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Literary Motifs and Historical Reality in Ruiz de Alarcón's *Quien mal anda en mal acaba*

O. HEGYI

The theme of a compact with the devil for personal gain can be traced back to the early centuries of Christianity. The usual motives are money, power and love. Not surprisingly, the attainment of a woman's love through magic or cooperation with magical helpers especially lends itself to literary treatment, because of both the human interest inherent in the theme and the obvious dramatic possibilities. Early instances of this motif appear in the *Helladius (Proterius)* and *Cyprian* legends.¹ In the former, a servant in the household of Proterius falls in love with the latter's daughter. In his desperation, with a letter of recommendation from a magician, he turns to the devil for assistance. In return for a signed contract that denies Christ and acknowledges the devil as supreme master, the Prince of Darkness makes the demons of harlotry descend upon the girl to arouse her amorous passions. Desirous of marrying the servant, she pleads desperately with her father until he, concerned for her life and well-being, reluctantly agrees to the unequal union. After they are married, however, she notices with shock that her husband never goes to church. Concerned for him, she succeeds in making him admit the truth. At her insistence, he approaches Bishop Basilius for help, who confines him in a monastery where he undergoes severe penitence. After forty days, as the servant is being led by his right hand to church by the bishop, the devil grabs his left hand and the two struggle over him. Finally, amidst the ardent prayers of the community, the contract descends from Heaven into the hands of Basilius, who tears it to pieces.

In the *Cyprian* legend, the magician protagonist, first on behalf of a friend and later for his own benefit, exorcises three devils one after the other to secure Justina's love. The three arrogantly boast about their power, but Justina, being a Christian, successfully withstands their temptations. The failure of the devils convinces Cyprian that Christianity is superior to the old pagan practices, and he converts.

The *Theophile* legend also develops the theme, although the object of this pact is not a woman's love but worldly prestige and professional success. This legend can, however, be regarded as closely related to the other two, since the

exact nature of the goal pursued through the compact is not crucial to the structure of the plot or the final outcome.

These legends continued to be popular in the Middle Ages throughout Europe.² In different parts, autochthonous ideas, derived from a pagan substratum, enriched the devil lore with new features. While the mediaeval devil can often degenerate into a comic figure, the legend can also become more sinister, as when the pact is signed with one's own blood.³ At first sight, this might strike us as a minor change, but it adds a new dimension to the theme because of the widespread tabus and superstitions connected with human blood across many different cultures.

The Renaissance witnessed a strong resurgence of belief in the devil and an increased curiosity about magic, answered by the Church's obsession with eradicating what looked like a new form of heresy. We need think only of the *Summis desiderantes affectibus* (1484), the special Papal Bull on witches issued by Innocent VIII, and also the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum* (1489), followed by other treatises of the same brand.⁴ If we are to believe the *Malleus* and its sequels, Christianity was faced with nothing less than an enormous conspiracy of devils and their earthly helpers. In the Renaissance literary treatments of the theme, pacts with the devil lead to the undoing of their perpetrators, more often than in the early centuries. It is in this atmosphere that the Faust legend is elaborated around the eccentric adventurer Johann Faustus (1480–1540?). He is, of course, an unrepentant magician, whose horrible end is already announced in the very title of the oldest popular Faust book (1587).⁵ His case constitutes an interesting example of how favourable circumstances can lead to the association with a real-life personage of traditions, legends, literary motifs, and popular superstitions.

The literary treatment of pacts to attain a woman's love may have received additional impetus from "case studies" recounted in theological treatises and inquisitorial trial transcripts. Karl Kiesewetter⁶ mentions the case of a French Augustinian monk who was condemned to life imprisonment in 1453 for entering a pact with the devil in order to enlist his help in the seduction of a noble lady. The idea that love can be obtained through magical arts was a common one, and note should be taken of the *Malleus*, which warns that "devils have six ways of injuring humanity. And one is, to induce an evil love in a man for a woman, or in a woman for a man . . ." ⁷

Spain, as is to be expected, shared the general European currents of belief in the devil and related matters. The early prototypes were well known in the mediaeval period. The *Theophilus* legend appears in Gonzalo de Berceo's *Milagros de nuestra señora* and also in the *Libro de los exemplos*,⁸ written in the early fifteenth century. The latter also contains a version of the *Helladius* (*Proterius*) legend and the story of a monk who uses the devil as a go-between in his plans to marry a pagan priest's daughter.⁹ The theme of the compact was revived in the Golden Age theatre, where, imbued with the spirit of the

