

## Staging the Unspeakable: Slavery, Torture, and the Expulsion of Moriscos in *El Hamete de Toledo*

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At the end of the sixteenth century, a Muslim slave was sentenced to death by inquisitorial authorities in Toledo despite his conversion to Christianity. Known as Hamete, he was punished for rebelling against his master, Gaspar Suárez, and killing his master's wife, Leonor Franco. As fascination with his execution grew stronger, the story of this unruly servant was adapted to the theater during the seventeenth century at least three times. The first version was written by Lope de Vega (1608-1612). A second version was written by Luis de Belmonte y Bermúdez and Antonio Martínez de Meneses (1652), and a third version was written by three unknown authors working in collaboration (1668). Despite variations in plot and purpose, these playwrights convey the message that cruelty is at the heart of relationships between Christians and Muslims during the early modern period.

In this essay, I examine how adaptations of the story of this Muslim slave that range from tragedy to farce reflect on Spanish history. I argue that the tragical features that appear in the first version stem from the proximity of the expulsion of the Moriscos (1609-1614), but the vague and burlesque tone of the other two adaptations can be understood in light of the loss of historical immediacy of the events that speak differently to subsequent spectators and the need to avoid addressing central topics linked to the past coexistence with New Christians in Spain. Thus, I focus on spotting references related to Moriscos, such as allusions to their slavery, their punishment, and, above all, their expulsion in the version of Lope de Vega. At the same time, I trace erasures of these remarks in the versions of Belmonte and Martínez, and of the three anonymous authors. By tracking allusions to and omissions of New Christians in these three plays, I aim to demonstrate that representations of Moriscos and the impact of their banishment in early modern Spanish theater are more pervasive than commonly thought.

### The Three *Hametes*

Lope de Vega's *El Hamete de Toledo* begins with the departure of Don Juan de Castelví and Beltrán from Valencia to North Africa during the celebrations of the Night of Saint John. Celebrating the same festivities, Muslims from Oran foresee the future through the book of a sorceress, Dalima, who predicts the tragic end of Hamete. The celebration ends abruptly with the arrival of Christians, and their subsequent attack on Muslims at sea. In the battle, Hamete and his lover, Argelina, are taken as hostages and sent to Castelví's lover, Doña Juana, as a gift. Doña Juana keeps Argelina and sells Hamete, whose new master brings him to Málaga. Hamete is sold once again by this new master, Don Martín, after he sees Hamete bravely confronting a bull. Don Martín then brings him to Toledo to the house of Don Gaspar and his wife, Doña Leonor. After receiving a letter from Argelina, Hamete hits violently against a maid and it is beaten with a cane by Don Gaspar. Humiliated, Hamete kills Doña Leonor and two servants. In his escape attempt, Hamete kills and injures several people. He is then caught, and he is taken back to Toledo, where he is punished, converts to Christianity, and changes his name to Baptist.

Luis de Belmonte y Bermúdez and Antonio Martínez de Meneses's *El Hamete de Toledo* begins with a scene of Hamete and Rustán lamenting the captivity of Argelina by Christians and discussing Hamete's future through a book. Attack by Christians, Hamete fights with Fernando de Vargas, who after defeating him, takes Hamete to Cartagena. Unlike Lope, these playwrights focus on amorous entanglements and set the plot in the house of Don Gaspar

and Doña Leonor. In this place, Bato confess his love for the Muslim slave, Argelina, who expresses her desire to convert to Christianity. When Hamete is brought to the house by Fernando de Vargas, Argelina recognizes him after seeing him using a mirror. To his surprise, she refuses to be with him after three years of separation. In the second act, Hamete challenges Bato while Doña Leonor expresses her jealousy towards Argelina. In order to flirt with Argelina, Bato tries unsuccessfully to pass as a Moor and is beaten by Hamete. After several attempts, Hamete convinces Argelina to be with him. Doña Leonor finds out that there is a man in Argelina's room and threatens to brand her. In order to confirm the relationship between Hamete and Argelina, Don Gaspar and Doña Leonor make Hamete believe that Argelina has been sold to a merchant from Valencia. Hamete kills Doña Leonor, and, in his escape, he hides on the top of a tower, but he is captured and taken to the authorities. In Toledo, he is punished, converts to Christianity, and changes his name to Baptist.

