

## Prison Revelations and Jailhouse Encounters: Inquisitorial Prisons as Places of Judaizing Activism and Cross-Cultural Exchange

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Prisons are a special site of cross-cultural encounter and religious illumination. People from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds meet each other and inevitably share ideas and experiences. The space of the prison, especially the inquisitorial prison, places an identity upon the prisoner and he or she can either embrace, dissimulate, or reject that identity. The Inquisition is concerned with identity; its interrogations are meant to unmask the “true” intention and beliefs of the accused and transform the heretic back into a child of the church. This stress on the performance of identity informs the social encounters within prison cells.

Prison and the prolonged process of interrogation can, in many cases, push the accused to examine their lives and their religious commitments. This is true even for someone who never gave too much thought to his or her religious choices. While in that place of religious questioning, the prisoner’s encounter with someone outside his or her normal ethnic or religious group can catalyze already latent religious rumblings and push the individual in a new direction. While these prison transformations might be a rare occurrence—I am at this point unaware of any macro study of this phenomenon—they feature prominently in two cases that I have studied carefully: the case of Luis de Carvajal *el mozo* from late sixteenth-century New Spain and that of Manuel Cardoso de Macedo, aka Abraham Peregrino Guer from Lisbon in the early part of the seventeenth century. I believe that these cases can serve as indicators of a wider phenomenon that can tell us much about the social experience of accused heretics and the ways that their religious ideas and social networks developed in response to their experience as prisoners in the jails of the Holy Office.

In this chapter we will look at the autobiographical writings and inquisitorial trials of two individuals who underwent profound spiritual experiences while in prison and, in both cases, the encounter with the other in prison inspired a series of important “prison revelations” and fed their evolving religious identity. I believe that looking at these encounters will deepen our understanding of social boundaries within the Western Sephardic, Iberian

*converso* and Iberian Old Christian worlds because, in both cases, we have individuals who cross their ethnic boundaries in order to embrace Judaism. This paper is part of a larger study looking at inquisitorial prisons as spaces of cross-cultural exchange.<sup>1</sup> As the project unfolds, I hope to develop an overarching understanding of these encounters and a better appreciation of the role of the inquisitorial prison to facilitate and inform them. At this stage I wish to share some insights from these two concrete cases, a micro-history of sorts. To the extent possible, I will be shuttling between the way these encounters are described by the subjects themselves in their autobiographical narratives and how they appear in the trial records, with an emphasis on the self-fashioning at play in the autobiographical texts.

Carvajal's story is rather well known within inquisitorial studies and the study of Colonial Mexico.<sup>2</sup> He was arrested along with most of his family in Mexico under suspicion of Judaizing in 1589. He spent several months in prison eventually confessing to being a Judaizer and he pleaded for mercy. In 1595, he was re-arrested along with his mother and sisters and, eventually, was burnt at the stake as an unrepentant Judaizer. Luis was a central animating force within the crypto-Jewish underground in New Spain, and this is certainly how he presents his persona in his autobiography and in his second trial testimony.

1 Solange Alberro's important research on the workings of the Holy Office in Mexico in her *Inquisición y sociedad en México 1571–1700* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988) and Jonathan Schorsch's micro studies of inter-racial encounters in inquisitorial prisons in his *Swimming the Christian Atlantic: Judeoconvertos, Afroiberians and Amerindians in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), are useful models for my own approach to the subject. Another important study, also from the Mexican Inquisition is Boleslao Lewin's *Confidencias de dos criptojudíos en las cárceles del Santo Oficio, México, 1645–1646* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos, Julio Kaufman, 1975).

For a better understanding of the function and the place of prisons in early modern Europe, see Pieter Spierenburg and Elisabeth Lissenberg, *Prison Experience: Disciplinary Institutions and Their Inmates in Early Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007). For a focus on the architecture of the prison see Norman Johnston, *Forms of Constraint: A History of Prison Architecture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000). Edward Peters provides some important background to the rise of the early modern prison in his "Prison Before the Prison: The Ancient and Medieval Worlds," in *The Oxford History of the Prison*, eds. Norval Morris and David Rothman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 26.

2 See the two classic treatments of his life, Alfonso Toro, *La Familia Carvajal* (México DF: Editorial Patria S.A., 1977 [1944]) and Martin A. Cohen, *The Martyr* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001). For an analysis of his religious thought, especially in the context of his martyrdom, see Miriam Bodian's *Dying in the Law of Moses* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007). For an appreciation of Carvajal within his wider Iberian context, see Lúcia Helena Costigan's *Through Cracks in the Wall: Modern Inquisitions and New Christian Letrados in the Iberian Atlantic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2010). My recent book, *Narratives from the Sephardic Atlantic: Blood and Faith*, features two chapters dedicated to Carvajal and his family network.

Luis crafted a spiritual autobiography that spanned his childhood initiation into crypto-Jewish belief and practice in Benavente, Spain, his family's move to New Spain in 1579, and his idiosyncratic textually-fueled spiritual exploits before and after his first arrest by the Holy Office in 1589. The autobiography traces his experience up until his second arrest in 1595: it was confiscated after his arrest and used as evidence against Carvajal and his circle. It was preserved as part of the *proceso* of the Carvajal family and was transcribed by the Mexican historian Alfonso Toro just a few years before it was stolen from the Mexican National Archives by a mysterious foreigner—a certain Professor Jac Nachbin in 1932—this text (almost) miraculously resurfaced in the past year and was repatriated to the Mexican Government with the help of the FBI and the collector of Americana Leonard Milberg. After a brief exhibition at the New York Historical Society, it has finally returned home to Mexico (Fig. 6.1). Between the trial records and Carvajal's *Vida*, we are able to appreciate the place of prison in Carvajal's spiritual development.<sup>3</sup> In his *Vida*, he gives pride of place to his unlikely friendship with a wayward monk, Fray Francisco Ruiz de Luna, and it is to this relationship we will now turn.