Counter-Reformation, it was used to illustrate the superiority of free will over predestination. Among these interpretations, two result in a positive outcome for the protagonist, and so are close to the early Christian legends in their spirit. Mira de Amescua's *El esclavo del demonio* (1612) ends with the repentance and miraculous salvation of the erring protagonist, while Calderón's *El mágico prodigioso* (1637) closely follows the *Cyprian* legend.¹⁰ In contrast to these, Ruiz de Alarcón's *Quien mal anda en mal acaba* (He Who Follows an Evil Way, Ends in an Evil Way), as the very title suggests, terminates in the undoing of the main character. The play is also unique in being inspired by an actual inquisitorial case. The protagonist is the *morisco*¹¹ practitioner of popular medicine Román Ramírez, whose historicity has been well documented.¹² Alarcón's direct source seems to have been Del Río's *Disquisitionum Magicarum Libri VI*, first published in 1599, where the part dealing with Román Ramírez is based on the inquisitorial prosecutor's accusation against him. Rumours and oral traditions about this figure may also have contributed to the genesis of the play.

According to what can be ascertained from the documentary sources, the real-life Román Ramírez, in his capacity as physician, was called upon to treat a woman exhibiting symptoms that nowadays would be regarded as psychosomatic. Since psychopathological and neurotic ailments were in those days viewed with suspicion and quite often attributed to the machinations of the devil,¹³ his involvement in this case eventually proved to be his undoing. Román was arrested by the Inquisition and in the course of the trial was accused of having cast a spell on his patient with the aid of the devil to prolong her illness and secure continued profits. There is no hint in the trial transcripts of amorous intentions. Román is, moreover, described as an elderly man. His diagnosis – surprisingly modern – that the woman's reactions resulted from her displeasure at being married to her husband against her will is recorded in the transcript. Unfortunately for Román, in the course of the proceedings he implicated himself further by admitting having secretly practised the rites of Islam, and by confessing his associations with a familiar devil called Liarde, whom he inherited from his grandfather.¹⁴ His renowned memory, which brought him fame as a professional story-teller, was also attributed to his associations with the devil. Eventually, Román became seriously ill in the prison and died in 1599. His body was exhumed in 1600 and burnt, together with his effigy, in an *auto da fe* celebrated in Toledo.

Román Ramírez was not the only *morisco* physician who got into trouble with the Inquisition. Several similar cases are mentioned by Luis García Ballester,¹⁵ and it seems certain that hostility on the part of Christian physicians against their *morisco* rivals, whom they regarded as *curanderos*, played a significant part in the procedures against them. No generalizations can be made about their medical qualifications: some – like Román – were semi-literate representatives of a certain type of popular medicine, based on the

knowledge of herbs coupled with the current superstitions of the age; others, however, seem to have attended university. In either case, they fulfilled a social need because there were few university-trained physicians. The *cris-tianos viejos* by no means shunned their services, especially not when the conventional methods of traditional physicians failed. It is recorded that even the future Phillip III himself, the monarch who ultimately signed the decree ordering the expulsion of the *moriscos* in 1608, had been treated as a child by a *morisco* doctor and cured.¹⁶ It must be taken into account, however, that stubborn, chronic diseases, resistant to the conventional medical arts, were frequently ascribed to devilish origins, and to succeed where others had failed was to tread on dangerous ground.¹⁷

At the time when *Quien mal anda en mal acaba* was written (Agustín Millares Carlo opts for 1617),¹⁸ the events that had led to the expulsion of the *morisco* minority were still lingering in Spanish memories. A *morisco* protagonist in a Golden Age play must be viewed in this context, although – as we shall see – the literary treatment is far from conveying the socio-historical background in a realistic manner. Caro Baroja¹⁹ already points to the progressive stages that led to a total deformation of historical reality. Needless to say, Alarcón's source was already biased, being based on the confessions of an accused obtained under duress, the testimony of ignorant witnesses, and the interpretations of the prosecution. While the transcripts of the inquisitorial procedures, published by González Palencia, do not mention torture, it should be considered that fear of torture might bring about the same results as torture itself, especially in the case of Román, who was an elderly and sick man.²⁰ The prosecution's point of view underwent further deformation in the context of Del Río's treatise. Finally, this raw material has been modified by a thorough literary re-elaboration. As in the primitive *Faust* legend, the real-life personage has been recast into the mold of literary conventions, which affects both form and content.

Notwithstanding the historical reality that lurks in the background, a careful study reveals that in the play traditional motifs and related devices play a significant part. They are easily discernible as such and for most of them approximate equivalents can be found among the types listed and classified in Stith Thomson's *Motif Index to Folk Literature* (Bloomington: 1955). In order to convey the conventional aspects of the play, and for the sake of comparison, in the following detailed discussion I shall refer to the entries in the Thompson *Index* by providing the appropriate number and short description in parentheses. It should be born in mind, however, that in the play the motifs do not necessarily appear in their pure and unadulterated form.