*El Hamete de Toledo* by three anonymous playwrights working in collaboration is a burlesque play. In it, characters appear with different names: Marcos (Don Gaspar), Lorenza (Doña Leonor), Marina (Argelina), and Toribio (Bato.) Don Marcos comes back from war and brings a Muslim slave, Hamete, from Algiers, Hamete. Unlike in other versions, Hamete is not taken as a hostage but rather turns himself in order to get a monetary reward. In the new household, he expresses his interest in Marina. However, Toribio sees them together and fights with Hamete. Using a cane as a horse, Toribio interrupts a secret encounter between Hamete and Marina. In order to avoid more fights between Hamete and Toribio, Marcos names Toribio as the mayor of Olías and keeps Hamete as servant. Knowing that Hamete and Marina are seeing each other, Marcos beats Hamete and brands Marina. At night, Hamete kills Lorenza and injures Marcos. He escapes and hides in a tower. Toribio wants to hang Hamete, but, surprisingly, Marcos defends him. At the end, Hamete is punished, converts to Christianity after demanding Marina's presence, and changes his name to Baptist.

### **Ambiguity, Fear, and the Moor**

One of the first features that stand out in Lope de Vega's play is the enigmatic representation of the Muslim slave or, as he is often called in the play, the Moor. Ignacio Arellano has pointed out that Lope's Hamete is a tragic protagonist (17). In a similar fashion, Abraham Madroñal identifies the play as tragedy (36), inspired by violent events that actually took place. According to him, the wife of Gaspar Suárez Franco, *regidor* of Toledo, was murdered by a slave. Therefore, Lope could write the play drawing on a known affair to depict the widower in a positive manner. Besides being a co-protagonist, Gaspar is a spectator and could receive benefits from the staging (46). Contrary to these views on Hamete, Thomas E. Case posits that "Hamete cannot be a tragic hero, although he is honorable, noble, and admirable" (201). Mina García Soormally describes him as "a man full of contrasts" (*El Hamete* 6) and emphasizes that "Hamete is different from the other Moors but does not quite belong with the Christians" (*El Hamete* 10). These conflicting views on Hamete are the results of Lope's refusal to develop a fixed character. Like Moriscos, in general the Muslim slave poses a challenge to classification owing to his constant oscillation between extremes.

Due to his inclination to melancholy, Hamete turns into a murderer. Yet Lope does not hesitate to justify this behavior: "Los buenos con agravios se hacen malos" (v. 2391). Lope stages a character with tragic undertones and spends a considerable effort to illustrating that the killings by Hamete can be explained by the misfortunes of slavery. Lope does not label the attributes of the Muslim or Moor as fixed qualities, but implies that they are shaped by daily interactions with his masters. Hamete has been taken as a slave, separated from his lover, and beaten with a cane in defiance of his claimed nobility. While spectators witness the horror of his killing, they can also identify with the traumas of a noble Moor until the moment he kills

others. I would like to suggest that the cryptic staging of Hamete in Lope acknowledges the ambivalence of an audience engaged with the controversies surrounding the expulsion, i.e., those who condemn the misdeeds of the Moor and those who believe that those misdeeds are the consequence of mistreatment. Lope is constantly flipping our sympathies back and forth in response to the actions of the Muslim slave. The ambiguous portrayal of Hamete is central in the first version and responds to Lope's desire to address a diverse that either supported or opposed the expulsion. In this manner, the ambiguous characterization of Hamete speaks to different spectators simultaneously.

Although there are only a few plays that allude to the banishment of the Moriscos directly, this event influenced how playwrights conceived the representation of Moorish characters. To illustrate this point, Felipe B. Pedraza Jiménez posits that the minimal representation of the event in the theater can be understood as a reflection of the expulsion as a thorny topic (185). Carried out region by region, the process lasted from 1609 to 1614. Promoted by the Duke of Lerma, Francisco Gómez de Sandoval y Rojas, the expulsion was proclaimed during the reign of Philip III to put an end to the long struggle with Islam in the Peninsula. Supported by several religious figures such as Juan de Ribera, Jaime Bleda, and Pedro Aznar Cardona, the decision was also criticized by historians, writers, and playwrights, such as Pedro de Valencia. In fact, Trevor Dadson has noted how propaganda under the government of Philip III swung into action due to the opposition to the expulsion (2). Thus, the first version of *Hamete* appeared at a moment of intense debate and, as such, reflects the tensions and complex dynamics between Old and New Christians in the Peninsula. As criticism of the expulsion faded, it was no longer necessary to create a perplexing character nor to include facts connected to a historical timeframe.

