Tristán the Sacristan in Cervantes’ *Los baños de Argel*: A Cervantine *Gracioso*?

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ABSTRACT

Joshua Shaw Wasson: Tristán the Sacristan in Cervantes’ Los baños de Argel: A Cervantine Gracioso?
(Under the direction of Carmen Hsu)

Los baños de Argel (1615) is but one of many works that include a “sacristan,” a character that has appeared in humanist satires, comedias nuevas, and treatro breve, and which over time had become a stock character. This study examines how Cervantes takes the “sacristan” and manipulates that character’s conventional traits to create humor in Los baños de Argel’s Tristán. To accomplish that goal, the paper explores the development of the sacristan in earlier Spanish texts before it examines Cervantes’ innovative reworking of the character in the abovementioned comedia. In addition, this essay examines the function of Tristán in relation to the role of the gracioso in the comedia nueva and allows us to conclude that Tristán should be considered a gracioso but a la cervantina.
To my wife Lauren, who has been more supportive of this project than any spouse has a right to expect.
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CHAPTER 1

TRISTÁN THE SACRISTAN IN CERVANTES’ LOS BAÑOS DE ARGEL:

A CERVANTINE GRACIOSO?

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra’s prose works, *Don Quixote* and *Las novelas ejemplares*, are recognized by readers and critics as some of the best examples of Spanish narrative, but it is not until the last thirty years that his theatrical works have received serious scholarly attention.\(^1\) In *Los baños de Argel*, a *comedia del cautiverio* first published in 1615,\(^2\) Cervantes makes use of a sacristan, a character that he uses in another of his *comedias*, *Pedro de Urdemalas*, and in three of his *entremeses*: “La elección de los

\(^1\) For examination of all Cervantes’ theatrical works see particularly: Stanislav Zimic’s *El teatro de Cervantes* (1992), and Jesús Gonzalez Maestro’s *La escena imaginaria* (2000). For authors concentrating on just his *entremeses*, see: Cory Reed’s *The Novelist as Playwright* (1993) and Vicente Pérez de León’s *Tablas destempladas* (2005).

\(^2\) There is some debate as to when exactly Cervantes wrote the plays published in *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses nunca representados*. *Los baños de Argel* in particular is problematic, because it seems to quite clearly borrow from Cervantes’ early *El trato de Argel*, which is presumed to have been written between 1581 and 1587, as well as the *relato de cautiverio* that is told by Ruy Pérez de Viedma in Chapters 39-41 of the first book of *Don Quijote* (1605). Canavaggio argues for a date of composition closer to the work being printed in 1615. For a more thorough discussion of both sides of the issue, see “Fecha de Composición” in Jean Canavaggio’s introduction to his 1984 critical edition published by Taurus Ediciones (35-39).
alcalde de Daganzo,” “La guarda cuidadosa,” and “La cueva de Salamanca.” As this character will be the focus of a much more extensive project that will explore the evolution of the sacristan as a character in Spanish literature from his commonalities with the other clergymen in the medieval period to his representation in the theater of the early modern period, the current study will concentrate on the novel way in which Cervantes uses one of these sacristans, Tristán, to create humor in Los baños de Argel.

While the increased study of Cervantes’ theatrical works has resulted in other examinations of Los baños de Argel, the focus of those works is rarely on the sacristan and when it is on the sacristan, scholars tend consider his anti-Semitism and leave off other considerations. Nicolas Kanellos (1975) and Jean Canavaggio (1998) have both written studies considering what Tristán’s anti-Semitic exchanges with a Jew might mean, but both focus on whether or not Cervantes is an anti-Semite or if he is attempting to create a social critique of anti-Semitism. This paper will argue that there is another way to view Tristán, that he is in fact more than just an anti-Semitic buffoon. In order to accomplish this goal, this study will first present a quick examination of the representation of churchmen in Spanish literature before the time of Cervantes. That will be followed by a discussion of humorous characters in early modern Spanish theater with a particular emphasis on the characteristics of the comedia nueva and its humorous character, the gracioso. Finally, this study will consider Tristán as he is presented in Los baños de Argel and argue that the circumstances of Los baños de Argel and Cervantes’

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3 Jean Canavaggio’s “Sobre lo cómico en el teatro cervantino: Tristán y Madrigal, bufones in partibus” (1985-1986) and “Las figuras del donaire en las comedias de Cervantes” (1981) are two studies that do examine Tristán as a comic character in more depth, but as will be argued later in this study, Canavaggio’s treatment of Tristán as a buffoon ignores important connections between Tristán and the gracioso of the comedia nueva.
use of Tristán to provide comic relief have more in common with the *graciosos* of the *comedia nueva* than has been previously recognized.

**Churchmen in Early European and Spanish Texts**

The tendency to create works with clergymen in a central role who act against their supposed religious and societal obligations is conspicuous in medieval and early modern European literature. In Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (1386-1395), the “Miller’s Tale” provides us with a look at a parish clerk ready and willing to commit adultery with another man’s wife, even though he fails in the end to do so. Additionally, the clergy were often the objects of satire in Boccaccio’s *The Decameron* (1351). Often, as in the third day’s tenth story where Rustico tricks Alibek into having sex with him, a member of the clergy would be involved in questionable sexual practices. Another medieval European work, the *Carmina Burana* (1230) criticizes the actions of the clergy in relation to what they should be doing ideally. While the poems do contain passages about romantic misconduct, another type of criticism occurs in these poems. “In Terra Summus…,” translated into Spanish by Lluís Moles as “En la tierra, en estos tiempos…” the poetic voice discusses how money rules everything, even to the point that “Al dinero aplaude, / venal, la curia pontificia / el dinero impera / en las celdas de los abades” (vv. 5-8). These medieval criticisms of the Church, that its leaders are avaricious and sexually involved with women, will be brought forth again by the Christian Humanists when they begin to criticize Church practices during the Renaissance.

This wider European tendency to use clergymen as an effective means of social and religious criticism also became a mainstay of early Spanish works like *El libro de buen
amor (circa 1330-1343) and the mid-14th Century Dança general de la muerte. The narrator and main character of El libro de buen amor calls himself the “Arcipreste de Hita.” In this work, he tells a number of off-color stories about his pursuit of women. While his introduction explains that the stories he tells are to teach others how not to behave through the use of his bad examples, it is telling that he claims to be archpriest. In the Dança general de la muerte, Death responds to the pleas of various members of society, a number of which are clergymen that commit various sins, like keeping mistresses.

