

# Writers and Religious Brotherhoods in Seventeenth-Century Madrid: The Congregation of the Slaves of the *Santísimo Sacramento de la Magdalena*

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*Summary: This article examines the participation of writers and artists in the Congregation of the Slaves of the most Holy Sacrament of the Magdalene. It presents the major characteristics of the so-called esclavitudes or congregaciones of “slaves”, a type of religious brotherhood promoted by the court nobility and religious reformers that enjoyed noticeable success in seventeenth-century Madrid. It analyses the presence of poets and writers, including some of the major figures of the time (Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Vélez de Guevara, Quevedo, among others) in the context of courtly patronage and sociability. It also touches on the contribution of literature in general and writers in particular to the construction of a Counter-Reformation religiosity in the capital of the Spanish Monarchy.*

Congregations of so-called slaves, or *esclavitudes*, emerged in Madrid at the beginning of the seventeenth century as a new model of confraternity promoted by the nobility, court elites, and religious reformers.<sup>1</sup> Following the court's controversial relocation to Valladolid in 1601, Philip III's return to Madrid in 1606 inspired individuals and institutions to resettle the city and participate actively in its public life. Approximately thirty such *esclavitudes* were founded during the seventeenth century, the distinctive feature of which was their characteristic “\$” symbol (fig. 1) and a complex and demanding program of devotional practices.<sup>2</sup> Among the most representative of these brotherhoods were those created with the specific purpose of atoning for alleged offences and atrocities committed against Catholic symbols—the Eucharist and images of Jesus Christ and the Virgin—at the hands of Jews and Protestants. The *esclavitudes* played an important role in renewing Catholic lay spirituality, instigating moral reform, and fomenting the spectacular display of Counter-Reformation

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to express my gratitude to Laura Bass, Goretti González, María José del Río, and Elizabeth Wright for their suggestions. An earlier version of this paper will be published in Spanish as “Devoción, patronazgo y sociabilidad en la Corte: escritores y artistas en la congregación de esclavos del Santísimo Sacramento de la Magdalena en el Madrid del siglo XVII” in Pierre Civil and Cécile Vincent-Cassy (eds.), *Hacedores de santos. La fábrica de santidad en la Europa católica (siglos XVI–XVII)*, Madrid, Doce Calles.

<sup>2</sup> For a general view of them, see Sánchez de Madariaga, “Da ‘confratello’ a ‘schiavo,’” 267–275.

religiosity in the re-established capital of the Spanish monarchy and new baroque court in Madrid.<sup>3</sup>

This article will first examine the defining characteristics of these *esclavitudes* within the wider context of brotherhoods founded in the seventeenth century, when this type of organization took root with great force. It will then explore the meanings of a new language of servitude that they developed. In addition, it will trace the parallel histories of two such pioneering slave congregations founded in Madrid in 1608 and 1609, both of which were dedicated to the Eucharist (*Santísimo Sacramento*, Most Holy Sacrament). Finally, the article will explore the significant presence of writers and artists in one of these brotherhoods, the congregation of the Santísimo Sacramento, known popularly as the Santísimo Sacramento “de la Magdalena.” The congregation featured among its adherents the most important writers of the era, including Miguel de Cervantes, Lope de Vega, and Francisco de Quevedo, as well as musicians, theatre directors, and painters. Religion, politics, patronage, and court sociability were woven into an inextricable unity within this *esclavitud*, which also boasted among its members no less than Francisco Gómez de Sandoval (1552/53–1625), first duke of Lerma, the all-powerful favourite (*valido*) of King Philip III (r. 1598–1621).<sup>4</sup> In this way, the article explores aspects of literary and artistic patronage at the Spanish court that have received little scholarly attention until now. Likewise, it deals with the ways writers and artists helped to create new forms of religious association and shape devotional and celebratory practices that were to have a remarkably lasting impact on Spanish society and culture.