Abraham Madroñal warns us that Lope's *Hamete* focuses more on slavery than on the Morisco ethnicity of the character, and therefore, that the play should not be read as a justification of the expulsion (54). Yet, one should take into account the influence of the banishment not so much as in seeing how the play could become a platform for its justification or condemnation, but in viewing it as a cultural product shaped by distinctive events that influenced the selection of places, characters, and themes. As a matter of fact, Thomas E. Case observes that the "tragedy of Moriscos and the tension it caused in Spanish society is essential to understanding the background of *El Hamete de Toledo*" (195). Likewise, Mina García Soormally proposes that, although Lope opted not to present the expulsion on stage, he "dramatizes the tension of the historical moment and the internal struggle that the clash between cultures produced" (*El Hamete* 3). Clearly, the tensions presented in Lope de Vega's version diminish in the subsequent adaptations.

Lope wants to stage a character who defies one single interpretation or a character who eludes a predetermined reading regardless of his known fate. It is for this reason that the playwright places the act of reading at the center the first time that Muslims characters appear on stage and puts an emphasis on the difficulty of deciphering Hamete. In the first act, the Muslim diviner, Dalima, uses a book as a tool to reveal the future of others. The enchanted book can be opened to any page, it has neither a beginning nor an end, and it adjusts its content according to who is reading it. After interpreting the future for several Muslims, she decides to hide Hamete's fate—whose real meaning will be revealed at the end—and provides another possible reading. Besides hinting at the common view of Moriscos as practitioners of magic, the staging of bibliomancy unveils the enigmatic qualities of the play. In a compelling reading of this scene, James Nemiroff connects Dalima's book to the debates on translation surrounded the Lead Books of Sacromonte, a series of tablets discovered in the Turpiana Tower in 1588 and, later, between 1595 and 1599 (136). Probably a forgery of Miguel de Luna and Alonso de Castillo, the lead books were written in Latin, Spanish, and Solomonic Arabic, and attempted

to redefine theological views such as the immaculate conception of the Virgin and the authenticity of Saint Cecilio.

Beyond guiding readers to future events and staging debates on the Lead Books, Dalima's book disguises the text's own constitution. Just like the magical book, the *comedia* shows that the act of interpretation responds to different readers' perspectives and does not lead to a single meaning. Indeed, Lope seems to give us the key to how to read his own work. In other words, he provides a sort of literary criticism *avant la lettre* in the sense that interpretation is an act of working on what catches the eye and deals with the selection of fragments, passages, and quotes from a book that attempt to disclose its meaning. In the same manner that readers respond to Dalima's book, literary interpretation focuses on the analysis of words that come to the critic as revelation. Through his ambiguity, Lope poses the following dilemma: Are we going to read the Moor as an evil being who deserves condemnation? Or is it society that makes the Moor evil? Lope supports both readings.

Given that adaptations are connected to a previous text, it is logical to compare these texts in order to trace the manner in which each of them illuminates our knowledge of their particular moment. In the first version, the possibility of simultaneous meanings offered by a sorceress is important to an understanding of the ambiguous portrayal of the Muslim. In Belmonte and Martínez, the only Muslim characters placed in North Africa are Hamete and Rustán. In this case, Rustán allows Hamete to provide his own interpretation of the book. There is no ambiguity that will be resolved or meaning that will be revealed at the end. Moreover, Hamete is introduced in a small and fragmented community, a depiction that contrasts with the first version, but is more in tune with his isolation in the last version. While the scene of the sorceress is crucial to understanding the enigmatic qualities of a play written in the midst of the expulsion, it is not necessary in later adaptations of the story that seek to entertain different audiences. In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon defines adaptations as "repetition, but repetition without replication" (7). In this regard, adaptations are a form of intertextuality (8) that dialogue with and recognize previous texts without being an exact copy. Thus, although the scene is repeated, it is also altered in order to minimize ambiguity. This characterization differs in the second and third versions.

In the third version, the three unknown playwrights erase the scene completely. Due to the genre of the play, it is understandable that the authors wanted to eliminate the tragic undertones and not leave room for ambiguity. The genre of *comedias burlescas* included a series of plays staged during traditional festivities at the palace during the reign of Philip IV. The majority of these short works recast known plays and, as Frédéric Serralta observes, what is distinctive of the genre is its imitative character (101). In these plays, humor is an important part of the adaptation by emphasizing absurd aspects and exaggerating extravagant characterizations to the extent that everything is, as Serralta describes it, illogical, irrational, and absurd (102). While Frédéric Serralta focused on humor as an element to provoke laughter, Luciano García Lorenzo suggests that humor allows the criticism of social values (124). In the case of the last version, the three anonymous playwrights turn Hamete into a fixed character deprived of the interior turmoil and hardly capable of provoking the controversy that Lope aspires to convey in his characterization of the Muslim slave.