In the prisons of the Inquisition Luis undergoes some of his most transformative experiences. As described in his *Vida*, prison is a site of prophetic dreams where Solomon, Jeremiah, and Job reveal divine secrets to him through parables.<sup>4</sup> Luis presents himself as a noble servant of the Divine, willing to suffer and sacrifice for his faith in the dark depths of the Inquisition's secret prisons. It is also a site of friendship and communion of a most surprising sort.<sup>5</sup> The inquisitors place a monk who was arrested for minor religious infractions into Luis's cell. The monk, Fray Francisco Ruiz de Luna, was ordered to not reveal his religious title to Luis in the hope that he will be able to spy on him and provide the inquisitors with more evidence of his heresy.<sup>6</sup> Early on however,

3 Carvajal's *Vida* as well as the records from his two inquisitorial trials can be found in Luis González Obregón, ed. *Procesos de Luis de Carvajal, el mozo* (México: Talleres gráficos de la nación, 1935). I have designated the *Vida* as LCMA (Luis de Carvajal, el Mozo Autobiography) and his trial records as LCM I and II (Luis de Carvajal, el mozo, first or second trial). Toro's transcription of the *Vida* can also be found in the Appendix of Toro's *La Familia Carvajal*.

4 LCM II, 695–96.

5 My reading of the relationship between Fray Francisco and Luis is enriched by some ideas developed by Professor Thomas Cohen of York University in his keynote address to the Early Modern Workshop in Jewish History (Brown University, 26 February 2012) entitled, "Entanglement: How the Whole World Worked and How Jews Joined In." In particular, his idea of the relationship between sacrifice and communion was very illuminating and provocative.

6 See Cohen, *The Martyr*, 166–67; Bodian, *Dying in the Law of Moses*, 63–64. Luis asserts that he was placed in the cell because of the inquisitors' concern over his poor health and depressed spirits, LCMA, 476.

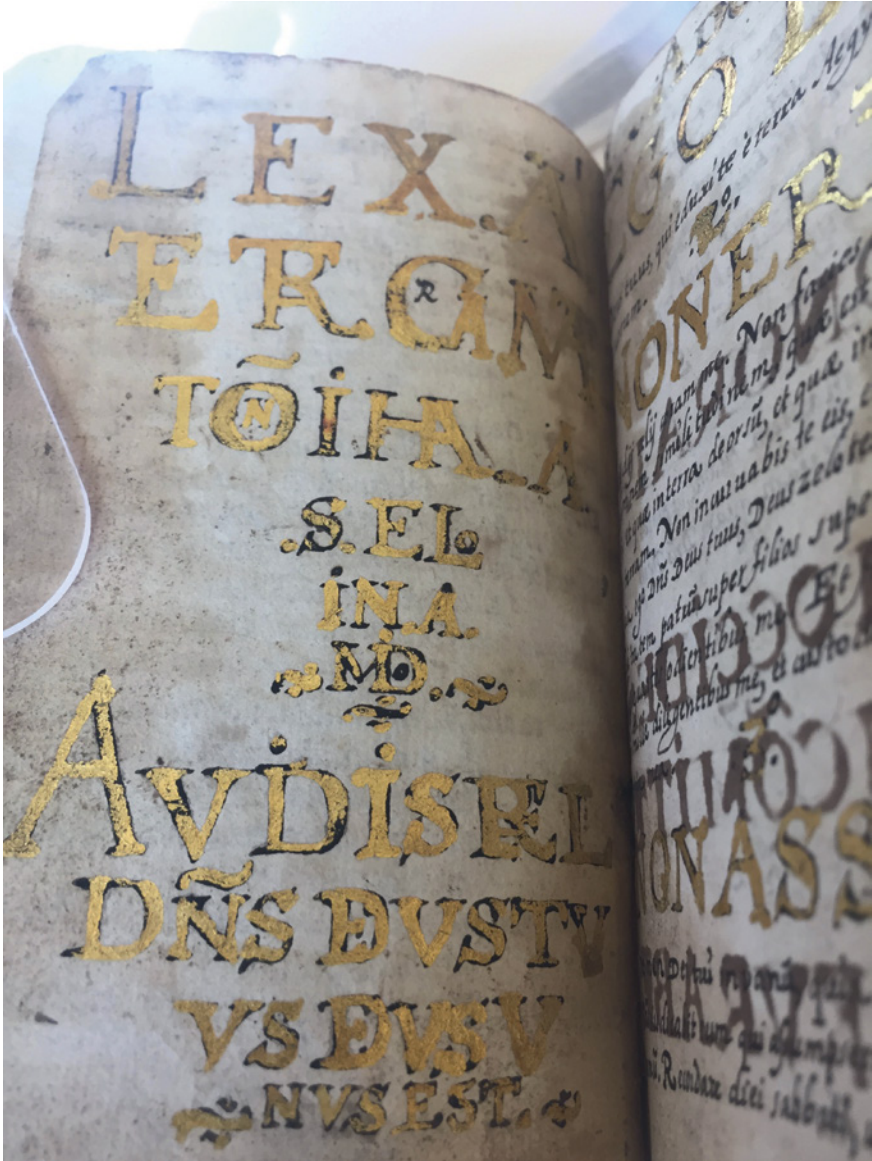


FIGURE 6.1 Latin Decalogue illuminated in gold leaf by Luis de Carvajal *el mozo*, Mexico, 1590s

the wayward monk and the Judaizing heretic discover a unique bond in their shared captivity.