The initial scene of the play takes place at a country inn where Román happens to catch a glimpse of the departing Doña Aldonza (N 710: Accidental meeting of hero and heroine). As is to be expected, he falls in love with her at first sight (T 15: Love at first sight). We also learn that her father had died and

that she happens to be on her way to her native Deza after having attended to legal matters about her inheritance in Madrid. Since no mother is mentioned in the play,²¹ she is left to her own resources, and she can be regarded as more vulnerable to the trickeries of a villain. From her servant Tristán, Román finds out that she has already been engaged and is expected on her return to marry the nobleman Don Juan. Thus, the theme of potential rivalry is introduced at an early stage. Since this element is absent in Alarcón's sources, its appearance in the play is a striking example of how fidelity to them is subordinated to other considerations. In the Golden Age theatre, of course, conflict based on amorous rivalry is an almost obligatory ingredient, and it is worth noting that S. Waxman conceives the play as being "more a conventional love *comedia* with *galán*, *dama*, and *rival*, than a devil pact drama."²²

From the very beginning, the dramatist also takes great pains in situating Román on the social scale, underscoring the preposterous nature of his amorous inclinations. When he approaches Tristán with his questions about Doña Aldonza's identity, the servant reacts in an unusually curt and rude manner to what might seem to us a straightforward inquiry. However, forms of address were of considerable complexity in the seventeenth century and use of the improper form often gave rise to hurt feelings. We may assume that this was true for the Spanish society of the age, but such situations are so frequent in literary texts that we can also regard them as literary motifs. Román's manner of addressing Tristán would sound arrogant to a Golden Age audience since he uses the *vos* form, normally reserved for addressing social inferiors.²³ Tristán's reaction is, as can be expected, no less arrogant, but then arrogance is one of the conventional qualities that male characters in the *comedia* tend to exhibit. Notwithstanding his own low social status as a servant, Tristán makes it known to Román that he expects to be addressed as a *hidalgo* by him. Furthermore, in biting remarks he insinuates that Román's abstinence from wine and bacon make him suspect of not being a *cristiano viejo*:

Román: (A Tristán) Mientras es hora
de partir, esa señora,
me decid, ¿quién es?

Tristán: No sé.

Román: Si el oficio entre su gente
de mayordomo ejercéis,
¿por qué causa respondéis
un "no sé" tan secamente?

Tristán: No os espante que del eco
guarde las leyes así;
que si seco respondí;
también preguntastes seco.
¿No dijérades siquiera:
"Hidalgo, saber quería,

– si cabe en la cortesía –
 Quién es esta pasajera?”
 Y no, sin haber jamás
 visto a un hombre: “Esa señora,
 me decid, mientras es hora
 de partir, ¿quién es?” Demás
 que estoy con vos en pecado,
 porque os he visto comer,
 y ni vino os vi beber
 ni tocino habéis probado;
 y de hablar con vos me corro;
 que quien no come tocino
 ni vino bebe, es indino
 de hablar ni escupir en corro (26–52).²⁴

The above passage might of course be inspired by direct observation of social interaction between *moriscos* and *cristanos viejos*. Abstinence from wine and bacon played a considerable part in the so-called *indicios exteriores*, which frequently provided the basis for inquisitorial procedures against members of the *morisco* minority.²⁵ In other words, mere culture traits thought to be peculiar to Islam and Judaism were in themselves regarded as circumstantial evidence of practicing the faith. However, allusions to abstinence from wine, and especially from pork, are frequently found in Golden Age literary texts to insinuate that someone is not of *cristiano viejo* origin. It is, therefore, more likely that we find here a literary convention rather than an author’s attempt to portray actual scenes.

Hand in hand with this unsympathetic portrayal of Román – which would appeal to the prejudices of the audience and stamp him as a *persona non grata* – the dramatist also provides an exposition of the theological issues at stake. This again is a frequent practice in Golden Age plays and, though stated through one of the characters in the play, it fulfils the function of authorial comment. Thus, in a long monologue (Scene V, Act I), Román bewails his bad luck, expresses his belief in astrology and predestination, and explicitly denies free will. He finally admits the enormous social distance that separates him from Aldonza, a fact that has already been alluded to in lines 12–20 (“¿Cómo tendrá mi humildad / alas para tanta altura?”). He then comes to the conclusion that without diabolical help his hopes of attaining his goal are slim indeed:

¡Miente la opinión, que pone
 siempre elección de los actos
 en la voluntad del hombre!
 ¡Miente, que no hay albedrío!
 Ley es todo, todo es orden
 dispuesto por los influjos
 de los celestiales orbes
 pues te sigo, bella Aldonza,

forzado de mis pasiones,
 como el acero al imán
 y como la aguja al norte;
 dictándome la razón,
 que el imposible conoce,
 por ser nuestros dos estados
 en todo tan desconformes.
 ¿Quién, pues, me dará esperanza
 de que algún tiempo la goce,
 si diabólicos engaños
 no ayudan mis pretensiones? (142–160)

While matters like free will and predestination would not raise strong feelings in our day, in the atmosphere of the Counter-Reformation this was an emotionally charged issue, and open expression of such opinions would invariably invite trouble. Román's rejection of free will must have scandalized the audience and immediately stamped him as a heretic.

In the second part of his monologue, Román shows he is aware of the hopelessness of his situation. Given the spirit of the times, for a woman to marry beneath her social status was inconceivable under normal circumstances; marriage between *crístianos viejos* and *moriscos* was even more strongly frowned upon.²⁶ Though the theme of intermarriage between Moors and Christians is not absent from Spanish literature (it appears in the *novela morisca* and in the "Historia del cautivo" in the *Quijote*), it is always the lady who happens to be Moorish, according to the double standard of the times. Even so, prior conversion is the standard prerequisite for such a marriage, and the parties to it are both presented as of noble descent. Román, as we know, is described as an outcast and the object of his amorous aspirations is of high social standing, destined to marry a nobleman. From the point of view of a Golden Age audience, she would be regarded as rightfully belonging to Don Juan by virtue of social norms and in the eyes of God. Within such a context Román's attitude constitutes an enormous temerity and a defiance of social and divine order. Since the obstacles in his way appear to be insurmountable by normal means, it is safe to say that no dramatist in Alarcón's time could have continued the plot from this point on a realistic plane. A magical solution virtually imposes itself²⁷ – regardless of the play's sources – and Román's only alternative is to turn for help to the devil (M 217: Devil bargains to help man win woman; M 217.1: Servant makes pact with devil denying Christ to secure nobleman's daughter). It should be added that members of certain minorities, and especially the Moors and the *moriscos* of Spain, have been traditionally associated with magical practices, both in literature and in seventeenth-century popular opinion.²⁸ Such an image of the *morisco* minority in the minds of the public constitutes part of the extraverbal context that must be taken into account. Román's choice of means to attain his goal would fit into his audience's expectations.

Seen from a structural point of view, the devil belongs to the paradigmatic class of the helper,²⁹ and, more particularly, to that of the supernatural helper, whose function is to remove the obstacles that stand in the hero's way. However, magic here is not merely an easy means to advance the plot, but a logical outcome of the initial situation. In view of the illicit nature of Román's pretensions, and the high risk involved, the magical helper has to be an evil one, and a powerful one at that.

After Román signs the contract with the devil with his own blood (M 201.1.2: Pact with devil signed in blood), we witness an acceleration of events: first, the devil casts a spell on Aldonza making her abhor her lawful fiancé (D 1931: Hatred magically induced) and making her perceive Don Juan as ugly and loathsome (D 1870: Magic hideousness). Since she herself is rather surprised about the sudden changes taking place in her, she attributes them to illness (D 2064: Magic sickness; D 2065: Magic insanity) and asks for the postponement of her marriage (T 151: Year's respite from unwelcome marriage). All this furthers Román's interest, but he still has to gain access to Aldonza's home. So, with the devil's aid, he builds up a reputation as a physician under the highly suggestive name Demodolo (K 1955.6: Sham physician and the devil in partnership). Once his fame is well established, it follows naturally that Don Juan, on the advice of his best friend Don Felix, should request Román to cure his fiancée. The devil's contribution, apart from providing Román with the medical skills that prompt his invitation to Aldonza's home, also consists in making him appear handsome and desirable (D 1860: Magic beautification). This motif, in addition to being the opposite of the magic hideousness caused in Don Juan, becomes necessary because of the literary convention that a nobleman should be good-looking and the assumption that a *morisco* can immediately be recognized as such by his outward appearance. Since it is not Román's intention to cure Aldonza, from now on most of his activities are confined to down-to-earth intrigues and deceptions. Assuming the role of a suitor disguised as a physician (K 1825.1.: Lover masks as doctor to reach sweetheart; K 1315.2: Seduction by posing as doctor), he diagnoses Aldonza as bewitched, implying to Don Juan that the author of her troubles is none other than his very best friend, Don Felix. False accusations (K 2100–K 2199) are frequent motifs in traditional literature of a certain type, and it is also part of the conventional treatment that they should be believed even if the unjustly accused one is a trusted friend (K 2131: Trickster makes two friends each suspicious of the other's intentions; K 2150: Innocent made to appear guilty).