In the characterization of Hamete, the three versions put a different emphasis on the fear that the other characters experience in the presence of the Muslim slave. In the first version, Lope insists on the real or perceived fear that Christians experienced in the presence of the Moor: "donde Beatriz te enseñó,/ dice que le diste miedo," (vv. 964-965) "Temo, señor, que se atreva/ a algún criado de casa/ o alguna gente de fuera," (vv. 2077-2079) "Tiemblo, vive Dios, del moro," (1185) "¡Lindo miedo en caballero!," (v. 1568) "¿Qué diablos tiene este galgo/ que hoy nos pone a todos miedo?" (vv. 2320-2321). This facet is different in the three plays due to either the proximity to or the distance from the expulsion of the Moriscos. Precisely, José

Miguel Martínez Torrejón connects the fear of Hamete to the fear of expelled Moriscos in Lope de Vega's version (92). In 1609, Spain was in the process of expelling the Moriscos due to the suspicions of their collaboration with the Turks. In the critic's own words, he states: "Hamete, pues, como se decía de los moriscos de su época, planeaba pasar el mar para regresar y acabar con España" (102). This complexity is lost in the second and third adaptations.

The version by Belmonte and Martínez and the one by the three anonymous authors make the Muslim slave a key character in the development of amorous entanglements. The only threat posed by the Moor is the threat to the decency and desires of his masters. In fact, the Moor appears as a servant of a household who somehow loses the menacing attributes and becomes a familiar entity. For instance, in the last adaptation, don Marcos does not want to punish the Moor for the killing of his wife. Absurdly, he goes so far as to state that he laments Hamete's punishment as if it were against his son: "Por Dios que me he lastimado/ como si perdiera un hijo" (vv. 1439-40). Given the distance in time between the first and third versions, it is logical to think that the fear of and anxiety toward Moriscos had lessened considerably after the expulsion. However, at the moment of the first version, the fear of Moriscos, either real or perceived, could not be ignored as it appears in treatises, novels, and plays. Ironically, despite the fact that characters do not fear the Muslim slave in the second and third versions, he kills his master's wife and several other people while he tries to escape.

In the second and third versions, Hamete is closer to the figure of the *gracioso* than to a serious protagonist. Thus, it is not surprising that critics like Madroñal and Arellano insist on the evolution of the story from tragedy to farce. In his *Eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte*, Karl Marx posits that history repeats itself (5). Drawing on Hegel's writings, he notes that great events and characters of world history appear the first time as tragedy and the second time as farce (5). In discussing the second version, Arellano points out that the text is less coherent and that there is a difference between the authors' mastery vis-a-vis Lope de Vega (23). More importantly, his portrayal redirects us to something more fearful. This familiarity reveals an unsettling atmosphere. In *Anxiety of Sameness in Early Modern Spain*, Christina H. Lee posits that Moriscos were expected to be acculturated, but were "seen as being a threat to the well-being of their community if they are suspected of desiring to become an exact cultural reflection to the Old Christians" (177). While the anxiety over sameness is visible in Lope's play, it is reduced considerably in later versions to the extent that Hamete barely has any distinctive qualities as Muslim slave. As characters lose their fear and curiosity for Hamete, the plays confirm the similarity between Christians and Moriscos. One could easily argue that this likeness is due to the challenges in finding Moorish garments to use on stage after the expulsion. However, there are barely allusions in the dialogues or stage directions to suggest otherwise.

In sum, later versions of *El Hamete de Toledo* show a familiarity towards Hamete from the safeness of knowing that Moriscos were expelled from Spain. Curiously, in all three versions he still is a threat to communal peace. In this sense, later versions appropriate selections from the first version, but what is omitted allows us to reflect on the first version as it reveals the horrors produced by sameness and familiarity. In *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders notes that appropriation is "involved in a process of reading between the lines, offering analogues or supplements to what is available in a source text, and drawing attentions to its gaps and absences" (75). Departing from this statement, I would like to emphasize that adaptations allow us to better read the source text through the elimination and editing process they embark upon. In other words, adaptations' own gaps and absences redirect readers to the creative process, and, more importantly, to the adapted work.