From their earliest moments together, Luis describes an easy and amicable relationship: after the two prisoners began to speak for a while, he was

gladdened by the company.<sup>7</sup> They are both happy to have social contact, to share a conversation as a respite from the dark loneliness of their imprisonment. But as all things in Luis's *Vida*, the arrival of this monk is no mere coincidence, neither is it really about the poorly executed plans of the inquisitors, but rather it is all part of a divine plan. Luis prefaces the arrival of Fray Francisco into his cell with a lament over being cut off from his holy books while in prison. He desires above all else to be able to pray and study the Bible. Sure enough, while Luis is denied access to books, this monk requests and promptly receives a breviary with which to pray. To Luis this is a great salvation; now, he is able to access the Psalms included as part of his cellmate's Catholic prayer book and pour out his soul to the God of Israel. Luis describes his deep joy at seeing the prison warden enter their cell with the breviary: with supreme delight and joy, he saw how the Lord his God through that request sent him that which he desired which was to be able to recite the Psalms, as was his custom.<sup>8</sup>

At first, however, Luis was unable to fully express his Judaism because of the presence of his "*compañero*," the monk. However, through Divine intervention, the monk was "enlightened and converted to the true God."<sup>9</sup> Luis describes how they engaged in theological discussions and how, after a few days, the monk began to see the truth of the Law of Moses. Their relationship was transformed from simply one of prison camaraderie born of boredom and loneliness into a spiritual bond. In the course of a few days, Luis went from hiding his Judaism to celebrating the God of Israel with the lapsed monk: "They would rejoice and console each other and would sing hymns and praises to the Lord [...]."<sup>10</sup> They would dance and praise God for having enlightened the monk and allowing them both to share in the divine service.

They also bonded over sacred texts. Fray Francisco lent Luis his breviary, allowing him to "poach"<sup>11</sup> passages from the Hebrew Bible out of the Catholic text for his own Judaizing ends. Luis describes them both spending hours in their cells discussing "*sagradas historias*."<sup>12</sup> During one such exchange, the monk was hungrily drinking in Luis's words when he declares: "What would

7 "Despues de los dos presos aberse comunicado un rato y alegrado de la junta y compañia." LCMA, 478.

8 "Con sumo gozo y alegria de ver que el s[eño]r D[ios] suyo abia ymbiadole por aquella orden lo que deseaba tanto que era tener por donde rezar los ps[alm]os como solia." LCMA, 476.

9 "Alumbrado y convertido." LCMA, 478.

10 "Se alegraba y consolaba y cantaba himnos y loores al s[eño]r." LCMA, 478.

11 Michel De Certeau, "Reading as Poaching," in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven I. Rendal (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

12 Presumably these were stories from the Hebrew Bible, but quite possibly this general category might include a wider array of religiously edifying stories. It is important to notice

I have given to have been enlightened by the truth of God outside of this prison, to have encountered it [the divine truth] while in the monasteries, which generally have open libraries filled with the sacred Scriptures and many other good books.”<sup>13</sup>

This bizarre off-hand comment made by Francisco—his desire to have been a Judaizer in a monastery so at least he could spend his time reading the Hebrew Bible—plants a seed in Luis’s mind. He asks, “are those books open to all?” (479).<sup>14</sup> Luis is struck by the idea of having access to vast libraries of religious works and echoes his friend’s sentiment and declares: “Oh how I wish I was in one of those.”<sup>15</sup> Eventually this wish comes true—after his release Luis is placed to work in a monastery where he had access to a library of religious works, but even at this moment in the narrative, the two cellmates share the same dream of free access to religious texts.

Luis tells the reader of the *Vida* that in addition to prayer and study of the Bible, Luis and Fray Francisco share in another more primal religious act. Despite their hunger, the two Judaizers discard the pork products in their meager rations and bury them in the dirt floor of their cells as a “sacrifice.”<sup>16</sup> Luis describes how they would suffer great hunger by passing up on this “forbidden food.” These shared acts of devotion and sacrifice serve to bring the two inmates together and transform the monk from a “good stranger” into “a confesant of the true God and His holy law” who eventually will wear “the martyr’s crown.”<sup>17</sup> Luis is amazed at this transformation because of Fray Francisco’s Old Christian background. He repeatedly mentions the fact that Fray Francisco took to the Law of Moses as if he were raised by Judaizing parents: “It was engraved on the soul of this good foreigner the divine truth as if he was raised in it all of his life and was taught it by pious parents.”<sup>18</sup>

Fray Francisco’s embrace of the “truth,” his bravery, and sacrifice are described as almost miraculous—the divine truth has been inscribed on his soul, without the usual dialectic between nature and nurture. I have not located indications in Fray Francisco’s *proceso* where any of these practices come

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that in this case in particular, Luis is the teacher: He is the one regaling Francisco with the stories.

13 “Quien me dierra sido alumbrado en la berdad de Dios fuera de esta carzel y caido en ella estando en los monasterios, que solyan donde tienen librerias abiertas con la sagrada escriptura y otros muchos buenos libros.” LCMA 478–9.

14 LCMA, 479.

15 “A quien me diera en unas de ellas.” Ibid.