The defining feature of confraternities, or *cofradías*, that adopted the name of “slaves” or “slave congregations” was their use of a symbol formed by the letter “S” pierced vertically with a nail (fig. 1), which in Castilian can be read as *esclavo* or “slave” (i.e. “s” + *clavo*, “nail”). This insignia of slavery was frequently used in the ordinances of *cofradías*; in the so-called letters of slavery (letters signed by members upon being inducted into a congregation); on placards announcing celebrations; on sceptres, staffs, and standards used during processions; upon the ornamentation and furnishings in chapels; and on the façades of churches.

Bartolomé de los Ríos y Alarcón (c. 1580–1652), an Augustine friar who founded the *esclavitud* of Nuestra Señora del Buen Suceso in Brussels in 1625 to atone for atrocities supposedly inflicted on the Virgin by Protestants in Scotland, explained that the “S” and the nail were plainly inscribed on the faces of the “slaves of men” (people taken as legal property) to make their condition visible to the public at large. Similarly, declared Fray Bartolomé, it was essential that the “slaves of God” wear those symbols “engraved upon

<sup>3</sup> The origins of the baroque court in Spain have been traced to Valladolid in 1605. See Williams, “El duque de Lerma.”

<sup>4</sup> On the duke of Lerma, see Feros, *Kinship and Favoritism*, and Williams, *The Great Favourite*.

their heart” so that they would be recognized accordingly.<sup>5</sup> In the “letters of slavery” drafted by the congregation of the Santísimo Sacramento de la Magdalena, as was the case for other *esclavitudes*, members offered themselves up as the “unworthy slaves of God,” just as Christ himself had become a slave by descending to earth to free men from their enslavement to the devil and to redeem them through the Passion, an act thereafter memorialized in the Eucharist. They regarded the Virgin, likewise a “slave of God,” as an intermediary and took an oath to defend the Immaculate Conception, even at the cost of their own lives. Members were thus also “slaves” of the Virgin.<sup>6</sup> This congregation pioneered the propagation in Spain by confraternities, guilds, and other groups of the oath of allegiance to the Immaculate Conception, which had first been formulated in 1619.<sup>7</sup>

The religious and social activities of confraternities reflected two dimensions of Christian charity: they reinforced both vertical devotional bonds through the love of God as well as horizontal and more explicitly social bonds through the love of one’s neighbour.<sup>8</sup> Traditionally, the language these groups employed underscored the horizontal bonds between spiritual brothers and/or sisters, expressed in Spanish by the words *cofradía* (confraternity) and *hermandad* (brotherhood). This language did not disappear with the *esclavitudes*. It is significant that the congregation of the Santísimo Sacramento de la Magdalena entitled its first membership registry “Book within which are inscribed brothers admitted to the Holy Congregation and Santísimo Sacramento brotherhood of slaves [...]”<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless a new vocabulary developed within slave congregations of the Eucharist, of Jesus Christ, and of the Virgin that focused on the vertical bonds of individual devotion, submission, and obedience: values of social discipline promoted by the religious and secular authorities of the time.

These brotherhoods employed a paradoxical language that underscored their members’ public humiliation before the divine. Those belonging to the highest social strata—nobles and prelates endowed with titles and land—represented themselves as the humblest and most unworthy of slaves. Indeed, the congregation of the Santísimo Sacramento de la Magdalena held that Saint Paul, considered the “eldest Slave of the Santísimo Sacramento,” was a model of this kind of ritualized inversion,

<sup>5</sup> Ríos y Alarcón, *La Guide des esclaves de l’Ave Maria*, 41. After suffering persecutions in Scotland and being miraculously saved in the Netherlands, the image of Nuestra Señora del Buen Suceso was donated by Bartolomé de los Ríos in 1625 to Isabella Clara Eugenia von Habsburg, then governor of the Netherlands.