As time wore on, the actions of these clergy and other more prominent members of the Catholic Church became the targets of Christian Humanists’ writings in Spain. The Diálogo entre Mercurio y Carón (1528-1529) written by Alfonso de Valdés provides a good example of the type of attacks made by Christian humanists against the Catholic clergy. In the Diálogo, Mercurio and Carón have a conversation about a number of issues they see with human society, but most interestingly for the purposes of this study, they talk about the conduct of Christians in positions of power in the Catholic Church. It is during one of these discussions that Mercurio describes his tour of the world. He tells Carón that he went to see how Christians lived and was shocked to find out that they broke almost all of the rules provided to them by Jesus. He highlights the questionable practices of the church in various ways, including the practice of keeping mistresses and engaging in sexual relations in violation of the vows of celibacy taken by the clergy, as

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4 Although probably circulated in manuscript form before his death in 1532, the work was published together with Diálogo de las cosas acaecidas en Roma without attribution or publisher’s information in Italy following his death. It is likely that the publisher anticipated official pushback from the Church as the work was already censured in 1530. Other topics of discussion include a defense of the emperor Charles V and his dealings with other monarchs.
well as the infighting that occurred amongst the priestly class. During one conversation, a bishop admits to keeping a concubine, and during another, a priest tells how he spread lies about other priests in retaliation for being accused of sleeping with many women (128-129, 173-174). When Mercurio asks him if the charges are true, the priest responds, “[p]ocas veces, cuando la carne mucho me vencía, mas procuraba de hacerlo muy secretamente” (174). Although the priest’s sin of being with many women was in and of itself problematic, the fact that he lied to cover up his transgressions is perhaps the more problematic of his sins as that sin was not a result of human weakness, but presumably resulted from a desire to escape punishment.

While sacristans are not implicated in amorous adventures in the Diálogo, one does engage in other sinful behavior. Before allowing Mercurio to take communion, a sacristan requires him to make a payment in order to receive it (89). By commercializing religion, the sacristan in the Diálogo illustrates another humanistic criticism of Catholic Church practices: simony. The corruption of the Church depicted in the Diálogo is not limited to the sacristan at this point in time as already evidenced by the actions of the priest and the bishop. While the criticism of the Church is a central part of the Diálogo, this practice of openly questioning the policies of the Church and the actions of its leaders was not to be long lived; in fact the Diálogo itself was officially banned in 1559 (Bataillon, 404). The Church’s reaction to the open criticism found in works like the Diálogo is presumably behind the diminished appearance of priests, bishops, and monks and the increased role of the sacristan in the entremés. Cotarelo y Mori states that “[e]n España no se hubiera tolerado presentar un sacerdote o un conventual enamorado de
It is during this period of censorship that the sacristan, a church official not necessarily of the priestly class in charge of caring for the various vestments and items used by the priests during services, begins to be employed on a more consistent basis by various authors as a humorous character.

The gracioso of the comedia nueva

Los baños de Argel includes many humorous moments involving Tristán the sacristan, moments which this essay will use to shed some needed light on Cervantes’ use of humor in the play, and in so doing show how Cervantes transformed a stock character into something more. In order to understand this transformation we must first know more about the comedia nueva and the gracioso. In the comedia nueva the plot often revolves around a galán pursuing the affections of the dama, which in some cases leads to situations that are serious or even suspenseful in nature, necessitating some type of comic relief for the audience if the play is to avoid becoming pure tragedy. The gracioso is the character that fulfills this need for humorous moments in the comedia nueva.

In El burlador de Sevilla y el convidado de piedra (1630), written by Tirso de Molina, the appearance of the ghost of Don Gonzalo creates suspense because the audience does not know if the outcome of this encounter will be tragic, while the gracioso Catalinón’s cowardly reaction helps to diffuse some of that suspense through

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5 Colección de entremeses, loas, bailes, jácaras y mojigangas desde fines del siglo XVI á mediados del XVIII, edited by Cotarelo y Mori. From now on all references to this work will be as “Colección.” Additionally, “a” refers to the left column of text on a page, while “b” refers to the right column of text.
humor (III, 2318-2425). Batín’s reaction to the distressed cries of women in the distance: “[e]xcusar el peligro es ser valiente,” is humorous when seen in immediate opposition to the courage Don Federico displays by going off into the unknown to investigate those same cries in Lope’s 1631 comedia, *El castigo sin venganza* (I, 323-327). This mixture of humor and potential or realized tragedy is one of the comedia nueva’s main points of departure from classical theater where the only relief from tragedy is the catharsis experienced at the end of the play.

While this usage of the *gracioso* as comic relief is perhaps the most important aspect in the definition of the *gracioso*, there are other defining characteristics that help to separate him from other humorous character types present in Spanish theater. At the conclusion of her study of five minor early modern Spanish playwrights, Juana de José Prades concludes that the *gracioso*:

> […] es un criado fiel del galán, que secunda todas sus iniciativas, consejero sagaz, pleno de gracias y donaires, solícito buscador de dádivas generosas y de la vida regalona (codicioso, glotón, y dormilón) cauto en los peligros hasta la cobardía, desamorado; lacayo, soldado o estudiante, según las actividades de su propio señor. (251)

A number of these characteristics are similar to the humorous characters of early Spanish teatro breve from which the *gracioso* develops; however, it is the relationship with his master or employer that sets the *gracioso* apart from these characters. This relationship is, as a rule, one of parodic opposition that allows the *galán* to be the serious face of the play

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6 See pages 30-42 of Javier Huerta Calvo’s “Estudio Preliminar” in *Teatro breve de los siglos XVI y XVII* (1985) for an overview of the characteristics of the *sacristán*, *estudiante*, *vejete*, and *bobo/alcalde* character types.
and the *gracioso* to be the humorous one.\(^7\)

**Tristán in *Los baños de Argel***

In *Los baños de Argel*, Cervantes tells the story of the captivity of a group of Spaniards living in Argel. The play bases its action around the recurring conflict between Spanish Christians and North African Muslims. The play consists of three acts and tells the story of Christians who are kidnapped from a town in southern Spain and taken as captives to North Africa.\(^8\) During the raid we meet many of the main characters of the “comedia” including Caurali, a captain of Argel, and Don Fernando, who upon hearing that his beloved, Constanza, has been captured, attempts to rescue her, only to be captured himself and taken to Argel as well. The plot of the play centers on the stories of

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\(^7\) Essays and books about the *gracioso* are quite numerous. For those with an interest in the subject, two bibliographic essays cover the major works of the period from the early 20\(^{th}\) Century to 2004. The first, covering the early 20\(^{th}\) Century to 1992 is: María Luisa Lobato, “Ensayo de una bibliografía anotada del gracioso en el teatro español del Siglo de Oro.” *Criticón* 60 (1994): 149-170. The second is Esther Borrego Gutiérrez, “Bibliografía comentada sobre el gracioso del teatro áureo español (1993-2004).” *La construcción de un personaje: el gracioso*. Ed. García Lorenzo, Luciano. Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 2005. 441-459. This book, *La construcción de un personaje: el gracioso*, is a very useful collection of studies specifically focusing on different aspects of the *gracioso* from his development to his impact on later theater.