16 “Bamos a hacer el sacrificio” (Let’s make the sacrifice). LCMA, 479.

17 “Confesor de D[ios] verdadero y de su ley s[antis]ma [...] corona de martir.” LCMA, 479.

18 “Imprimiosele tambien en el anima a este buen estrangero la berdad divina como si toda su vida ubiera sido criado en ella y enseñado por fieles p[adr]es.” LCMA, 479.

up—or any indication that during this time together he gives any indication to the inquisitors of his budding Jewish affinities—this remains a desideratum. However, we know that after his release he served on a royal galley as penitence for his previous heretical deeds—belittling the sacraments by administering without the proper authority. While serving on a galley ship, he breaks down, desecrates a crucifix, and declares his belief in the Law of Moses, and thus this renegade monk ended his life at an *auto-da-fé* as an obdurate Judaizer. Luis praises the monk for his bravery and integrity: Joseph’s companion confessed the truth of the God of Israel before the tyrants with such a courageous spirit that has never been seen in someone of a foreign nation.<sup>19</sup>

The *Vida* describes Francisco telling the inquisitors to their face that only the God of Israel is true and all other gods are frauds and tricks of the Devil. He audaciously claims that the “king and the inquisitorial dogs” know this but their hearts are hardened to the truth like the heart of Pharaoh.<sup>20</sup> It is not only that Francisco is pious, passionate, and brave; his commitment to Judaism is remarkable because of the way that it breaks with his ethnic past. He is of an “*estraña nación*,” an Old Christian, but becomes a crypto-Jewish martyr. Through his sacrifice, he gains communion with Luis and his people.<sup>21</sup>

Luis and his family were arrested a second time for backsliding into their old pernicious ways in 1595. The inquisitors again placed a spy into his cell in the hopes that the new cellmate would give them confidential information. Things turned out very differently for Luis and the inquisitors this time. Instead of another opportunity for cross-cultural encounter and another victory for Luis’s

19 “El compañero de Joseph confeso aquella vez al D[ios] del cielo delante de los tyranos con tan valerosos animo q[uan]to no se a vista semejante cosa en ho[mbr]e de estraña nacion.” LCMA, 486–87.

20 It is not clear if this exchange is the invention of Luis’s fertile imagination or not. How Luis knew that Francisco used this creative piece of biblical exegesis before the inquisitors is hard to know. However, the application of the Exodus story to the plight of the *conversos* before the inquisitors could very well be an indication of the extent to which this monk had already begun to absorb Luis’s bibliocentric hermeneutic.

The calling of the inquisitors “dogs” is a fascinating reversal or appropriation of the classic anti-Jewish epithet “*perro judío*.” This is just one of many examples whereby Luis’s Judaism is actually a Judaizing of Christianity, a reorientation of Catholic ideas and terminology toward an idealized vision of the Law of Moses.

21 Manuel Cardoso de Macedo, another Old Christian convert to Judaism whom I will discuss later in this essay, is deeply troubled by his Old Christian blood and felt that it was a hindrance to his full conversion. While Cardoso is accepted by the Jewish community in Amsterdam, he himself carries an anxiety about his place within that community because of his ethnic origin. For Luis, however, Francisco’s conversion is all the more wondrous because of his Old Christian background.

faith, in this case the cellmate was a clever and manipulative spy, abusing the trust and gullibility of his target.

Luis Díaz, a wayward cleric, was placed in Carvajal's cell to function as a spy.<sup>22</sup> Because of Carvajal's success in turning the monk Ruiz de Luna into a sincere and heroic crypto-Jew during his first trial, Luis might have been predisposed to believe in Díaz's openness to crypto-Judaism. Carvajal's desire to connect with Díaz might also suggest his own loneliness and desire (inspired by his earlier prison experience) to share his spiritual life with a fellow believer. Solange Alberro has shown how the inquisitors often placed prisoners alone for a while in order break them psychologically. Thus, he not only quickly tells Díaz about his own religiosity, but he goes on to recount, with great detail and excitement, the courageous deeds and spiritual activities of his wider crypto-Jewish network. His goal is to convince this cleric who seems to have lost his way with Catholicism not only that the Law of Moses is the true law, but that there is a vibrant community of the faithful whom he could join. This community is more than a group of like-minded individuals—they are like a family; in embracing the Law of Moses, Díaz would also be part of that family of enlightened believers.

Díaz picks up on the deep bonds between the crypto-Jews and uses it as a way to get more information about this large and interconnected network. He tells Carvajal that he wants to know who the Judaizers are in order to “get to know them and love them like brothers.”<sup>23</sup> Later on he uses similar terminology when he asks Carvajal, “Would you tell me who are your brothers?”<sup>24</sup> Díaz is able to push Carvajal for more information because he says he wants to meet his “brothers.” He gives the impression of desiring to be a part of the spiritual brotherhood that is so essential to Carvajal's religious world. He perceptively hits Luis where he is vulnerable. When Luis finally realizes that Díaz is a spy he is despondent, but not only because of the damage he has done to the people he loves, but because of the wound left by Díaz's deception and betrayal. Díaz records Carvajal's lament: “Where was my judgment when I opened my heart to you?”<sup>25</sup> He realizes that he let himself be tricked by this deception: he

22 Regarding this aspect of inquisitorial protocol, see Boleslao Lewin's *Confidencias de dos cryptojudíos*, 11–12. Lewin points out that the Mexican tribunal's use of spies was often criticized by the Suprema in Madrid because it was too invasive. Also see Solange Alberro's *Inquisición y sociedad en México*, 229–35. Díaz, like Ruiz de Luna, was imprisoned on light charges. However, these would have been enough for the inquisitors to use as pressure to force him into spying.

