his community. He appears in the company of another 53 names in a 1533 list of a Seville confraternity, that of the Knights of Castro Street. Its members, mostly foreign and often of converso origin, were involved in the Transatlantic trade.⁹⁸ Leardo's name in the confraternity list is followed by the honorary title of «*bachiller*», bachelor, thus highlighting his pride in his academic credentials over his profession. In line with the significance he accorded to his studies and his reputation as an occasional Latin poet, he corresponded with the humanist Juan Luis Vives and befriended writers like Pedro Núñez Delgado and Pedro Mexía.⁹⁹ These last two had also composed poems either in praise of Del Río or in his poetic competitions. It is worth mentioning that, at least at some point in their careers, some of these poets and humanists were in tune with Erasmus's writings and ideas, as well as with the writings of Bartolomé de las Casas, so much so that some of them had problems with the Inquisition at some point in their lives.¹⁰⁰

I have been referring to the Sevillian poetic competitions as a space for poets to gather created by Del Río. In what follows, I will delineate up to what extent Baltasar del Río can be considered a *maecenas*.

In an «Introito» published in the leaflet corresponding to the 1531 competition, one Captain Salazar credited Del Río for making possible the competitions or *palios*.¹⁰¹ Salazar did not shy away from comparing Rome and Seville. The competitions took place in the household of the archbishop and recently elected cardinal Alonso de Manrique, to whom Salazar referred as «a new Roman prince».¹⁰² Salazar noted contemporary educational flaws and stated that if Spain had more patrons sponsoring the study of classical languages, and more bishops like Del Río, it would be full of ingenious minds, worthy not only of Rome, but also of Athens in its golden age.¹⁰³

Franco Leardo also recognized Del Río as the Maecenas of the poetic compositions, while reminding listeners and future readers of the power of education, inspired by a tradition that

⁹⁷ C. C. GARCÍA VALDÉS, *Un erasmista y poeta sarítico en el Caribe colonial*, pp. 179–180. Bejarano was sentenced to retract, discontinue his current practices, and only read the Bible.

⁹⁸ The confraternity was likely founded at the beginning of the sixteenth century and was made up by a number of merchants, money lenders, and ship masters. M. M. HERMOSO MELLADO-DAMAS, *La cofradía de los Caballeros de la calle Castro de Sevilla: una estrategia de mercaderes en el siglo XVI*, in *Génova y la monarquía hispánica (1528-1713)*, Génova y la monarquía hispánica (1528-1713), vol. I, 2011, pp. 50–51.

⁹⁹ J. PASCUAL BAREA, *Le banquier génois*, p. 475.

¹⁰⁰ Idem, *Los certámenes de poesía latina*, pp. 15–16.

¹⁰¹ S. MONTOTO (a cura di), *Justas poéticas*, p. 49.

¹⁰² Ivi, pp. 48–49. Salazar would insist on Alonso de Manrique's status as a Roman prince in another *Introito* published in the leaflet for the 1532 competition. There, he would argue again in favor of the Cardinal's status as a temporal prince, alluding to the *Donation of Constantine*. Interestingly, he would compare the Cardinal's aspirations to the papal tiara with that of Charles V's son, the future king Philip II, then about five years old, to the throne of Castille, even if he noted that cardinals are temporal princes by election and royal princes are that by inheritance. Ivi, pp. 84–85.

¹⁰³ S. MONTOTO (a cura di), *Justas poéticas*, p. 49. The reference to Athens' golden age points out to the fact that Del Río knew Greek.

saw poetry as immortal and more durable than material crafts.¹⁰⁴ The banker offered Baltasar an epigram, a perennial gift more valuable than pheasants, baked goods, or wine.¹⁰⁵

Years before, around 1516, Pedro Núñez Delgado had also authored several Latin epigrams in praise of Del Río. In them, he declared in a hyperbolic tone that Del Río's writings would embarrass «the eloquent authors from antiquity».¹⁰⁶ Del Río, moreover, is portrayed as an example of moral virtue and Christian spirituality. Núñez Delgado went as far as to declare that, if others were to follow Del Río's example, worship and veneration of Christ would only increase, sending into oblivion the fame of Caesar and Asinius Pollio and that of the generosity of Maecenas.¹⁰⁷ Here again the mention of Maecenas is a reminder of Del Río's role in promoting Seville's cultural life, and most notably in aiding young students and conversos to become prominent members of the Sevillian society.¹⁰⁸

During the first half of the sixteenth century, being from a converso family mattered little in Rome. However, things were quite different in Seville. On several occasions, the implementation of the statutes of purity of blood had prevented Del Río from taking the place that corresponded to his rank in liturgical celebrations. His constant appeals to the curia often succeeded in redressing these wrongs. With the help of Cardinal Pucci, Del Río was able to acquire a chapel in the cathedral of Seville, in which he founded the Confraternity of the Consolation, made up mostly of members of the converso nobility. Del Río made use of his knowledge and literary skills to climb the social and ecclesiastical ladder at the curia and thus give support to other conversos. He communicated frequently with notables and rulers and befriended poets in Rome and Seville, fostering a network of humanists who have been identified, sometimes quite broadly, as Erasmists.

After Del Río's death, four daily masses were celebrated in his chapel in honor of Leo X, Julius II, Cardinal Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, and Cardinal Lorenzo Pucci, all ecclesiastical dignitaries that in their lifetime had helped him in his career.¹⁰⁹ The rising chapel's voices challenged the decree of purity of blood upheld by the council of canons and gave a respite to converso spiritual communities in Seville, at least for some time. And yet, Del Río's support of conversos, poets, and humanists may not be extrapolated to other communities. It is unclear what role Del Río played, if any, in the evangelization of the "New World" and what his involvement was with native people. Lastly, further study is necessary to investigate how much and in what manner the confraternity helped conversos in times of need, especially with judiciary procedures. As has been noted, a number of converso poets participating in the poetic competitions, as well as members of the confraternity, were subjected to Inquisitorial trials. How flexible was the structure of the confraternity in these occasions? How much could informal literary networks and literary works (poetry, translations, discourses) empower their members on certain occasions, and how much they left a trace that could be used, at any other given moment, against them?

¹⁰⁴ For the idea of the immortality and permanence of poetry in Roman circles from the Trecento to the Cinquecento, see K. CHRISTIAN, *Empire Without End*, pp. 38–44.

¹⁰⁵ J. PASCUAL BAREA, *Le banquier génois*, pp. 476, 481–482.

¹⁰⁶ P. NÚÑEZ DELGADO, a cura di FRANCISCO VERA BUSTAMANTE, *Epigramas*, Alcañiz, Ediciones del Laberinto, Instituto de Estudios Humanísticos, 2002, p. 73.

¹⁰⁷ *Ivi*, pp. 76–77.

¹⁰⁸ Its echoes could have been reminiscent of the *quattrocento* circle of poets congregating around cardinal Prospero Colonna's "Gardens of Maecenas". K. CHRISTIAN, *Empire Without End*, pp. 37–63.

¹⁰⁹ JUAN GIL, *Los conversos*, vol. II, p. 59. The mass offered to cardinal D. Diego Hurtado de Mendoza was also dedicated to the cardinal of San Clement, most likely a reference to his old patron, Jaime Serra.

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