\(^8\)While *Los baños de Argel* was published as a play in three acts, some scholars argue that the work was originally a four-act play. John J. Allen (1963) proposes that Cervantes superficially reworked an original version of *Los baños* that was divided into four acts to create the published version. He bases his argument on the fact that the acts as they stand now end with scenes that do not contribute to developing suspense that would be resolved in the following act. Rodríguez López-Vázquez (1994) proposes, like Allen, that Cervantes had written this play originally in four acts and planned for Gaspar de Porres’ theater company to produce it sometime between 1585 and 1589. However, Rodríguez López-Vázquez believes that the character Ossorio is evidence that Cervantes rewrote and redistributed parts of the original four-act play into a three-act play to satisfy the contract he had signed with Rodrigo Ossorio in 1592 to provide six comedies for his theater company.
the Moorish masters and their relationship with their Christian slaves, as well as the
secondary story of a Muslim woman, Zahara, who was secretly taught Christianity in her
youth, and who gives another slave, Don Lope, enough money to ransom himself. He
sails back to Argel and rescues Zahara and the other Christians that are able to sneak
away.9

We are introduced to Los baños de Argel’s sacristan, Tristán, for the first time at
the very beginning of the play when the Muslims of North Africa raid his town. He
appears on the town walls and like a dutiful person, runs off to sound the alarm by
ringing the church’s bells. His actions are compared to those of the viejo, or old man,
who acts bravely in the face of the invasion to save his sons – “¡[a] socorreros voy,
amados hijos!” (I, 38) – while the sacristan’s subsequent actions are humorous for their
cowardice: “el corazón se desarma / de brío, y de miedo muero […] [c]omo persona
aplicada / a la Iglesia, y no al trabajo, / mejor meneo el badajo / que desenvaino la
espada” (I, 45-46, I, 51-54).10 This cowardice results in laughter for the audience
because, as Barry Sanders explains it in Sudden Glory: Laughter as Subversive History
(1995), “[p]leasure – downright satisfaction – comes at the expense of some other, less
fortunate soul, because we realize that we are somehow better, or better off” (9). The
sacristan’s cowardice then, is funny precisely because the audience members feel that
they are better than Tristán and can laugh at his cowardice, much like the audience would

9Much of Los baños de Argel’s plot, particularly the parts involving Don Lope and
Zahara, is recognized by scholarship as closely related to the story of the captive and

10All citations of Los baños de Argel are based on Jean Canavaggio’s critical edition
published by Taurus Ediciones in 1984. Roman numerals will stand for the act, and
Arabic numerals will stand for the verse.
have laughed at the cowardice of various *graciosos* in the *comedia nueva*. This connection between Tristán and the *gracioso* of the *comedia nueva* is further cemented by the fact that his reaction in the face of danger is the opposite of the *viejo*’s reaction, much as the *gracioso*’s reactions to a certain situation are the opposite of his master’s reactions.

Aside from cowardice’s potential for humor when placed in opposition to the bravery of another character, there is another reason that cowardice creates a sense of superiority in the audience. Often a character’s cowardice results in his failure to control his bodily functions. While Tristán does not soil himself when faced with danger like Soguijo in “El entremés famoso del Sacristán Soguijo” (1612), his fear still certainly provoked the same kind of superior laughter in the audience that no doubt arose when Soguijo is terrified by a supposed ghost that demands he finally marry his betrothed. He verbalizes his physical failings when he says, “¿[s]i me hirió que siento mojados los calzones?” (155b) and “¿[h]uelo mal señores? ¿Si me he corruscado?” (156a).\(^{11}\) Cervantes, by not stating directly to what the cowardice of Tristán usually leads avoids the direct use of scatological humor to characterize his sacristan, a reticence that is not characteristic of other authors who use the sacristan as a comic character.

It does not seem, however, that Cervantes was attempting to avoid scatological humor for the sake of what we would today call decency. In fact, there are a number of

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\(^{11}\) This *entremés* comes from Cotarelo y Mori’s *Colección*. In it, the fear felt by Soguijo comes from being “haunted” by friends of a woman he promised to marry. He is so scared by the supposed ghost that he soils himself and promises to stop delaying his marriage.
humorous incidents in the play that would argue against such concerns.\textsuperscript{12} The first of these is in an exchange that further emphasizes the audience’s superiority to the sacristan. Cauralí and Tristán are being taken as captives to the raider’s ship, when Tristán bemoans the fact that he left the safety of the bell tower, only to have Cauralí shout at him, “¡camina, perro, a la marina!” (I, 89. This insult, *perro*, has three meanings that apply to the scene. The first, and perhaps most vehement usage of *perro* is its use in a Muslim context. Some Muslims believe that dogs are impure animals whose touch and even presence violate a Muslim’s ritual purity. As Cervantes and many others had been in Muslim countries, this Muslim usage of *perro* underlines the low, almost inhuman station to which the new Christian captives were assigned in North African society.\textsuperscript{13}

While the Muslim usage of *perro* highlights the demeaning and tragic nature of the Christians’ captivity, the second and third available meanings of *perro* create comic relief. The second usage of *perro* is as a synonym for *canalla*, a term, which, according to Sebastian de Covarrubias’ *Tesoro de la lengua españaola o castellana* (1611), was applied to cowards who attack when it is easy to do so, and run away when it is not (127). This usage highlights the cowardly nature of Tristán, and as we will see during his interactions with the Jew, perhaps is the most apt description we can apply to Tristán. However, he chooses to pay attention to the third usage of *perro* by saying, “¿[p]erro? / [a]gora sé que

\textsuperscript{12}The best example of Cervantes lack of concern for decency, though clearly not a humorous example, is the violent martyrdom suffered by Francisquito at the hands of his new master for refusing to convert to Islam in the third act of the *comedia*.

fue mi madre perra” (I, 90). By taking his captor’s insult as referring to both he and his mother, Tristán provides the audience with another laugh by implying that she was a prostitute. Yet again we can see that Cervantes is using his audience’s propensity to laugh at the insults and unfortunate circumstances of others to create humor in *Los baños de Argel*.

The humorous aspects of the dialogue, and the necessity that the audience feels superior to a character in order to laugh can again be seen when Cauralí presents the Spanish captives to the king. During this exchange the sacristan thinks, or at least acts as if he thinks, that they ask him if he is the pope, when in fact as the *Diccionario de autoridades* states on page 113, the term *papaz* is a word used by the Moors to refer to Christian priests in general (I, 722-724). Those who know what the term means can feel superior to the sacristan and laugh at his apparent ignorance, while those who are themselves ignorant of the meaning of the term *papaz* in this context are able to laugh at the “ignorant” Moors who believe that Tristán could possibly be the pope. This exchange seems to be a part of Cervantes solution to a common problem faced by Siglo de Oro playwrights, that is, the playwright must satisfy both the vulgos and the discretos that make up the audience in order to be successful (Wardropper, 219). Cervantes solves the problem by utilizing many different levels of humor and feelings of superiority directed at different segments of his audience.