23 “Para conocerlos y amarlos como a hermanos.” LCM II, 164.

24 “Me diréis quién son tus hermanos [... ?].” LCM II, 165.

25 “Donde tenía yo mi juicio cuando os descubrí mi pecho.” LCM II, 157.



revealed his heart; he allowed himself to be vulnerable to someone who called himself a brother; and he was taken advantage of.<sup>26</sup> At the same moment that Carvajal believed that he was welcoming another stranger into the fold, of inviting another searcher into his spiritual family, he endangered the entire community.

Crossing boundaries is neither safe nor easy. Luis successfully manages other important relationships with people outside his social network, most notably his complex relationship with Fray Pedro de Oroz, the rector of the Colegio de Santiago de Tlaltelolco where Luis taught Latin and was Fray Pedro's personal scribe. Luis appreciated Fray Pedro's kindness and his love of books. There is a palpable sense of respect and a shared love of ideas in Luis's description of the rector. But ultimately, Luis had to hide his true religious feelings and practice subterfuge throughout his time with Fray Pedro, so it is a compromised sort of encounter. His encounter with Luis Diaz during his second trial lies on the opposite end of the spectrum. He was completely open with him, vulnerable and eager to connect, and the spy used that vulnerability to his maximum advantage, completely abusing his trust in the guise of a wayward Christian eager to see the true light of the Law of Moses.

Most *conversos* were deeply rooted within *converso* social networks—regardless of actual crypto-Jewish activity. To a great extent, they did business with, got married to, and socialized with other *conversos*, often from related families. In prison, however, they would meet people of other socio-economic and ethnic groups. In the Mexican context, these spies offer the historian a unique window into select encounters with a social or ethnic other. Because of the tight quarters of the prison cell, the long hours alone without other distractions, and the highly charged nature of the space, cellmates had an opportunity to get to know the other, to share, and be vulnerable. But the spy, if he remains true to his mission, needs to use that proximity and to capitalize on the desire to share in order to obtain information that the prisoner might not want to share with the inquisitor. By feigning interest and cultivating trust, the spy can reach into the “soul” of the prisoner. *Conversos* encounter other individuals outside their social network in prison, cellmates, guards, and maids, etc., and these cases are important to consider as well. However, the cases involving a spy have the advantage for the historian of leaving a record—the testimony of the spy to the inquisitor—of at least a version of their cross-cultural interaction.

In the *Vida*, Carvajal regales his readers with the story of his cellmate's embrace of the Law of Moses and their shared religious devotion. He is the

26 “Y diciendole éste que él era su hermano.” Ibid.

master and he is in control of the narrative; it is Carvajal who gives voice to his cellmate's experience and praises the neophyte's passion. In the case of Manuel Cardoso Macedo, however, it is the convert to Judaism, Cardoso the Old Christian outsider, who tells his own story of cross-cultural encounter.

Manuel Cardoso de Macedo (1585–1652) was an Azorean Old Christian who found his way to Judaism after first embracing Calvinism and then discovering “the Law of Moses” in a cell he shared with an accused Judaizer in the prison of the Lisbon Holy Office. Cardoso eventually escapes Portugal along with members of a large *converso* family that he met in prison, and he converts to Judaism in Hamburg, taking the Hebrew name of Abraham Pelengrino Guer. He settles in Amsterdam where he lives within the Portuguese community until his death in 1653.<sup>27</sup>

Cardoso's religious odyssey begins in England. His father was in the dye and textile trade and conducted extensive business with England. He sent his teenage son, Manuel, to England in 1599 to master the language and apprentice with some business associates, presumably in preparation for a life in the family business. While in England, he encountered the Bible in English translation. This, according to his telling in the *Vida*, changed his life, setting off a series of

27 Cardoso wrote a spiritual autobiography later in his life while he was living openly as a converted Jew in Amsterdam. The text was titled, “Vida do bemaventurado Abraham Pelengrino” and has survived in a beautifully copied manuscript from 1769 in the collection of the Ets Haim Library in Amsterdam (EH\_49\_A\_15; [http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/eh\\_49\\_a\\_15/](http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/eh_49_a_15/)). Prof. Yosef Kaplan disentangled the identity of this Old Christian convert to Judaism from another convert with a similar Jewish name, Abraham Guer but with a different Christian name who lived at a slight remove from our Pelengrino. See his “Jewish Proselytes from Portugal in 17th-Century Amsterdam—The Case of Lorenzo Esudero,” [Hebrew] *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1977): 87–101.

Bernard Teensma published a transcription of the autobiography with a Dutch translation and very helpful biographical and linguistic annotations: “Manuel Cardozo de Macedo, ‘La *Vida* del buenaventurado Abraham Pelengrino,’ edited by B. Teensma,” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 10 (1976):1–36. My citations are from this transcription and all translations are my own (hereafter, *Vida*). I also make occasional use of the records from Cardoso's two inquisitorial trials found in the Torre de Tombo archive in Lisbon: *Processo de Manuel Cardoso*. Tribunal do Santo Ofício, Inquisição de Lisboa, Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais / Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo. PT-TT-TSO-IL-28-319 and PT-TT-TSO-IL-28-319-1. I have abbreviated these to CM PT-TT for the first trial and CM PT-TT II for the second trial. In Chapter 4 of my *Narratives from the Sephardic Atlantic*, I analyze Cardoso's self-fashioning and religious transformations in light of his social dynamics.