<sup>6</sup> Letter of Slavery from the Santísimo Sacramento’s slave congregation, reproduced in Martínez de Grimaldo, *Fundación y fiestas*, fol. 231<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> [Forma del Juramento, que de la pia, santa, y loable confession de la Inmaculada Concepcion]. BNE, VE 65–14.

<sup>8</sup> Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 9.

<sup>9</sup> APSCO, Ms. “Libro donde se escriben los hermanos que son Recebidos en la Santa Congregación y hermandad de los esclavos del Santísimo Sacramento.”

claiming that he set an example to be followed. Members cited a text in which the saint referred to himself as “Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, called as an Apostle.”<sup>10</sup> In 1609, this *esclavitud* instituted an annual celebration in honour of the moment when Saint Paul was “most fallen” (as the brotherhood explained to emphasize the fall), that is, on the day of his “miraculous Conversion.”<sup>11</sup>

Founded in 1608 and 1609, the first two *esclavitudes* in Madrid were dedicated to the Eucharist. Their main goal was to atone for offences to the sacrament that their sponsors claimed had been perpetrated by Protestants in London in 1607. The congregation of La Magdalena explained their purpose:

[...] to venerate and revere the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, and in particular to atone for the offences and derision it suffered in London, after we have heard of the severe contempt with which Lutherans and other heretical enemies of our FAITH in England and elsewhere have subjected the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. They have toyed with it in a thousand ways, threading the holy wafers along strings and tying them to their legs like rattles, dancing with their invention and playing with them, as if they were a deck of cards.<sup>12</sup>

Blaming outrages inflicted against the Eucharist on Protestants was a common tactic used by Catholics to deny Protestant claims to being true Christians. For the congregations under consideration, it is worth noting the date of their appearance, shortly after the London Peace Treaty of 1604 between Spain and England. The duke of Lerma had been criticized for reaching an agreement with a “heretic prince” via a peace treaty that, to make matters worse, included clauses paving the way for new forms of religious tolerance.<sup>13</sup> One might infer that the specific allusions made by the congregation of the Magdalena to events that took place in London constituted a symbolic defence of the faith against England, ritually compensating for the new and harshly criticized peace policy.

<sup>10</sup> “Pablo, Esclavo de Jesucristo, llamado Apóstol.” This expression was interpreted to mean that the saint prided himself on having the title of slave before he had that of apostle. Martínez de Grimaldo, *Fundación y fiestas*, fol. 6<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Martínez de Grimaldo, *Fundación y fiestas*, fol. 6<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> “[...] venerar, y reverenciar, el Santísimo Sacramento del Altar, enderezando particularmente el intento a desaguarle de las ofensas, e irrisiones que padeció en Londres por haber oído decir los grandes desacatos que en Inglaterra, y otras partes hacían los Luteranos, y demás herejes, enemigos de nuestra FE, con el Santísimo Sacramento del Altar, jugando con él de mil maneras; ensartando las formas en hilos, y atándoselas a las piernas, como casca- beles, danzaban con esta invención, y jugaban con ellas, como si fueran barajas de naipes.” Martínez de Grimaldo, *Fundación y fiestas*, fol. 4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> García García, *La Pax Hispanica*, 45–48.

The two congregations of Santísimo Sacramento shared a common origin and common histories characterized by rivalry as well as emulation and cooperation for over two centuries.<sup>14</sup> In November 1608, Antonio de Robles y Guzmán, chamberlain and gentleman of King Philip III, and Alonso de la Purificación, member and provincial of the Discalced Trinitarians, established the first slave congregation in the monastery of the Incarnation of Discalced Trinitarians, itself founded in 1606 by the duke of Lerma at his palace.<sup>15</sup> Beginning in 1617, the brotherhood became known as the Santísimo Sacramento de la Magdalena for having been established in the Augustinian convent of Santa María Magdalena. It would later be known as the Santísimo Sacramento del Olivar, after the street on which the congregation built its own oratory in the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>16</sup> From the beginning, two of its members were Jacobo Gratiis (1517–1619) and Simón de Rojas (1552–1624), well-known religious reformers in Madrid. Gratiis, who was referred to as the Knight of Grace, was an Italian who had discovered his religious vocation late in life. It was he who, as part of a wave of intense foundational activity, established in 1609 the second slave congregation dedicated to the Santísimo Sacramento in the Franciscan convent of San José. Both the congregation and the convent were popularly known by his nickname, Caballero de Gracia.<sup>17</sup> Simón de Rojas, a Trinitarian friar who enjoyed a reputation for saintliness during his lifetime and wielded considerable power at court, founded the *esclavitud* of the Dulce Nombre de María (Sweet Name of Mary), known as Ave María, in 1611 in the monastery of the Calced Trinitarians belonging to his order.<sup>18</sup>