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14The *Diccionario de autoridades* (1737) has another meaning for *perro*. It is, “[m]etafóricamente se da este nombre por ignominia, afrenta y desprecio, especialmente a los Moros o Judíos.” While in Act II, verse 400 and 404, the sacristan does insult the Jew by calling him a *perro*, there are a number of instances in which Moorish characters direct *perro* as an insult to the Christian captives.
Another misunderstanding occurs during the same exchange between the king and the sacristan when the king says, “[b]ufón es este cristiano” (I, 754) and the sacristan replies, “¿[y]o búfalo? [n]o, señor: / antes soy pobre aldeano. / En lo que yo tendré maña / será en guardar una puerta / o en ser pescador de caña” (I, 755-759). This misunderstanding, along with his earlier misunderstanding of papaz-papa, causes Hazén, one of the guards, to say to himself in an aside: “O este pobre pierde el tino / o él es hombre de placer” (I, 735-736). Hazén’s difficulty in determining whether or not the sacristan is ignorant or is playing the part of the fool paired with the king calling him a bufón, connects Tristán to another character common to Spanish culture, the buffoon. As Marquéz Villanueva has shown in his “Planteamiento de la literatura del ‘loco’ en España,” the buffoon is a character that, at least in his courtly manifestations, uses misunderstandings, insults and other malicious humor to make fun of others and in so doing potentially influence them to see the world in his own way.15 Because the entirety of these buffoonish exchanges occurs during the division of the captives to their new jobs and masters it is easy to conclude that Cervantes is once again using Tristán to provide

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15 Canavaggio argues in “Sobre lo cómico en el teatro cervantino: Tristán y Madrigal, bufones in partibus” that Tristán is a buffoon. The French Hispanist considers the abovementioned scenes in which Tristán misunderstands his captors, as well as a few other scenes yet to be mentioned, as evidence that the sacristan is taking the role of court jester or bufón through intentional misunderstanding of what Cauralí and the king are saying. Clearly, Cervantes utilizes buffoonish elements in his creation of Tristán; however, the present study argues that characterizing the sacristan only as a buffoon does not do justice to the character that Cervantes has created through a mixture of various comedic characteristics and repetitive appearances on stage. This mixture certainly does include elements of buffoonery (i.e. insults, malicious jokes, and potentially feigned ignorance illustrated in his misunderstanding the king), elements that make him a richer character, but which do not define the entirety of Tristán because by virtue of being a sacristan he has a long pedigree of varying uses in earlier Spanish works, and as we will see he shares some functions and types of humor with the gracioso of the comedia nueva.
comic relief to ease the audience’s pain at seeing Spaniards captured and enslaved. The other situations in which the sacristan creates comic relief have yet to be examined, but in every case where the sacristan turns up on stage, he is there just after a depressing moment for the rest of the captives. An example of this is the scene in which he and the viejo come on after Zahara and Constanza’s discussion of Constanza’s love that should not be. The sacristan and the viejo come onto the stage and begin a discussion about the difficulty of keeping the faith in the difficult conditions of Argel.

The timing with which Cervantes uses the sacristan to provide comic relief is similar to the way in which the gracioso is used by most writers of the comedia nueva. His humorous and opposite take on giving in to desire is an example of how the sacristan functions as a parodic opposite for other characters and not just the viejo. During his exchange with the viejo, the sacristan admits to eating meat on days when it is banned to do so, and he argues that he is free to do so because he eats what his master gives him, and because “[a]quí no hay teologías!” (II, 285). This statement is humorous because it is made by a man that knows he is wrong, but is defending himself anyway. It appears that the sacristan is falling into a similar trap as he falls into in earlier works. He acts in a way we do not expect someone related to the Church to act, but instead of committing adultery with someone’s wife by tricking her husband into believing that she has died in a fire, as the sacristan does in “Entremés 17,” or as Cotarelo y Mori calls it, “Entremés sin título, cuyos interlocutores son un sacristán, Filipina, Qurcio y Albertos” (72-76), Tristán commits a different mortal sin through his complicity in violating the prohibition of eating meat during Lent. This gluttony can be seen as a slippery slope towards the
enjoyment not of meat, but rather another type of flesh. Indeed earlier Spanish authors, including Juan Ruiz, pointed this fact out.\textsuperscript{16}

However, Cervantes does not simply imply this connection between gluttony and lust, he has the \textit{viejo} reply, “Yo recelo / si una mora os da el pie / deis vos la mano a ese celo” (II, 298-300). Thus, the \textit{viejo} is criticizing the sacristan’s easy morality by saying that since he eats meat, he would jump at the chance to be with a Moorish woman. This change from lecherous adulterer to eater of meat is not a huge change made to the character of the sacristan, because as the \textit{viejo} makes clear, both gluttony and lust are really all about giving in to one’s desire for that which is forbidden. In this regard, Tristán is like the goliards of medieval Europe whose poetry and songs speak to a fascination with and indulgence of physical appetites.\textsuperscript{17} By indulging his desires the sacristan becomes inferior to the audience and again invites them to laugh because they feel superior to him.

Tristán, then, like the narrator of \textit{El libro de buen amor} and the clergymen criticized by the Christian humanists, is represented as a pursuer of worldly pleasures. The increased censorship that led to a decline in the use of high-ranking members of the

\textsuperscript{16}In \textit{El libro de buen amor}, the battle between Don Carnal and Doña Cuaresma has implications of eating meat as a type of lechery. Indeed, Sebastián de Covarrubias’ \textit{Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española} lists \textit{carnal} as among other things, “lo que pertenece a la carne; y al hombre que es muy dado a la sensualidad y vicio de la carne, le llamamos carnal” (461). \textit{Pensamiento carnal y acto carnal} are defined as “aver conocido una muger carnalmente, aver tenido ayuntamiento con ella” (461). It seems then, that the connection between gluttony and lust occurs because both are sins of the flesh. The \textit{Diccionario de autoridades} further highlights this connection between eating meat and sex in its definition of \textit{carnal}, “cosa libidinosa, luxuriosa y dada al vicio y deleites de la carne.”

\textsuperscript{17}Huerta Calvo (1995) makes this connection between sacristans and the goliards in his article “Cómico y femenil bureo” (23-27).
clergy as literary figures opened the door for the sacristan to carry on the tradition of the worldly church as the stage of the early seventeenth-century Spanish entremeses. Emilio Cotarelo y Mori’s preliminary study in his Colección informs us that not only is the sacristan a more common character in the entremeses of the early modern period than the priest, the monk, or the bishop, but that the sacristan is the character most often used in the entremeses (CLIIIb). In these burlesque one-act plays, the sacristan is often portrayed as a comical romancer of women. Cervantes himself makes use of the rivalry between a sacristan and a soldier for the love of a fregona in “La guarda cuidadosa.” In the end the fregona chooses the sacristan to be her husband. Interestingly, recent scholarship has shown that, in at least the case of “La guarda cuidadosa,” the popular poetry of the day may have influenced Cervantes to write these lines for Cristinica the fregona, “Sacristán de mi vida / tenme por tuya, / y, fiado en mi fe, / canta alleluya” (Entremeses 90). It would appear then that since the sacristan had become a part of popular poetry as a lover of women the sacristan as a character had become a part of the Spanish popular culture.