Currently Dr. Alexander van der Haven at the Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev is working on some very exciting research into the life of Cardoso de Macedo. I look forward to his forthcoming work.

independently inspired religious inquiries. He writes: “Scripture was the first thing that they placed in my hand after the ABC.”<sup>28</sup>

He soon became enthralled with Protestant ideas, eventually rejecting “the religion of his parents” for Calvinism. On trips back to the Azores to visit his family, he managed to keep his heresy a secret, but eventually word got out and he was arrested while visiting São Miguel and was eventually sent to the Lisbon Holy Office in 1608. It is in prison where he rejects Calvinism after his discovery of Judaism. Cardoso eventually was released from prison and, after connecting with a group of Portuguese *conversos* he knew from his time in prison, he escaped Lisbon for Hamburg where he formally converted, eventually settling in Amsterdam. Around the 1620s, he composed his spiritual autobiography *La Vida del buenaventurado Abraham Pelengrino Guer*. Like Carvajal, Cardoso’s autobiography can be read in light of his trial records found at the Torre de Tombo. I will make reference to those inquisitorial records, but our main focus for the remainder of this paper will be the way Cardoso’s cross-cultural encounter in prison is depicted in his *Vida* and its central role in his religious self-fashioning.

In Cardoso’s *Vida*, he describes himself as a defiant Protestant during his time in the jails of the Inquisition. “I am a Calvinist and I will die a Calvinist, unless you can convince me with reasons,”<sup>29</sup> he tells the Azorean bishop who first apprehends him. He describes polemical back-and-forths he had with the inquisitors, which all concluded, not surprisingly, in his vindication over the hapless inquisitors.<sup>30</sup> At one point, Cardoso tells the reader that the inquisitors gave up on convincing him and decided to move Cardoso to the house of a respectable and honored man whose good Christian example would inspire Cardoso. They voiced the hope that, “There you will be touched by the Holy Spirit, so that you will turn toward the milk of the Church that you suckled [as a child].”<sup>31</sup> Because of his Old Christian background, Cardoso is treated with considerable flexibility and mercy. The inquisitor’s starting point is that he will eventually return to his former religious identity. The Bishop in the Azores tells Cardoso, “We know of your lineage”; in other words, we know your

28 “Consideray na Escritura, que foy a primeira couza que me meterão na mão depois de ABC.” *Vida*, 7.

29 “Eu sou Calvino, e Calvino ei-de morer.” *Vida*, 8.

30 *Vida*, 9–11. In the actual inquisitorial records, we see no indication of this. Rather the inquisitors are mostly concerned with identifying how he fell into the clutches of “Lutheranism” and if there were other Catholics living in England infected with this.

31 “Ahy vos tocará o Espírito S[an]to, para que vos convertais ao leyte da Ygreja que mamasteis.” *Vida*, 12.

family, your blood is pure and thus this heresy is only skin deep and will pass. He was a teenager after all.

However, the plan never has a chance to take off. Before he was actually moved to the home of this upstanding family, he was placed in a holding cell with an accused Judaizer, Henrique Dias Milão, a New Christian who vehemently denied being a crypto-Jew to the inquisitors despite the evidence they had proving a long history of active Judaizing.<sup>32</sup> It was through this temporary cellmate that Cardoso first came into contact with a written account of Judaism in the form of a small “booklet of his crimes,” compiled by the inquisitors recording Dias Milão’s Judaizing. When Cardoso began to read the practices cataloged in this “Libello” he was shocked to find out that there were still people in the world who actually kept the laws of the Bible: “There were people who kept that religion, because all that was [recorded] there was in accordance with Scripture.”<sup>33</sup> He spent the entire night reading the pamphlet and considering its implications on his own religious life. The next morning, he found himself again at a religious crossroads, unsure of his next step: “I awoke without any form of religion, wiping out all of the

32 As is often the case in trials of Portuguese *conversos*, it is very hard to ascertain the veracity of the accusations of Judaizing. That his children work hard to leave Lisbon in the years following their father’s execution at the *auto-da-fé* of 1609 only proves that they feared being caught in the Inquisition’s web a second time. On the other hand, that many of the Dias Milão children move to Northern Europe and become members of open Jewish communities does indicate some awareness of and commitment to Jewish belief and practice. This consciousness, however, might have been inspired by their brush with the Inquisition. Regardless of the veracity of the inquisitor’s accusations, what is of interest to our present discussion is how Cardoso describes this encounter with the booklet listing Dias Milão’s “Judaizing crimes.”

33 “Libelo de suas culpas, [...] se havia gente que guardasse aquela religião, porque tudo o que aly estava concordava com a Escritura.” *Vida*, 12. Regarding the attraction of some radical Protestants to Judaism see the collection of essays edited by Martin Mulsow and Richard H. Popkin, *Secret Conversions to Judaism in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2004.) and Richard H. Popkin and Gordon M. Weiner’s *Jewish Christians and Christian Jews* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994). In *The Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), Geoffrey Parker mentions that many *conversos* of Antwerp served as an important resource for the Protestant cause in the Low Countries. In addition to providing monetary support, some *conversos* converted to Calvinism and shared strategies of dissimulation with their fellow “brethren.” Parker cautions, however, against seeing too much religious sincerity in these moves, “for many of them [the Marranos] it was no more than a façade for crypto-Judaism. It is significant that few *marranos* became Protestants in 1577–1584 when it was easy but there was no persecution” (60, n. 36). See chapter 4 of my recent book, *Narratives from the Sephardic Atlantic: Blood and Faith* (Indiana University Press, 2016), for an analysis of Cardoso’s conversion within the wider context of Christian religious experimentation in the early modern period.