### **Cartography, Displacement, and Slavery**

The three adaptations also differ in the references to different towns in the first version vis-a-vis the centrality of Toledo in the second and third ones. In Lope, cartography is essential to understanding the convoluted interactions between Christians and Muslims in the Mediterranean. The allusions to places, cities, and routes illustrate a desire to trace the slave network inside and outside of Spain in the sixteenth century. Indeed, despite staging events that happened in Toledo recognizing the city, Lope wants to place the story in a Mediterranean context. Some of the cities mentioned are Marbella, Gibraltar, Tangier, Ceuta, Mazagan, Asilah, Tarifa, Ronda, Cádiz, Sanlúcar, Ayamonte, Lepe, Cape St. Vincent, Granada, Almería, Cabo of Gato, Melilla, Orán, Cartagena, Alicante, Denia, Oliva, Palamós, and Barcelona, along with the Gulf of Narbona. A native of Meliona, Hamete belongs to the Abencerrajes, who came to Algiers from Spain. In Oran, he is a corsair who is taken as a captive to a land that he had visited during his younger years as a slave. After being a captive in Valencia, he moved to Málaga, and finally was displaced to Toledo. The specificity of these areas should not be overlooked. In fact, these references can be better understood in reference to a period of particular turmoil regarding the Moriscos; i.e. the years from the Second Rebellion of the Alpujarras to their expulsion. In this theatrical map, Málaga turns into an important stage in Hamete's journey. In addition to giving an air of veracity to the story, one must remember that Málaga was also an important center for the slave trade.

The defeat of the Moriscos and the conquest of Portugal was key to the supply of Black slaves in Málaga. Juan Jesús Bravo Caro states that the phenomenon of slavery was widespread in the city during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (211), and María Presentación Pereiro Barbero asserts that the rebellion of the Moriscos influenced the internal market in Málaga with a drop in the material value of slaves and the extraordinary increase of buying and selling operations (325). Lope was aware of this situation. In his prologue, Matthew J. Dean suggests that Lope's admonition to slave owners at the end of the play could be relevant to an audience during the expulsion: "It is likely that 'esclavos' refers specifically to Morisco slaves" (42). In the first act of the first version, Suárez notes that "Esa ciudad,/ que por saberlo os prevengo,/ suele tener abundancia/ de algunos de Berbería" (vv. 789-792). This explains how Gaspar Suárez from Toledo gets in contact with Hamete. It is not fortuitous that he decides to keep the original name of the slave and the one chosen at the moment of conversion. Bernard Vincent has shown that the most common name among Muslim slaves in Málaga was Hamete and the most common name among Christian slaves was Juan.

According to Vincent, the visible presence of Black and Muslim slaves in Málaga contributed to the strong and unanimous opposition to the expulsion (257). These references are lost completely in the second and third versions, in which Hamete is transferred from Oran to Toledo through Cartagena. More importantly, in the second and especially the third version, the impact of the commerce of slaves is minimized. While in the first version Hamete is taken away from his Muslim community, in the other two versions the authors place Hamete in a domestic sphere from the start. In Belmonte and Martínez's play, he appears with Rustán in a scene that parodies the fortune telling offered by the sorceress Dalima in Lope's play before being taken as a hostage. In the three anonymous authors' play, Hamete is introduced to the audience when he is already a slave in Spain. His master, don Marcos, narrates how he fought against the Moors and eventually captured Hamete. However, there is no focus on the encounters at sea, the change of owners, or the vicissitudes of slavery. In this case, Hamete and Marina are more common servants of a household threatening the decency of their masters than slaves menacing the system that subjugates them. The allusions to Málaga are erased in the later versions of *El Hamete de Toledo* due to the fact that these authors are less interested in the political, social, and economic conditions that shaped the first version.

References to Valencia are more complex. There are seventeen allusions to this city in the first version. In contrast, there only two in the second version and none in the third one. On

the one hand, Lope's experience as an exile in Valencia left a strong impact on his writing for the theater, and, in this sense, *El Hamete de Toledo* pays homage not only to Toledo but to this city as well. On the other hand, the centrality of Valencia in the expulsion of the Moriscos and the abundance of allusions in Lope's play are not coincidental. It was the place where the expulsion was first announced. Consequently, the city became one of the most important ports for the expelled en route to different parts of the Mediterranean. Like some other writers, Lope took a story from the recent past at the moment that events related to Moriscos were unfolding and adapted it to reflect contemporary circumstances.