Immediately after an encounter that will be examined later between the sacristan, the viejo, and a group of Moorish children who mock their status as slaves that will never

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18 Aside from the aforementioned “Entremés sin título, cuyos interlocutores son un sacristán, Filipina, Qurcio y Albertos,” see Colección, “Entremés famoso de la Mamola” (68-72); “Entremés sin título,” (85-88); and “Entremés noveno de la cuna,” (140-141) for further example of the sacristan as comical romancer of women.

19 For discussion on the sacristan as a paradigmatic romancer of women in Spanish folklore of the sixteenth century, see Francisco Marquez Villanueva, Fuentes literarias cervantinas 100-104. Additionally, in his preliminary study at the beginning of his Colección, Cotarelo y Mori states that the sacristan “[e]s el Adonis preferido de las mujeres [in the entremeses]” (CLIIIb).
be rescued, the sacristan and the viejo spot a Jew. The sacristan’s contempt for this Jew during their exchanges will help to cement the connection between Tristán and the officially mandated hostility directed at Jews and other non-Christians in early modern Spain. This officially mandated anti-Semitic sentiment is nothing new in Spain, and in fact has a long history as way of causing laughter in an audience. As Marquez Villanueva has pointed out in his “Jewish ‘Fools’ of the Spanish Fifteenth Century” (1982), many times the buffoons of the court would use their target’s Jewish faith or supposed Jewish converso ancestry as the basis for violently insulting attack poems directed at each other. The anti-Semitic character of these poems emphasizes the lower social position of the Jew and as such permits the court to laugh at the Jew from a position of power. Since, as Marquez Villanueva makes clear, the majority of these fools were almost always either Jewish or converso themselves (“Jewish Fools, 404), it is hardly surprising that one’s own Jewishness would become the subject of ridicule. In addition to providing buffoonish elements to Tristán’s character, these interactions with the Jew will highlight Cervantes’ use of the sacristan’s loose morality for the sake of making his audience laugh, but these interactions will also bring in new questions about just what purpose this laughter serves in the context of the play, and indeed in the wider context of early modern Spain.20

20These encounters between the sacristan and the Jew have been examined to see if Cervantes harbored anti-Semitic sentiments, if he was himself a descendant of conversos, or if the apparent outer anti-Semitism hides a Cervantine defense of Jews and conversos because the Jew follows the rules of his faith, even when it is against his secular interests to do so, as compared to the sacristan who sells out and eats meat with no problems. For discussion of these issues, see Canavaggio, “La estilización del judío,” (1998) and Nicolas Kanellos, “The Anti-Semitism of Cervantes: Los baños de Argel and La gran sultana: A Reappraisal” (1975).
Many of these encounters recall the medieval *disputas* in which a Christian attacks the Jewish religion resulting in the defense of Judaism by a Jew, a defense that eventually falters and results in his conversion to Christianity.\(^2^1\) These disputes, characterized by their verbal violence and impudence, often centered on the Sabbath and other Jewish customs, customs that Cervantes has the sacristan attack during a variety of encounters. These attacks, for the sake of humor, are carried out in a way that encourages the audience to laugh at the misfortune of the Jew. In their first encounter, which occurs in Act II, verses 377-428, the sacristan tries to force the Jew to carry his water barrel for him, and when the Jew refuses, the sacristan verbally abuses him and threatens him with physical violence. The scene characterizes Tristán as a lazy and manipulative person who desires to receive as much reward for as little work as possible. The Jew’s food, purposefully cooked in preparation for the Sabbath and stolen by the sacristan cannot be recovered unless the sacristan decides to simply give it to him, as the Jew says, “[n]o puedo en mucho ni en poco / contratar” (II, 807-808), just like he is unable to cook or do any kind of work, otherwise he would be contravening the Laws of Moses (II, 802-803). In the end, the sacristan takes the fifteen *reales* from the Jew’s pocket as payment for the currently stolen *cazuela*, and as payment for two others that he plans to steal in the future (II, 831-832). By recognizing his adversary’s commitment to his faith in these two encounters, Tristán is able to take advantage of those circumstances for his own personal gain and provoke laughter in the audience by showing the Jew stuck in a subordinate role due to his faithfulness to Jewish tradition.

\(^2^1\)Américo Castro published a preliminary study about the text of what he calls “Disputa entre un cristiano y un judío” (1914) in *Revista de Filología Española*. This *disputa* was, as Castro states, a work of “carácter popular” written in the vernacular (175).
The sacristan uses the Jew and goes back to him to take advantage of him multiple times. His first efforts involving the water barrel and the food pale in comparison to his later effort. As the Jew is leaving from the scene in which he has his *cazuela* stolen from him, he asks, “[h]aced, Cielos, que me deje / este ladrón de cosillas” (II, 842-843). It seems that the sacristan takes offense to being called a petty thief when he says, “¿[d]e cosillas? Vive Dios / que os tengo de hurtar un niño / antes de los meses dos” (II, 844-846). As we see later on, this kidnapping was meant to allow him to purchase his freedom with ransom money obtained from the Jews for letting their child go free. The Jew finally stands up for himself and takes the sacristan to the King for judgment. The King orders the sacristan to give the child back, but the Cadí then orders the Jew to pay the sacristan for the day of work that he lost in stealing the child (III, 514-525). The King rules in favor of the Jews, but in the end we find out that the Jews:

Sacristan: [... me han rescatado
y dado libertad graciosamente.
Dicen que de esta suerte
aseguran sus niños,
sus trastos y cazuelas,
y finalmente, su hacienda toda.
Yo he dado mi palabra
de no hurtarles cosa
mientras me fuere a España,
y por Dios que no sé si he de cumplirla. (III, 809-818)

By admitting that the Jews are paying for his ransom to prevent him from continuing his thefts, the sacristan creates a humorously absurd juxtaposition of babies and minor domestic goods such as casseroles. There is also a certain humorous irony in this situation that one of the play’s character’s points out before the Sacristan gives a detailed explanation of how he came to be ransomed. Ossorio responds to Tristán saying, “[e]l

cuento es más gracioso / que por jamás se ha oído: / que los judíos mismos / de su misma
hacienda os rescatasen” (III, 803-806). It is this response from Ossorio that confirms our understanding of Cervantes use of the encounters between the Jew and the sacristan as intentionally humorous.