Scriptures, not believing any of them, and seeing it all as a fable. In the end, I was turned into a libertine.”<sup>34</sup>

His newfound agnosticism allows him to cynically dissimulate a change of heart to the inquisitors. He appeals to their mercy and forgiveness. He claims to have been possessed by a devil and likens himself to a drunk who when seduced by wine becomes somebody else only to wake up in the morning and not remember any of the previous evening’s disastrous exploits. Cardoso fed the inquisitors exactly what they were hoping to hear, and they welcomed him back to the fold. He was asked to repent his sins and was penanced at the *auto-da-fé* of 5 April 1609. In addition to the *sambenito* he was obliged to wear, Cardoso was sent to the *Escolas Gerais*, a reform school for penitent heretics for rehabilitative instruction in the Christian faith.<sup>35</sup>

Cardoso’s discovery of Judaism calls into question his once solid belief in Calvinism. He is profoundly confused and enters a brief period of radical agnosticism, and it is during this time that Cardoso is able to feign remorse for his heretical “nonsense,” plead disingenuously for the Holy Office’s mercy, and ultimately save his life.<sup>36</sup> As he confesses in his *Vida*: “Following this I decided to go to the [inquisitors’] table and retract [un-say myself] in order to not die.”<sup>37</sup> This “un-telling” of his past life was possible only because of the spiritual emptiness and lack of conviction he now felt.

However, in time, Cardoso was not paralyzed by his agnosticism. Upon his release from prison, he was placed in the *Escolas Gerais*, the reform school set up for inquisitorial penitents in the Santa Marinha neighborhood of Lisbon, where his inquisitors hoped that he would be shepherded back to the flock of the faithful. All penitents who were not sentenced to death or the galleys

34 “He deitando-me amanesi sem hum modo de religião, borando todas as Escrituras e não creher nada dellas, e ter tudo por fábula. Finalmente fiquey libertino formado.” *Vida*, 13.

35 In the trial record, we do not see any sudden shift in his testimony along these lines. There is also no mention of his being placed in Dias Milão’s cell—not that this would necessarily make it into the record. What is interesting is that the role of the remorseful penitent that Cardoso describes in this section of the *Vida*, a persona he claims to adopt only after his crisis of faith, is how he appears throughout his first trial. From the very beginning he recounts his heretical beliefs and rejection of Catholic practice, but only as part of a confession leading to his petition for mercy and his desire to return to the church. In the trial records, there are no theological debates with the inquisitors. The only bold proclamations of his Calvinism come from testimony of others who met him in England. These are two irreconcilable images that point to the very different rhetorical contexts of his prison testimony and of his *Vida*. Cardoso writes the *Vida* as a retrospective, and in that retelling he crafts his present self-image.

36 “Disbarates.” *Vida*, 13.

37 “Ao seguinte determiney a hir à Meza e desdezir-me por não morer.” *Ibid*.

were placed in these schools. After several months they would be allowed to leave but had to reside in the nearby Santa Marinha neighborhood so that inquisitorial officials could check up on them and ensure their full reintegration. Cardoso was successful at convincing the officials of his piety, and he was soon released.<sup>38</sup>

Prisons are often the best schools for criminality, and this “reform school” was no exception. In the *Vida*, Cardoso describes how he made use of the high percentage of *conversos* there to deepen his understanding of Judaism: “And with my conscience never being at peace, I would approach certain individuals who would appear to me [as possible crypto-Jews], and I would ask them: “Why did they arrest you?” And when they would say to me that they were arrested for being a Jew, I would continue to ask them if it was so. If they would say “yes” I would try to extrapolate from [what they told me] what I saw fit.”<sup>39</sup>

Cardoso points to two essential characteristics of how he understood his religious transformation. His search to understand Judaism is self-directed. He decides which *conversos* to approach as potential sources, and he is the one who carefully extracts the information that he finds relevant for his own religious quest: “I would try to extrapolate from [what they told me] what I saw fit.” At the same time, Cardoso bonds with his informants. Most strikingly in this passage, we see how he begins to transform himself into not only a Jew, but a crypto-Jew. In order to get the information he wants, Cardoso must act like a crypto-Jew, even before becoming a Jew. He practices stealth and dissimulation in order to reconstruct the religious world of which he received an earth-shattering glimpse in the jail of the Inquisition a few weeks back. His choice to learn more about Judaism leads him along a path where he not only encounters a new social circle, that of the New Christians, but also must adopt the subversive practices characteristic of crypto-Judaism because of inquisitorial surveillance.

38 In his second trial two officials from the *escolha* testified that they knew Cardoso from his time at the school and were aware that he moved into the Santa Marinha neighborhood. They do not explicitly vouch for his piety, but they do not say anything to contradict it. Their main focus is on Cardoso's close relationship with Fernão Lopes and his mother. They describe Cardoso as a servant of this family and their acquaintances, setting their table and preparing their meals. See the testimonies of Jorge DaCosta, the director (*alcalde*) of the school and Antonio de Ruiz, a former guard, in CM-PT-TT II, 50–54.

39 “E nunca aqueitando com o juizo me chegava a algumas pessoas que me paresião, y lhes preguntava: ‘Porquê vos prenderão?’ e dizendo-me por Judeu lhe tornava a preguntar se o avia sido. Se me dezia que sy. Tirá-lla delle couza era, y dizendo-mo tomava dahy o que me paresia.” *Vida*, 14.