In Lope, Valencia shows aspects of the enslavement of Muslims and, by extension, Moriscos. Henry Kamen posits that by the mid-seventeenth century "slavery in Valencia was overwhelmingly Moorish rather than black African" (213). He observes that slaves were delegated to a domestic function and represented a status symbol: "The lack of a clear preference for males over females, and the absence of any great demand for mature males, proves that slaves were not required for onerous physical labour in Valencia" (219). Vicente Graullera Sanz also observes slaves from Granada in Valencia after the Second Rebellion of the Alpujarras (134). In this fashion, Lope paints a realistic picture of the position of slaves regarding their place in Spain by emphasizing their domesticity. Hamete is not abused by hard work. Rather, the grievances against his claimed nobility encountered in the spaces of the households in which he lives make him a resentful being. Valencia also symbolizes the lost homeland. At the beginning of the play, several Christians celebrate the festivities in honor of Saint John the Baptist along the coast. Unfortunately, Don Juan de Castelví announces that he must go to Barbary to fight against Moors. Leaving his lover behind, Don Juan laments: "¡Ay, Juana, ya te perdí!/ ¡Ay, Valencia, patria mía,/ con qué tristeza aquel día/ de tus murallas salí! (vv. 588-590) In the same manner, the first scene that introduces Muslim characters starts with the observance of these festivities in Oran. Much like Don Juan, Hamete must depart from his land to engage in piracy activities. However, he is not going to be separated from his lover, Argelina, until he is settled in Valencia. The parallelism of losing a lover and abandoning a city is reinforced throughout the play as a means to highlight how separation and estrangement were experienced on both sides of the Mediterranean. Martínez Torrejón has noted that the correspondence of both groups along the sea is total (94). More specifically, the similarities of Don Juan and Hamete's misfortunes stress the significance of Valencia to characters, to Moriscos, and to the playwright himself.

In the second act, Hamete finds comfort in Valencia to the extent of comparing it to other places in North Africa: "...hay correspondencia/ de Argel, Tremecén y Orán/ a Valencia, bien podrán/ verme y buscarme en Valencia." (vv. 973-976) However, due to the fear of his master's wife, Hamete must abandon Valencia and he is taken to Málaga to be sold as slave. Being separated from his lover, Argelina, Hamete laments the loss of Valencia more than the one from Oran: "No dejo sino en Valencia/ la mitad del alma agora" (1658-1659); "¿Qué he de hacer en tal desdicha/ viendo que ya no me queda/ remedio para librar/ el alma que está en Valencia" (vv. 1958-1961); "Si pudiera conquistarte/ con mis suspiros, Valencia" (vv. 2026-2027). In the context of the expulsion, these references are not innocent. The departure of Hamete reflects the experience of thousands of Moriscos leaving the port cities en route to exile. This does not mean that Lope was taking a stance on the issue of the expulsion, but, rather, that he could empathize with the descendants of the Muslims expelled from Spain just as he was banished to Valencia. Similarly to the expelled descendants of Muslims in Spain at the beginning of seventeenth century, Hamete embodies displacement, dislocation, and dispossession. Contrary to other playwrights, Lope de Vega insists on constant relocation and never-ending exile by introducing Hamete as a descendant of the expelled Abencerrajes from Spain. This aspect is reinforced by the fact that Hamete reiterates on several occasions that he

is a noble from Meliona. Located between Oran and Tlemcen, Meliona was renowned for being a place inhabited by expelled Moors from Spain.

In accounts of events that inspired these plays, the city is never mentioned. In the two sources copied by Madroñal, Luis Zapata de Chaves' *Miscelánea o Varia historia* (ca. 1590) and Jerónimo Román de la Higuera's *Historia eclesiástica de la imperial ciudad de Toledo* (ca. 1605), its absence is notable. In Zapata de Chaves' account, Hamete was a Turkish slave hit by his master after coming back from a game of canes (Madroñal, 58). In Román de la Higuera's report, Hamete was sold to Gaspar Suárez in Málaga by Alonso Francos (Madroñal, 60). Thus, the prominence of Valencia in Lope does not follow historical accuracy in regard to the sources, but it is important for the understanding of contemporary issues.

These subtleties are lost in the second and third versions. In Belmonte and Martínez, Valencia is mentioned twice. In order to know Hamete's real feelings towards Argelina, Gonzalo proposes a ruse: "Ya una industria he imaginado/ en casa voz echare/ de que Argelina vendí/ a un mercader que se fue/ a Valencia" (vv. 2430-2434). The figure of the merchant was often associated with Valencia as a city with a geographical position that fostered the exchange of commodities in the Mediterranean. One must remember that a Valencian merchant helped Miguel de Cervantes in his fourth attempt to escape from his captivity in Algiers, and Gaspar Aguilar gives prominence to this figure in his play *El mercader amante* (1616). However, Valencia does not have the same importance that it had in Lope de Vega's version. In the second version, characters never visited or missed Valencia. Rather, the city is related to commerce as Argelina could be sold to a merchant with connections in the region. In the version of the three unknown authors, Valencia does not appear. In fact, there is barely any expression of sadness from being deprived of one's own land.

### **Crime, Punishment, and Unforgiveness**

The three early modern versions of *El Hamete de Toledo* share the same ending. Despite some variations in names and dialogue, the Muslim slave is sentenced to death for his misdeeds and killed even though he converts to Christianity. On the one hand, the killing of the main character is unavoidable to maintain the accuracy of the story and to provide spectators the sense of horror and fascination produced by the torture of the real Hamete. Moreover, the feeling of retribution would be very appealing to a public accustomed to *comedias* ending with the triumph of human and divine justice. On the other hand, the killing and conversion of Hamete have a different meaning when one contextualizes these within the expulsion of the Moriscos.