The humor of the sacristan in *Los baños de Argel* is an amalgamation of different types of humor (that is, cowardice and buffoonery) not normally associated with the sacristan and the humor of his not so Christian actions (i.e., eating meat when it is forbidden and taking advantage of the Jew). These not so Christian actions are similar to the humorous tricks that the sacristan typically played upon the husbands or guardians of his lovers in that they require the sacristan to act in a way unexpected of a member of the church. In these circumstances, much of the sacristan’s humor requires a person to be tricked or cuckolded. While “La guarda cuidadosa” uses situational humor and word play to great comedic effect, it is in another of Cervantes *entremeses*, “La cueva de Salamanca,” that the sacristan as adulterer and the husband as the butt of the joke is most evident. Reponce the sacristan is Leonarda’s lover, and the barber is Cristinica the servant’s lover. These two men are visiting their lovers when Pancracio, Leonarda’s husband returns earlier than expected forcing the lovers to hide. In this particular instance, a student from Salamanca who had asked for a place to stay is the one who tricks Pancracio by making him believe that he was going to summon demons in the form of the sacristan and the barber, but it is obvious that he has been being fooled by the sacristan and the barber for quite sometime. This *entremés* shows that Cervantes was familiar with and contributed to the characterization of the sacristan as an adulterer, a characterization that he utilizes in “La cueva de Salamanca” to create a situation in which the audience can laugh at the naïveté of Pancracio when he believes his wife is truly so
sad to see him leave that she might faint, when in reality she is ready for him to leave so that she might spend the night with her lover.\textsuperscript{22}

In the case of \textit{Los baños de Argel}, the tricked person is not the husband of the sacristan’s lover, but rather is the Jew. The Jew as the object of mockery is a troubling one when viewed from a modern perspective. Canavaggio notes in his introduction to \textit{Los baños de Argel} that the production of the play in 1979 cut out much of the sacristan’s part in order to avoid having to somehow contextualize and explain the sacristan’s tricks played against the Jew (43).\textsuperscript{23} For the modern reader, the striking anti-Semitism and abuse of the Jew by the sacristan can be off putting. Among other abuses Tristán calls the

\textsuperscript{22}The \textit{Diccionario de autoridades} has an interesting entry relating to the propensity of the sacristan to trick others, “[e]s bravo sacristán, es un gran sacristán. Frases con que se pondera que uno es caviloso, sagaz y astuto para el aprovechamiento propio o engaño ajeno.” As the \textit{Diccionario} was published more than a century after \textit{Los baños de Argel} and the \textit{entremeses} that have already been discussed and Covarrubias’ \textit{Tesoro} of 1611 has no mention of a usage like this, it is possible that the continued representation of the sacristan as a person who tricks others for his personal gain became entrenched in the phrases “[e]s bravo sacristán” and “es un gran sacristán,” usages that survive into the 22\textsuperscript{nd} edition of the Real Academia Española’s \textit{Diccionario de la lengua española}. I have not yet had the opportunity to examine sixteenth and seventeenth century \textit{reftaneros} to verify whether or not this usage is found there.

\textsuperscript{23}On pages 43-46 of the introduction to his critical edition of the play, Canavaggio points out a number of changes made to this version of the play produced by Francisco Nieva (among them: Nieva turns the work into a “collage” of 17 scenes preceded by a prologue; the martyrdom of Francisquito is changed to a conversion to Islam; the introduction of parts of \textit{El trato de Argel} that help to put more emphasis on intrigues of the various lovers; and the introduction of a scene in which Zahara’s father attempts to stop her fleeing with the Christians. In spite of the textual changes made by Nieva, Canavaggio believes that the end result is faithful to the central plot of the original. Additionally, he praises the fact that this production of the play has moved it outside the field of academia and back into the public notice. While a laudatory goal, moving the play back into the public notice with these changes creates a different play than that which Cervantes wrote and waters down the play to the point that it asks much less of its audience. Removing the exchanges between the sacristan and the Jew takes the burden off the audience to struggle with big questions like the validity of anti-Semitic and other ethnic humors designed to provoke laughter at the expense of an entire group of people.
Jew “perro judío” (II, 400) and when the Jew refuses to carry the barrel, he threatens, “¡Vive Dios, perro, que os arranque el hígado!” (II, 404). Such obvious rancor and verbal violence helps to characterize Tristán as an anti-Semite, but this leaves the question, could Tristán have tricked a non-Jew and gotten the same laughs as he undoubtedly got through his anti-Semitic harangues?

In two studies, “La estilización del judío en Los baños de Argel” (1998) and “Sobre lo cómico en el teatro cervantino: Tristán y Madrigal, bufones in partibus,” (1985-1986), Canavaggio offers an interpretation of Cervantes apparent anti-Semitism (as expressed through his use of an anti-Semitic Tristán). He believes that Tristán, while obviously an anti-Semite, serves a nobler purpose in the play, that is to say, he functions as a buffoon to provide a more cheerful tone to the entire situation of being held captive, so that the work could, as King puts it, maintain a less oppressive mood in spite of its somber elements (284-285). This interpretation goes against the views of Nicolas Kanellos in “The Anti-Semitism of Cervantes: Los baños de Argel and La gran sultana: A Reappraisal” (1975) and Stanislav Zimic in “Los baños de Argel” in El teatro de Cervantes (1992). Both of these critics see that Cervantes was attempting to provide a social critique of the anti-Semitism of his day by providing us with a Jewish character that stood by the rules of his faith, even as those rules were used against him. Zimic argues further that Cervantes was taking the sacristan, a character that his audience would recognize as unreliable and worthy of scorn, and showing his audience how foolish those who attack Jews are, especially when they are attempting to prove their own Christianity by vehemently hating the Jew instead of doing things that a Christian should do.
Both of these theories, that Cervantes was writing in order to criticize anti-Semitism in the Spain of his day and the belief that Tristán’s function is one of lightening the mood, acknowledge the power of humor to lighten a dark play or affect social change, both of which are valid points. However, Canavaggio does not address why Cervantes would use anti-Semitism for comic purposes when other forms of humor were open to him, and the Kanellos and Zimic arguments focus too much on the social critique potential that Tristán provided for Cervantes. They all ignore a more straightforward reason for Cervantes’ use of anti-Semitic humor: Cervantes was experimenting with the form and contents of his plays to take advantage of what the viewing public wanted to see.24 If we can trust his own statements in his prologue to _Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses_, Cervantes says that of the twenty or thirty comedies that he wrote before leaving his pen, all of them were performed, “sin que se les ofreciese ofrenda de pepinos ni de otra cosa arrojadiza; corrieron su carrera sin siblos, gritas ni barahúndas” (Obras completas, vol. 2, 363). Since none of his earlier plays were booed offstage, it appears then, that Cervantes was aware of what his audience wanted to see; at least at the time that he was writing his earlier plays. However, as time went on, it appears, based on his explanation for how he came to publish the _Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses_ that after changing to another genre and then coming back to writing plays, his no longer attracted the audiences of his earlier works and that he had lost popularity as a playwright.25 The

24 As Wardropper notes in his “Cervantes Theory of the Drama” (1955), communicating to various levels of audience was important to the writers of the Siglo de Oro (219).