After two months in the reform school, Cardoso is released and moves in with the children of his former cellmate, Henryque Diaz Milão. Cardoso refers to Milão, who was sentenced to death for his Judaizing practices, as his “*comp[anheiro]o*.” Cardoso decides to stay with Milão’s children because he wants to learn more about Jewish ritual and belief. Thus, he went “with the goal of keeping the Sabbath and going little by little taking notice of the Law of Moses, because it appeared to me to be the true [law], of which I did not have any knowledge because in my father’s house it was said that the Jews adored a heiffer [*toura*, a female *touro*].”<sup>40</sup> He has discovered the true nature of Judaism only recently because growing up in his father’s house, the only knowledge of Judaism he had was a bizarre refrain claiming that the Jews adore the “*toura*,” not the Torah.<sup>41</sup> Again, Cardoso cites his family legacy as the primary obstacle on his path to religious truth. It is thanks to his cellmate, and then later on the inmates at the school, that Cardoso comes to see the truth of Judaism.

Not only does Cardoso gravitate toward the Jews for religious knowledge; he also begins to identify himself with them: “I was acquiring affection for the Men of the Nation, and [I began to] take upon myself their troubles as my own.”<sup>42</sup> He describes his move toward Judaism as grounded in intellectual rigor, but it is also intimately tied up with his empathy for the Jews, his taking their “troubles as his own.”<sup>43</sup> This expression of empathy reflects his (desired) identification with both the God and the people of Israel and his willingness to share in their destiny.

40 “Fuy com presuposto de guardar o Sabat e yr pouco a pouco tomando nottisia da Ley de Mosseh, porque me pareceu ser a verdadeira, da qual de antes não havia tido nottisia, por cuidar que os Judeos adoravão huma toura, como em caza de meo pay se dizia” (*Vida*, 13). For more on the Diaz Milão family see H.P. Salomon’s *Portrait of a New Christian: Fernão Álvares Melo, 1569–1632* (Paris: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1982.).

41 In his edition of *La vida del buenaventurado Abraham Pelengrino*, Teensma defines the word “*Toura*” to mean wooden disc or chopping block (30, n. 13). My reading is supported by the straightforward definition found in the *Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa Contemporânea: Academia das Ciências de Lisboa*, 2.2 (Lisbon: Verbo, 2001), and other Portuguese dictionaries. This definition also supports an allusion to the “Golden Calf” implied by word play.

42 “Fuy tomando afeição à gente da Nasão, e pasar-me a seus trabalhos como próprios.” *Vida*, 13.

43 This seems to be a clear allusion to Ruth, the righteous convert, who told her mother-in-law, Naomi, “Wherever you go, there shall I go, and wherever you will sleep, I will sleep, your people are my people and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16). Ruth left the comfort of her homeland to return with her impoverished and widowed mother-in-law to a strange land. Her commitment to Naomi on a personal level was intimately tied to her relationship with Naomi’s God.

In his *Vida*, Cardoso includes several examples of his self-sacrifice for his fellow Jews: he arranges an escape from Lisbon for members of the Dias Milão family in 1609, and when the plot is foiled, he takes the blame, suffering abuse at the hands of the authorities and shielding his New Christian companions. He manages to arrange a second escape, which was successful, bringing members of the Diaz Milão family and himself to the safety of Hamburg in 1611. Each of these instances form pivotal moments in his spiritual *peregrinação*; they signify movement toward a fuller integration into the Jewish community and a more complete transformation into his new religious identity. In these cases, prison is a place where he not only discovers the tenets of Judaism, but he transforms himself through shared experiences and sacrifice into a member of the *Nação*.

Carvajal's encounter with Francisco Ruiz de Luna, the wayward monk who saw the light of the Law of Moses in their shared inquisitorial prison cell in Mexico City, is essential to Carvajal's self-fashioning as a spiritual leader and enlightening teacher of the "Truth." He managed to bring this Old Christian, with no roots in the people of Israel, to the God of Israel and His Law. Carvajal and Ruiz de Luna bond over their shared commitment to Judaism and form a powerful connection that transcends blood. Within the narrative economy of the *Vida*, this relationship is a testament to Luis's prophetic power and his ability to help reveal the Judaic truth to even a "stranger."

For Manuel Cardoso de Macedo, his encounter with a stranger in prison is essential to his religious trajectory. From the first instances of his autobiography, Cardoso presents himself as a brave and determined searcher after the truth. In each case, his enlightenment is facilitated by an encounter with religious and ethnic others—in England it involved his Protestant hosts, while in Lisbon it is a group of *conversos* accused of Judaizing who radically reorient his religious journey. Despite his passionate commitment to Calvinism throughout his time in prison, he is still open to the truth, from wherever it comes. His revelatory encounter with Diaz Milão and his subsequent connection with the wider Diaz Milão family, his self-sacrifice and involvement in their escape, all serve to transform Manuel Cardoso de Macedo into Abraham Pelengrino, Abraham the Searcher. His Jewish name is encoded in his autobiography; the *Vida* maps his spiritual peregrination unto the figure of the first Jew—Abraham—who gave up his bonds of affection and the comforts of home to wander in search of the True God.

In both cases, the encounters with ethnic and religious others within the warped "third space" of the inquisitorial prison allow for much more than an exchange of new ideas or the forging of new friendships. These encounters allow for religious transformations and a radical shift in the subjects' sense of self.



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