Even access to Aldonza, however, does not seem to guarantee success. Though she is favourably impressed by Román (D 1900: Love induced by magic) and, under the devil's spell, idealizes him, a medical doctor's status was still not high enough in the Golden Age to make a suitor acceptable to a noble woman. Though the devil is capable of affecting Aldonza's sensory

perceptions sufficiently to gradually influence her feelings, he cannot make her break social tabus. There is a further obstacle to be surmounted, and Román becomes aware that only as a nobleman will he succeed fully:

Sólo acreditar me falta
de principal caballero;
que éste es el medio postrero
de alcanzar gloria tan alta (1277–80).

At this stage Román and the devil cleverly contrive to spread the rumour that he is a nobleman in disguise called Diego de Guzmán (K 1315.5: Seduction by posing as nobleman), who has fled from Madrid to escape a forced marriage decreed by his father. The deceit is achieved by completely natural means: aware of the presence of Leonor, Aldonza's maid, Román and the devil carry on a make-believe conversation, which she is bound to overhear and from which she must conclude that Román is a nobleman (N 475: Eavesdropper overhears secret name). Leonor hastens to take this piece of information to Aldonza. The latter is noticeably elated, but in spite of the devil's prior machinations she is still sober enough to send a letter to Madrid to check the accuracy of her maid's gossip and to inquire whether a certain Don Diego is missing from the city, and whether he fits Demodolo's description:

Mas a Madrid es razón
escribir para informarme;
que no es cordura arrojarme
con liviana información (1701–1704).

When the reply from Madrid confirms Leonor's claim, Aldonza's scruples fade away entirely, and she herself declares her passionate feelings to Román in the course of a long dialogue (1795–1925). She expresses her desire to marry him, but she has been engaged to Don Juan, and according to the mores of the day her breach of promise would dishonour both families. She is therefore still vacillating:

Aunque el alma esté dispuesta,
aún no lo está la ocasión,
si atiendo a la obligación
de cuerda, noble y honesta (1891–1894).

When Román insists and wants to know what she is worrying about, she – as must be expected – fears people's gossip and Don Juan's jealous nature:

Román: ¿Qué temes?
Doña Aldonza: Lo que dirán,
y los celos de Don Juan,
de quien sabes la pasión (1912–15).

Román hastens to assure her that Don Juan's desperation will eventually bring him to such a mental state that he will no longer be worthy of marrying her. Doña Aldonza seems happy with such a solution and comes to the point of expressing her willingness to marry Román even if he were not Don Diego:

Doña Aldonza: Pues con eso seré luego
tu esposa, si eres don Diego.
Román: ¿Y si no lo soy?
Doña Aldonza: También (1923–26).

Additional and concurrently developed stratagems are necessary to pave the way for Román's marriage. As already mentioned, Don Juan is made to believe that his friend Don Felix is his rival and is responsible for casting the spell on Aldonza (1053–97). In his uncontrollable jealousy, Don Juan decides to lie in wait for his friend, and when the devil in the image and shape of Don Felix leaves Aldonza's house, he is convinced of his friend's treachery and allows himself to be tricked into attacking the phantom (2032–39). The devil's capacity to impersonate others is, naturally, well documented in devil lore, although in the above situation several other motifs seem to coalesce (J 1485: Mistaken identity; J 1760: Animal or person mistaken for something else; N 340: Hasty killing or condemnation). Don Juan, under the erroneous impression that he has killed Don Felix, considers himself an outlaw and immediately seeks refuge in a church to escape punishment (R 325: Church as refuge). During his stay there, in a comic interlude, his servant Tristán is the object of some of the devil's horse-play (G 303.24: The devil in church; D 450: Magic transformation of objects into other objects). Eventually Don Juan finds out that Don Felix is not dead, but very much alive – a circumstance that surprises him and strengthens his conviction that his friend is a magician who not only bewitched Doña Aldonza but also is responsible for his own confusion and bewilderment. However, his prior claim in front of a common acquaintance to have killed Don Felix, his having sought asylum in a church without apparent cause, and his own confused and erratic behaviour cast doubt on his sanity – a factor that would incapacitate him for marriage.