25 The above paraphrases this rather longer quote in which Cervantes explains in a prologue to his collection of _Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses_: “Algunos años ha que volví yo a mi antigua ociosidad y, pensando que aún duraban los siglos donde corrian mis alabanzas, volví a componer algunas comedias, pero no hallé pájaros en los nidos de
reason for this drop in popularity would appear to be based on Lope’s rise to popularity and the less than flattering comparisons Cervantes’ works drew to those comedias nueva. Cervantes himself points to Lope as a cause for changes in the world of the Spanish theater. He says, “dejé la pluma y las comedias, y entró el monstruo de naturaleza, el gran Lope de Vega, y alzóse con la monarquía cómica; avasalló y puso debajo de su jurisdicción a todos los farsantes” (Obras completas, vol. 2, 362). It seems fair to say then that Cervantes recognized the changes that Lope was bringing about in the world of Spanish theater through his popular formats and their influence on other writers. In fact, Rodríguez Lópe-Vazquéz (1994) argues that it was the almost universal adoption of the three-act play that led Cervantes to rewrite Los baños de Argel as a three-act play instead of as a four-act play (212). Based on the evidence that Cervantes was willing to adopt the three-act format, it is not a stretch to imagine that he would also have decided to explore different ways to bring comic moments to the stage.

In accepting the idea that Cervantes was aware of the need for a change to that which he had been writing, it seems reasonable that he could certainly have decided to take advantage of the comedic power of anti-Semitic jokes for the purpose of making his audience, especially the vulgo, laugh. We can see this type of humor even in today’s

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26 Canavaggio’s Cervantes points out that even until the beginning of the 20th century Cervantes’ comedias were never really judged on their own merits, but rather based on comparisons to other types of works (270).
society where jokes about ethnic groups are certainly still alive and thriving. In Cervantes’ time, anti-Semitism was not condemned and could even be considered officially sanctioned thanks to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and the resulting fervor to prove one’s status as an “Old Christian.” This fervor to prove one’s status as an Old Christian, a major part of which was the persecution of the *conversos*, influenced the work and writings of the various *locos* of the royal court of the Spanish Hapsburgs. In his article “Literatura bufonesca o del loco” (1985-1986) Francisco Marquéz Villanueva finds that one of Carlos V’s buffoons, Francesillo de Zuñiga, utilized a style of humor that amounts to self-deprecating humor to attack this anti-*converso* spirit. While Cervantes’ sacristan certainly uses self-deprecating humor to get laughs, the exchange between the sacristan and Cauralí is memorable for Cauralí’s use of the insult “perro” and the way in which Tristán deflects them, it is also worth noting that his use of self-deprecating humor is less than his use of insult humor. Insults, as Neu (2008) shows, are often meant to express a feeling of superiority and disdain for those being insulted.27 This feeling of superiority and dominance is integral to the power and success of insult humor, and, by extension, the type of ethnic humor where a different ethnic or religious group is portrayed as being worth less than the one to which the speaker belongs. This insult humor is one that occurs multiple times in the play, from the aforementioned encounter with Cauralí to those involving Tristán insulting the Jew, but perhaps more memorable than any of these is the encounter between Tristán, the *viejo* and a group of Moorish children. The children’s taunt: “¡Rapaz crisitano / non rescatar,

27Neu discusses other situations in which insults are ritualized and thus permissible; however, he notes that even these rituals are designed to be a test in which superiority is established (57-81).
no fugir; / don Juan no venir; / acá morir, / perro acá morir!” is interlaced between lines of the Sacristán responding in vehement and insulting way (II, 336-340). His anger at being verbally tormented in addition to being held captive is readily apparent:

Sacristán: Oh hijo de una puta
nieto de un gran cornudo,
sobrino de un bellaco,
hermano de un traidor y sodomita!
[…] ¡Tú morirás, borracho,
bardaja fementido;
quínola punto menos,
anzuelo de Mahoma, el hideputa!
(II, 341-344 & 348-351)

Seeing such anger and rage acted out on stage was surely in and of itself quite funny, especially if it was delivered by a talented actor, but by adding in such impressively foul insults, Cervantes guarantees a laugh from his audience, because as it has been pointed out, insults are often viewed as humorous by those not on the receiving end of those insults. In this case it would seem that both the viejo, who responds to the very end of the sacristan’s outburst and the flight of the Moorish children with “[g]racioso disparate. Ya se han ido,” and the audience are expected to be laughing at the invective being dished out by Tristán (II, 376). It seems in this particular case that Neu’s observation that “it is when the butt of the joke is not present that unbridled viciousness tends to emerge,” does not apply (Neu 217). It is hard to imagine a more thorough and complete use of vicious attacks than Tristán’s because he has covered all the major types of insult humor

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28Interestingly, this is the only place in which the pidgin language that developed between Muslim captors and Christian captives is used by anyone in the play. Canavaggio’s endnotes explain that this pidgin language was a common way for even children to communicate with Christian captives.

29See Jerome Neu’s *Sticks and Stones*, specifically Chapter 9, Insult Humor (215-241).
by disparaging the children’s family (“hijo de una puta / nieto de un gran cornudo”), their religion (“anzuelo de Mahoma”) and their sexuality (“bardaja fementida”). Indeed, the taunts that the sacristan and the viejo suffer go above and beyond the simple “perro” epithet used by Cauralí and are certainly further evidence in favor of the argument that Cervantes was not concerned with decency in Los baños de Argel, but rather wanted to create a sense of the suffering that Christian captives lived through in Argel. Once again though, Cervantes returns quickly to laughter inducing moments by interlacing the children’s taunts with Tristán’s angry retorts, retorts that are humorous in their own right, but are made even more so since he is directing such impressive invective at children.