The ending is a perplexing one. Why cannot Hamete be saved after embracing Christianity? Why must he die after turning into a Christian? After all, theatrical adaptations of Hamete's story, as with most early modern Spanish plays, do not aim historical accuracy and alter past events to fit into a specific purpose. As the friar reminds him at the moment of his conversion: "Si lo haces porque piensas/ que has de vivir, hoy te advierto/ que, aunque te vuelvas cristiano, te han de dar dos mil tormentos" (vv. 3053-3056). I contend that the scene makes a commentary on the expulsion. Richard W. Tyler, Matthew J. Dean, and Thomas Case hint at the possibility that Lope de Vega's version was inspired by the torture of a Morisco king during the expulsion. While these playwrights may be respecting the sources of their narratives, they also echo the powerless position of those who embraced Christianity at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Despite massive baptisms and evangelization campaigns, conversion was not sufficient to convince political and religious authorities to keep converted Muslims in Spain. In his sermon after the announcement of the expulsion in Valencia, Juan de Ribera argued: "el primer remedio que pone para que se conserve la paz, y cese la perturbacion é inquietud, es suplicar á nuestro Señor que sean cortados (no desmochados, sinó cortados) los



infieles y perturbadores.” (5) Thus, the discourse of “cutting” those who were a threat to peace was common in a period that was debating the banishment of Moriscos. In the first version, punishment is intense:

Oíd lo que se ha de hacer de aqueste moro:  
 Primeramente, atado en un madero,  
 que vaya puesto en la mitad del carro,  
 le han de sacar pedazos de sus carnes  
 con tenazas ardiendo en todo el cuerpo  
 hasta que no descubra cosa sana.  
 Luego, en Zocodover, entrambas manos  
 le han de cortar y luego de la horca,  
 que ya he mandado hacer, han de colgarle  
 por los pies, la cabeza abajo, a efeto  
 de que muera rabiando deste modo. (vv. 2896-2906)

The scene of the torture makes the play closer to the martyr scene of *El santo niño de La Guardia*. In fact, Madroñal has suggested that *El Hamete de Toledo* “surge como respuesta o complemento a otra comedia toledana del propio Lope: *El santo niño de La Guardia*. Sus parecidos son notables en cuanto a la atrocidad con que se describe el suplicio del niño inocente en la primera y del esclavo en la segunda” (47). In one of her essays, García Soormally offers a compelling reading of the conversion in Lope’s play: “Sólo ésta es la que coincide en el tiempo y en el tono con el momento de la expulsión y por tanto, sólo ésta reproduce el sufrimiento que estaba a flor de piel. Por ello, Lope describe la tortura de manera muy gráfica pero, a la vez, abre la posibilidad de la recuperación del idólatra y plantea la conversión como última solución” (*El (H)amete de Toledo* 60-61) and adds “Por tanto, y aunque la conversión sólo llega momentos antes de expirar, Amete lleva en su último viaje el germen de la salvación y, de este modo, aunque *in extremis*, logra incluirse en el proyecto hegemónico” (61). Although her interpretation differs slightly from mine, we both agree on the importance of conversion in a moment of intense debate regarding the expulsion. In effect, this representation directly addresses the problem with Moriscos who, despite their conversion to Christianity, continued to practice Islam or were perceived as unable to assimilate.

The second version also shows Hamete on his way to his punishment: “O le saquen por un lado del tablado o se descubre abriéndose dos puertas y Hamete sentado en uno como carro atadas atrás las manos puesto de medio cuerpo arriba una camisa dada encarnación con un brasero a sus pies con tenazas” (86). However, Belmonte and Martínez are more interested in the baptism than in the visual aspects of the torture. The third version does not offer many details: “Sale HAMETE y el verdugo atencándole, el ESTUDIANTE y DON MARCOS” (111). The three versions more or less follow the sources and insist on the observation that baptism is not enough to save Hamete. Cutting Hamete from society to restore order is similar to the scapegoat mechanism in which one individual is singled out for negative treatment.