Román has by now almost succeeded in neutralizing his opponent and, to remove the final obstacle, he suggests to the desperate Don Juan that a stranger be talked into marrying Aldonza; later, in the darkness of the night, Don Juan could secretly take his place, while the stranger would depart (K 1915: The false bridegroom [substitute –] takes the place of the true bridegroom; T 92.4.3: In darkness of night trickster instead of her chosen lover elopes with girl). This would presumably give Don Juan the opportunity to take his revenge by dishonouring Aldonza and by killing Don Felix afterwards. Because of perturbances caused by the devil, Don Juan welcomes the idea and suggests that Román himself should play the role of the stranger and marry Aldonza.³⁰ Since it is he himself who in the presence of witnesses proposes to

Aldonza that she marry Román, unwittingly he is paving the way for the latter to attain his goal. Should Román succeed, public opinion would be on his side; Aldonza's remaining scruples concerning breach of promise and family honour would be brushed away; and, if Don Juan complained, it would only further convince those around him that he is a madman.

As we have seen, the combination of magic and deceit is most successful in removing obstacles from the path of the protagonist step by step, so much so that we come to the point of no return and Román's triumph appears to be imminent. Only a miracle can help now to avert disaster for virtuous Doña Aldonza, and this is what – albeit in an astonishing manner – the dramatist treats us to. At the critical moment, when Román during the wedding ceremony stretches out his hand to Aldonza, virtually out of nowhere a *familiar* of the Inquisition appears and puts an end to his machinations by arresting him on the spot. With this the spell is broken, and the devil, as is his usual custom,³¹ abandons Román to his fate and excuses himself by saying that he is powerless against Heaven:

Mi furor,
Román, no os puede valer.
Aquí dio un fin mi poder,
porque el del cielo es mayor (2663–66).

The modern reader's dissatisfaction with such a dénouement is, of course, understandable. We have a play here in which the plot is initially complicated on a supernatural (magical) plane, leading to an insoluble and irretrievable situation that is resolved through a rather prosaic and earthly *deus ex machina*, unless we assume that the dramatist intended to endow the Inquisition with an aura of the supernatural. Tristán, who from the very beginning distrusted Demodolo and his companion the devil, and possibly Don Felix might be suspected of being informers. However, there is nothing explicit in the text that would give us a clue as to how the Inquisition got wind of what was going on. In spite of the lack of subtlety inherent in any *deus ex machina* device, it should be pointed out that exposure and punishment of the villain – a sort of poetic justice meted out at the end – are part and parcel of the conventional treatment characteristic of the Golden Age theatre³² and other literary periods that require poetic justice to be explicitly expressed.

It might be objected at this point that the dramatist's source itself would, at least partly, have a bearing on the solutions open to him. It is true that the real-life Román Ramírez also suffers imprisonment at the hands of the Inquisition, but it is equally evident that the author is more determined by *a priori* literary considerations than the data provided by his source. He felt no compunctions in changing the latter when it suited his purpose. Moreover, dramatists in search of ideas tend to select data that can be fitted into their literary vision of the world, and if Alarcón incorporated Román's imprison-

ment into the play, he did so because it fits into his preconceived scheme and because it is compatible with the “universe of discourse”³³ that determines the laws and conventions of the Golden Age theatre regarding form and possible content. If the real-life Román had managed to escape from his prison, the dramatist would still have ended the play with a motif containing some sort of spectacular punishment, or, as the only possible alternative, he might have substituted for it a motif involving last-minute repentance, most likely accompanied by the death of the protagonist. Assuming a different “universe of discourse,” one could conceive him developing the plot on a realistic plane, but such a solution was unavailable to a Golden Age dramatist. A modern author might, if inspired by the same source material, treat the pact with the devil as a false accusation invented by Román’s antagonist, and present Román himself as a tragic victim of a cruel society rather than as a villain.

As far as the structure of the play is concerned, we can see it in the context of a semiological system in which motifs form a syntagmatic relationship, deployed in a linear sequence that represents a causal chain. In a well-planned work of art, the motifs are of course not merely chosen for the sake of embellishment, but integrated into the structure of the whole. By virtue of their significance and function, the motifs also form a paradigmatic class, and are potentially interchangeable. In the proper context, and depending on the dramatist’s intentions, the devil’s part (the helper) could be easily taken over by a pagan god, an ogre, a dragon, or a Celestina-type witch; the sham physician might be replaced by the sham teacher (K 1315.7 and K 1958) or the sham priest. The paradigmatic choice of motifs has, of course, a bearing on characterization and on the outcome: it is not the same whether our “helper” is an angel or a devil, nor are deceits and treachery conducive to a happy end.