The devotional programs developed by the two congregations shared many similarities and were likely the fruit of their early mutual emulation. Both possessed a militant confessional tone, defined by their mandate to worship the Santísimo Sacramento and atone for alleged offences suffered by the Eucharist at the hands of Protestants. The two *esclavitudes* also stood out in the panorama of early seventeenth-century brotherhoods in that they both developed a group of intensely demanding devotional practices and spiritual exercises for their members, which would in turn influence

<sup>14</sup> References to this long history of emulation and cooperation can be found in the ordinances of the congregation, such as those of 1780: *Constituciones y reglas*.

<sup>15</sup> This is the monastery that later would be known as Jesús Nazareno after the image rescued by the Trinitarian order from Muslims in Fez in 1682. The monastery would later receive patronage from the House of the dukes of Medinaceli, so much so that the image, which inspired great devotion, is now known as the Christ of Medinaceli.

<sup>16</sup> In 1615 the congregation moved from the convent of Discalced Trinitarians into the monastery of the Espíritu Santo of *clérigos menores*. In 1617 they moved into the convent of María Magdalena. In 1646–1656 they built their own oratory on Calle del Olivar.

<sup>17</sup> Remón, *Relación de la exemplar vida y muerte del Cavallero de Gracia*.

<sup>18</sup> Vega y Toraya, *Vida del Beato Simon de Roxas*. Simón was beatified in 1766 and canonized in 1988.

other slave congregations. Both aspired to build a framework within which the most devout lay people could learn about and practice a form of spirituality in close conjunction with members of the clergy. Some of their pious practices, including those that involved music, were inspired by the religiosity of the Oratory of Philip Neri (1515–1595, canonized 1622). Still, it is important to emphasize that the *Escuelas de Cristo* (Schools of Christ) as well as those brotherhoods with close ties to the Oratorians never made use of the vocabulary or symbols of the *esclavitudes*, nor did those congregations associate with the Jesuits.

The devotional practices of the congregations of the Santísimo Sacramento included meditation, mental and vocal prayer, private flagellation in the oratory (on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays), frequent communion, and a close relationship with God that was nonetheless governed by a strict obedience to the clergy's spiritual guidance. At first, these activities were performed in the oratories of the monasteries and convents where they were based, but later, starting in the middle of the seventeenth century, the congregations began using oratories of their own. The *esclavitudes* loomed large in the public eye. The congregation of la Magdalena sponsored splendid celebrations featuring music, poems, and altars placed in the streets. Both adhered to the practice of giving charity to the unfortunate, although this was not their central concern. Both strongly emphasized moral reform. Thus, for example, they endeavoured to counter the general moral laxity of Carnival by praying the Forty Hours, taking communion, and listening to sermons during the three days of Shrovetide at the court. For the same reason, the slaves of both congregations prayed before the Eucharist for all those who amused themselves at spectacles of bullfighting held in the Plaza Major.<sup>19</sup>