Although these adaptations fulfill the expectations of Hamete’s punishment, the second and third versions do not dwell much on the horror and violence like the first one does. Case has pointed out the unusual violence of Lope’s play (193). Drawing on René Girard’s concept of the scapegoat, he contends that the different forms of violence “have a social as well as dramatic function in *El Hamete*” (205). Nemiroff suggests that “Lope was inspired by two kinds of city festivals that would have been observed during his stay” (151); i.e. *autos de fe* and festivals celebrating saintly relics. In the case of later versions of Hamete’s story, the decrease in *autos de fe* could explain the less violence in these playwrights’ staging of the punishment of the Muslim slave. However, this does not mean that these versions are more

humane or sympathetic toward Hamete. At the end of the *comedia burlesca*, don Marcos addresses spectators to remind them: “aún no lo hemos perdonado” (v. 1664). The repetition of history as farce compels us to go back to the particular moment in the past to comprehend its effects, but it also reveals something more fearsome as it cannot hide or erase completely the tragic elements of earlier times. Thus, Marcos’ statement evidences how farce can be more revealing than tragedy as it shows an unwillingness to forgive. More importantly, it demonstrates that these authors were aware of the play as an *adaptation*. Hutcheon states that to “experience it *as an adaptation*, however, as we have seen, we need to recognize it as such and to know its adapted text, thus allowing the latter to oscillate in our memories with what we are experiencing” (121). In this case, the text is closer to the play of Belmonte and Martínez. As a matter of fact, the editors of the *comedia burlesca* have compared its ending to previous versions, but in ridiculous style.

### Conclusion

The three adaptations of Hamete’s story were written with different purposes, genres and audiences in mind. The ambiguity, the sufferings of slaves, and the fear of Muslims that make the first version unique seem to disappear in later versions. After all, meaning is shaped by context. Yet one should not dismiss adaptations for not following the adapted play accurately or not insisting on these compelling aspects. Lope himself adapted the story of Hamete adding details that were not in the sources. Although spectators of Lope’s play might be somewhat familiar with accounts of the Muslim slave, the knowledge of later audiences of Hamete’s case, the sources of his story, and the influence of Lope de Vega’s play are hard to measure. As Sanders reminds us, “knowledge of the adaptional work is not necessary for a satisfying experience of viewing such a film, then, but we might argue that such knowledge brought into play in the process of understanding could enrich the spectator’s experience and may indeed enhance or complicate the pleasures involved” (28). Spectators of the second and third versions certainly knew that the expulsion was complete and therefore, references to the material conditions previous to the banishment had to be deleted or avoided.

The impact of the expulsion in plays written at the beginning of the seventeenth century should not be overlooked. They must not be examined to determine to what extent they support or criticize the deportation of Moriscos from Spain. Instead, these plays can speak of the fear, anxieties, and uncertainties of a period distinguished by intense political, religious, and economic debates and reveal the impact of the banishment by the manner in which the stagings of events or Muslim characters were altered or transformed in comparison to plays written or performed prior to the banishment. As I suggested earlier, allusions to and omissions of issues related to Moriscos illustrate how their depiction and the impact of their banishment in early modern Spanish theater are more pervasive than commonly thought. Thus, despite Thomas E. Case’s assertion that Moriscos were not suitable dramatic material (*Lope* 145), I contend that New Christians and their circumstances were staged in elusive ways. As Fredric Jameson proposes, “history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form” (35). In the example of *El Hamete de Toledo*, playwrights adapted the story to their own circumstances, bearing witness to Spain’s own adjustment to historical conditions. Whereas indirect allusions to the “Morisco problem” are embedded throughout the text in the first version, omissions of these illustrate a desire to avoid addressing the topic in the second and third versions.

These adaptations allow us to trace the repetition of history from tragedy to farce through the story of a Muslim slave. However, despite its temporal linearity, history can repeat itself from more angles than just farce. For example, the most recent adaptation of Lope de Vega’s *El Hamete de Toledo*, staged by AlmaViva Teatro and premiered at the Real Escuela

Superior de Arte Dramático de Madrid (RESAD) in 2009, privileges the tragic undertones of the first version. In analyzing the social commitment of this theater company, Marta Olivas reads this adaptation of Lope's play from the perspective of immigrants: "El vilipendio y el menosprecio al que se somete a la inmigración arrastran al extranjero a una espiral de rencor que solo puede desembocar en la réplica del tratamiento injusto recibido" (194). Thus, Lope's Hamete continues to represent the displacement, dislocation, and dispossession of a religious, cultural, and political minority after four centuries. In the adaptation, Hamete invites spectators to reflect on the challenges of immigrants in contemporary Spain and the permanence of the Mediterranean as a place of conflictive encounters. The expulsion of Moriscos might be erased in theatrical adaptations; however, the banishment still haunts Spanish collective memory in intangible ways. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the director César Barló decided to stage the story of Hamete almost exactly 400 years after the decree expelling Moriscos from Spain was announced.

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