If we now attempt to compare Román’s pact with those of the prototypes, even a superficial comparison will show that we find ourselves in quite different worlds. It is evident that through the modifications of the socio-cultural context, the universe of discourse, and the individual intentions of the authors, the significance of this theme undergoes continuous change. In the ancient *Cyprian* legend the emphasis is on conversion, which comes from the realization that the devil is impotent and that there are powers stronger than he. Cyprian the Magus, in a way, shows that he knows on which side his bread is buttered. He makes a rational choice after comparing the evidence: if Justina is able to withstand the devil’s power, it can only be because she has a stronger ally. Cyprian’s devil still has many characteristics that could be associated with the ancient pagan idols or demons of a pre-Christian age. He is definitely less powerful and sinister than the later Christian devil.³⁴ The *Helladius (Proterius)* legend, on the other hand, shows some affinity with Alarcón’s play in the sense that it also contains the element of social obstacle. However, the servant who enters the pact forms part of the household and so would have the opportunity to talk to his master’s daughter. All the devil has

to do is to instil passion in the lady – a relatively easy task for an evil spirit. There is no doubt about the servant's Christian faith, and the social context that gave rise to the legend was a very different one from the Spanish environment of the sixteenth century. The emphasis is, moreover, not so much on the "villain" – he is not the real protagonist – but on St. Basilius, who wages a heroic and ultimately victorious battle for the nearly-condemned soul.

In Alarcón – notwithstanding other connotations – the protagonist is Román, and the title itself implies individual responsibility. The importance of free will, a central issue during the Counter-Reformation, is also implicit in the play. Román's denial of it makes him into a heretic and a rebel who tries to attain his goal by illicit means, and so comes to a bitter end. Román, then, is not vanquished by his rival; he brings about his own downfall. Rivalry between Román and Don Juan exists only in a limited or potential form, since the latter remains until the very end totally oblivious to the fact that Román is his rival. None of his actions is geared to oppose Román's schemes; on the contrary, he comes entirely under the latter's pernicious influence and, on the basis of unsubstantiated evidence, unjustly suspects his best friend of causing his misfortunes. As an antagonist, he seems colourless, a mere puppet who proves to be hopelessly unequal to the challenge he is confronted with. Without the timely intervention of the Inquisition, there is not the slightest doubt as to who would be the loser. However, might not precisely his personal weakness and insignificance better emphasize the overwhelming power of the Church? As an individual, Don Juan is without protection against the devil. However, since he is a Christian – albeit an imperfect one – he automatically benefits from the protective power of the same divine and social order against which Román rises up in opposition. The play, then, seems to have connotations beyond that of an individual's attempt to gain a woman's love by deceit, since the "villain" also happens to represent an alien religion, often referred to as a "diabolical sect" in the theological writings of the age. No wonder that many passages in Golden Age literature attest to anti-*morisco* prejudice,³⁵ a sentiment no doubt shared by Alarcón. Underneath the plot's surface, the theme of Christianity versus Islam, or that of Heaven against Hell, emerges with the implacable logic of the Counter-Reformation.

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Notes

- 1 For details concerning the Greek sources of these legends see L. Rademacher, *Griechische Quellen zur Faustsage*, in *Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Philosophisch-historische Klasse*, Bd. 206, abh. 4 (Wien, 1927).
- 2 The first two are contained in Jacobus de Varagine's *Legenda Aurea*, composed around 1275, and