Based on the fact that Cervantes was not above using anti-Semitism and insult humor to create laughs and his willingness to blend different types of comedy into one character with the creation of a comic sacristan who appears in multiple scenes to provide comic relief, the question must be asked, did Cervantes, in spite of his doubts about the gracioso, in fact create a gracioso when he created Tristán the sacristan?30 As scholars have shown, the sacristan was established as a comic character that often plotted adultery

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30 In the second chapter of the third book of Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda, Cervantes presents un poeta that wishes to write a play about Periandro and Auristela. This author is not as worried about the fact that since they are still alive, he does not know how the play will end, but rather he is worried about “cómo podría encajar un lacayo consejero y gracioso en el mar y entre tantas islas, fuego y nieves; y, con todo esto, no se desesperó de hacer la comedia y de encajar el tal lacayo, a pesar de todas las reglas de la poesía y a despecho del arte cómico” (Obras Completas, vol. 2, 221). This section of Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda is understood by Jesús Gómez to be proof that Cervantes was, like a number of Lope’s other contemporaries, critical of Lope’s gracioso. See Gómez, “Una visión sobre el personaje del gracioso en la crítica actual” (2005), particularly page 12.
with women in *entremeses*, but instead of taking that stock character and moving it straight into his *comedia*, Cervantes brings different forms of humor to the stage. The sacristan’s cowardice during the pirate attack, his anger at being provoked by the young Moorish children, his comic misunderstandings, and his slapstick and manipulative interactions with the Jew take many different kinds of humor and blend them into one character while maintaining the possibility through his eating of meat during Lent that the sacristan would ignore other laws of the Church just like the sacristan of the *entremés* ignores rules against having sexual relationships with women.

Cervantes’ mixture of various types of humor to create Tristán shows a new way to represent the sacristan and in many ways takes what had become a tired one-dimensional character-type and expands it into a role that is reminiscent of the *comedia nueva’s graciosos*, especially in regard to Tristán being the only character truly dedicated to providing humor in the work. While Cervantes’ sacristan recalls the *gracioso*, especially in that he is a gluttonous coward and is the source of much of the humor in the work, he does not share what criticism deems the most important characteristic of the fully formed *gracioso* that appears in the later *comedias nuevas*: he is not the servant of a *galán*. This lack of a servant-master relationship has been taken to mean that Tristán

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31 As of yet, there are no studies focusing solely on the sacristán; however, he is often examined as a part of studies that investigate the characters of the *entremés*. Of these, see: Asensio, Eugenio. *Itinerario del entremés: Desde Lope de Rueda a Quiñones de Benavente*. Madrid: Gredos, 1965; Huerta Calvo, Javier. “Cómico y femenil bureo (Del amor y las mujeres en los entremeses del Siglo de Oro).” *Críticón* 24 (1983): 5-68; and Huerta Calvo, Javier. “Estudio preliminar.” *Teatro breve de los siglos XVI y XVII: Entremeses, loas, bailes, jácaras y mojigangas*. Ed. Javier Huerta Calvo. Madrid: Taurus, 1985.

32 In his “Una visión sobre el personaje del gracioso en la critica actual” (2005), Jesús Gómez explores the early critical reaction to the character type we now consider the
was not a *gracioso*, an issue that Canavaggio has examined in all of Cervantes’ *comedias*. He argues that Cervantes does not create a completely formed *gracioso* in any of those works.\(^{33}\)

It is this supposed lack of a *gracioso*, coupled with a play that progresses episodically instead of in one continuous arc, that often causes modern readers and critics to categorize *Los baños de Argel*, along with Cervantes’ other comedies, as being less worthy than the *comedia nueva* so ably promoted by Lope. Interestingly, in his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* (1609), Lope’s exposition of the make-up of the *comedia nueva*, he states that the main feature of the *comedia nueva* is that it is “lo trágico y lo cómico mezclado, / [...] que aquesta variedad deleita mucho” (vv. 174-178). Clearly, *Los baños de Argel* contains both elements, from the tragic martyrdom of a child to the already examined humor of the sacristan. Neither Canavaggio (*Cervantes*, 265-275) nor Rodríguez López-Vazquéz (1994) believes that Cervantes’ use of *comedia nueva* techniques was a result of intentional emulation, though their argument that Cervantes was strictly opposed to the *comedia nueva* is difficult to believe in its entirety. Their position is based on the belief that Cervantes was a neo-Classist, and derives directly from the opinions they believe were expressed by Cervantes through various characters appearing in his prose works, particularly the canon’s discussion of theater in *gracioso*, as well as the current state of academic inquiry into the character of the *gracioso*. It is his reasoned opinion that in spite of the past usage of the term *gracioso*, it should apply only to those characters that have a servant-master relationship with the *galán*. He argues that while many of the secondary characteristics traditionally associated with the *gracioso* hold true in most instances, it is his dramatic function that sets the *gracioso* apart from other comic characters.

the first book of Don Quixote. However, it should be noted that Bruce Wardropper believes that the basis for the critical interpretation of Cervantes as a strict neo-classicist rests on the shaky ground of disconnecting the canon’s discussion of books of chivalry and his discussion of theater. Wardropper’s article “Cervantes’ Theory of the Drama” (1955) seeks to disprove the usual interpretation of the canon in Don Quixote as the mouthpiece for Cervantes as a strict classicist, and instead as revealing Cervantes’ ambiguous feelings about the comedia nueva. Wardropper’s position certainly appears much stronger in light of the fact that in Los baños de Argel Cervantes ably mixes tragedy and comedy.

Canavaggio’s argument that Cervantes created no fully formed gracioso is strictly speaking correct due to the lack of a specific master-servant relationship, but it ignores the many different similarities that Tristán has to the gracioso of the early comedia nueva. The most well known of these early comedias is most likely Fuenteovejuna (1610), a work that was written and performed before Los baños de Argel was published. It has a gracioso, Mengo, who does not have a galán for whom he works as a servant, yet Mengo has been considered a gracioso for quite some time. Additionally, the episodic nature of Fuenteovejuna and its similarity to Los baños de Argel in that regard should not be ignored.34 Interestingly, like Fuenteovejuna, Los baños de Argel has a large cast of characters that potentially influenced Cervantes’ decision to not tie Tristán to an

34 The scene in which Mengo and the others debate the nature of love does little to move along the action of the play. Additionally, the scenes in which the action cuts to the Reyes Católicos chop up the flow of the play and contribute to the episodic nature in which it progresses. Another good example of the similarities between Tristán and humorous characters in Lope’s early comedias nuevas is La dama boba (1613), in which Finea’s position as a main female protagonist does not prevent her from providing humor. The scene in which she misunderstands her lesson on letters with Rufino is humorous in the same vein as Tristán’s misunderstanding of papaz/papa.
employer. By making this choice Cervantes is free to have the sacristan provide comic relief throughout the play, a decision that allows him to blend many different kinds of humor into one complex character that provides an interesting case study of how Cervantes creates comedy in his plays. He does not simply take the entremés’ sacristan and transport him into a full-fledged comedia, nor does he strictly follow Lope’s model for the gracioso, but rather creates a character that is an amalgamation of the medieval buffoon, the clergyman in the humanistic satire, the entremés’ sacristan, and the comedia nueva’s gracioso. This experimental Cervantine gracioso permits Cervantes to satisfy his audience’s desire for a mixture of tragic and comic without completely giving up on his own literary ideals and becoming dependent on the dictates of Lope and his comedia nueva.
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Hendrix, William S. *Some Native Comic Types in the Early Spanish Drama*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1924.