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- translated into several European languages. It should be noted that the name *Proterius* appears as *Heradius* here.
- 3 L. Rademacher, p. 49, n. 2.
 - 4 These and the following general conclusions have been drawn from Karl Kiesewetter, *Faust in d. Geschichte u. Tradition* (1893; rpt. Hildesheim: Olms, 1963); Günther Mahal, *Mephistos Metamorphosen* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1972); R.B. Robbins, *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* (New York: Crown, 1966); Gregory Zilboorg, *The Medical Man and the Witch during the Renaissance* (1935; rpt. New York: Cooper Square, 1969).
 - 5 Title of the 1592 English translation: *The Historie of the damnable life, and deserved death of Doctor John Faustus*. Quoted from Philip Mason Palmer, *The Sources of the Faust Tradition* (New York: Octagon, 1966), p. 135.
 - 6 *Faust* p. 126.
 - 7 *Malleus Maleficarum*, quoted from Zilboorg, p. 37
 - 8 John Esten Keller, ed., *Libro de los exemplos por A. B. C.* (Madrid: C.S.I.C., 1951), p. 201, No. 261 (192).
 - 9 *Ibid.* The *Proterius* legend is on p. 43 (No. 23), but the father's name here is given as *Eradio* in accordance with the *Legenda Aurea*. The monk's tale is on p. 98, No. 106 (35).
 - 10 For a brief discussion of possible sources, see the *Introduction* by James N. Birch to his edition of Calderón's *El mágico prodigioso* (London: Methuen, 1929). In *Appendix II* he also provides a version of the Cyprian legend as it appears in Alonso de Villegas' *Flos Sanctorum* (Madrid, 1594).
 - 11 This is the term usually applied to members of the Crypto-Islamic minority of sixteenth-century Spain. Forcibly baptized, the moriscos continued to practice the Islamic faith secretly until their expulsion in 1608. Being officially Christians, in matters of faith they fell under the jurisdiction of the Inquisition.
 - 12 For details consult Ángel Gonzalez Palencia, *Las fuentes de la comedia "Quien mal anda en mal acaba"* (Madrid, 1929); Julio Garo Baroja, "Magia y estilización literaria. Un hechicero morisco: Román Ramírez," in *Vidas mágicas e inquisición* (Madrid: Taurus, 1967), I, 309–328; and L.P. Harvey, "Oral Composition and the Performance of Novels of Chivalry in Spain," in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 10 (1974), 270–286. Prof. Harvey's excellent article deals mainly with Román Ramírez as story-teller.
 - 13 Zilboorg, especially pp. 11–13, 28, 49–50, 54.
 - 14 Caro Baroja, p. 322, makes the interesting observation that Liarde's character corresponds more closely to that of an Islamic *jinn* than to a Christian devil.
 - 15 "The Minority of Morisco Physicians in the Spain of the 16th Century and their Conflicts in a Dominant Christian Society," *Sudhoffs Archiv*, 60 (1976), 209–234.
 - 16 García Ballester, p. 223.
 - 17 García Ballester, pp. 213–14.
 - 18 See his edition of the *Obras completas de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* (México: F.C.E., 1968), III, p. 169.
 - 19 *Vidas mágicas e inquisición*, I, p. 316.
 - 20 On the threat of torture as a means of obtaining confessions, see Peter Dressendörfer, *Islam unter der Inquisition* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1971), p. 31.
 - 21 The almost universal absence of mothers in Golden Age plays is regarded by Rudolph Schevill as characteristic of the conventions of the genre. For details see his *The Dramatic Art of Lope de Vega* (New York: Russel and Russel, 1964), 17–19.
 - 22 "Chapters on Magic," *Revue Hispanique*, 38 (1916), 460–61.
 - 23 For a discussion of this topic, see Francisco Rodríguez Marín, "Los tratamientos en el *Quijote*," in his critical edition of *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* (Madrid: Atlas, 1949), vol. 9, Appendix 19.
 - 24 Quotations from and references to the play are based on the *Obras completas de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón*, ed. Agustín Millares Carlo (México: F.C.E., 1968), III, pp. 169–252.
 - 25 Dressendörfer, pp. 84–87.
 - 26 For more details on this topic see Dressendörfer, pp. 44–47.

- 27 Augusta Espantoso Foley, in *Occult Arts and Doctrine in the Theatre of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* (Genève: Droz, 1972) emphasizes the use of the occult for its dramatic possibilities. She sees magic "as a structural force that causes a series of *enredos* and difficult situations as a result of the diabolical pact" and points out that "Alarcón regarded magic as a dramatic tool" (p. 35).
- 28 For interesting examples in literature and reality see Julio Caro Baroja, *Vidas mágicas e inquisición* (Madrid: Taurus, 1967), I, pp. 47–52. It is also of interest that in Cervantes' *Persiles y Segismunda* (Ch. VIII) the witch Zenotia describes herself as of *morisco* origin.
- 29 The importance of the "helper" or "magic agent" as a structurally-required function (incarnated by one of the characters or magic objects) has been pointed out by Vladimir Propp in his *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2nd. ed. (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1968), pp. 43 ff.
In regard to the theatre, the concept of the "helper" or "accomplice" as a necessary "function" has been convincingly argued by Étienne Souriau in *Les deux cent mille situations dramatiques* (Paris: Flammarion, 1950).
- 30 See Propp's remarks about trickery, according to which the villain's "deceitful proposals are always accepted" by the victim (p. 30).
- 31 Compare this to Sith Thompson's motif M 212.2: Devil at gallows repudiates his bargain with robber.
- 32 On the principle of poetic justice as applied to Golden Age drama, see Alexander Augustin Parker, *The Approach to the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age*, Diamante, VI (London: The Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Councils, 1967).
- 33 Eugenio Coseriu defines the term *universe of discourse* as a "universal system of significations to which a discourse (or statement) belongs and which determines its validity and meaning. Literature, mythology, the sciences, mathematics, the empirical universe, in their capacity of 'themes' or 'worlds of reference' of speech, constitute 'universes of discourse'." For details see his "Determinación y entorno," *Teoría del lenguaje y lingüística general* (Madrid: Gredos, 1973), p. 318.
- 34 Rademacher, pp. 30–31.
- 35 For instance, Ch. V. in Quevedo's *Buscón* and certain passages in Cervantes' *Coloquio de los perros*.