The two brotherhoods enjoyed immediate success and attracted a large membership.<sup>20</sup> The first register book of the *esclavitud* of la Magdalena offers a close-up view of its demographics between 1608 and 1643. Many members joined during the brotherhood's early years. After its two founders, Antonio de Robles and Alonso de la Purificación, the next person received (in December of 1608) as "first brother" and unworthy slave of the Santísimo Sacramento was Pedro Manso, president of the Council of Castile and Patriarch of the Indies. Manso's career had been nothing short of meteoric, thanks in no small part to the duke of Lerma.<sup>21</sup> According

<sup>19</sup> On the congregation of la Magdalena, the works of José Martínez de Grimaldo are fundamental, including his *Fundación y fiesta* (1657) and his *Sumario de la Fundación, Constituciones, y Ejercicios* (1665). On the Caballero de Gracia congregation, the ordinances of 1609, 1612, 1676, and 1781 survive. Various documents are held in the Real Oratorio del Caballero de Gracia.

<sup>20</sup> The congregation of Caballero de Gracia had more than 2000 members a few years after its foundation. Roscales Olea, *El Caballero de Gracia*, 117.

<sup>21</sup> Feros, *Kinship and Favoritism*, 219; Sieber, "Literary Continuity," 157.

to the register, at least 522 new members (men and women) joined the organization in 1608–1609, 494 in 1610, 237 in 1611, and 467 in 1612.<sup>22</sup>

This was a socially heterogeneous confraternity, filled with individuals who were employed by the royal and municipal bureaucracies. The register reveals that members also included several artisans, which indicates that the brotherhood did not bar those who made a living from trades considered menial. Nevertheless, the number of artisans was relatively small during the period under consideration, and many of them were employed by the royal household. The presence of titled nobles was striking. Servants and maids of the nobility also appear in the registry. The number of businessmen and merchants must have been higher than that indicated in the book, since it contains an overall dearth of information about individual members' jobs and professional activities. Men and women alike belonged to the *esclavitud*, but were generally admitted separately, although sometimes entire families were entered together into the ledgers. Judging by the signatures in the register, it is clear that members were generally literate: the majority of male "unworthy slaves" signed their own name, as did many women. The *esclavitud* attracted foreigners, especially Italians but also Irish and other nationalities. Its demographics were a faithful reflection of court society and it had a notably cosmopolitan character forged in Madrid during the final years of the sixteenth century and consolidated in the early decades of the seventeenth.

Artists and writers joined the *esclavitud* soon after its foundation. The following literati signed on as members of the congregation: Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza, admitted on the 15 March 1609, Miguel de Cervantes (17 April), Alonso de Salas Barbadillo (31 May), Vicente Espinel (5 July), Lope de Vega (24 January 1610), Luis Vélez de Guevara (25 March), Pedro Soto de Rojas (9 March 1612), and Francisco de Quevedo (2 July 1615). The dramatist and actor Andrés de Claramonte joined the *esclavitud* on the 8 March 1610. Also among its members were the author and theatre troupe director Alonso Riquelme and several other comedy writers and theatre troupe directors, including Diego López, Fernán Sánchez de Vargas, Baltasar de Pinedo, Tomás Fernández, along with players from those troupes, who were sometimes admitted as a block. It is also worth noting that a significant number of musicians from the royal household—composers, singers, violinists, and guitarists—were members, a phenomenon that becomes evident as early as 1609: Diego Gómez, composer and *violón de la Casa Real*, Lope de Miranda, Honorato Lampi, Gabriel de Gabrieli and Mateo Troilo, all of them *violones de la Casa Real*; Esteban (Stefano) Limido, composer and *maestro de los violones italianos*; Antonio Martínez and Diego Ponce de Iranzo, both singers of the *Capilla Real*; Eugenio de Heredia, guitarist and *violón de la Casa Real*, Francisco Ponce

<sup>22</sup> Many fewer entries were recorded during the years that followed. From 1613 to 1643 the only year that has a rate similar to that of its early years is 1628, with 346 new members. APSCO, Ms. "Libro donde se escriben los hermanos."



de León, singer of the *Capilla Real*; Gabriel Díaz, composer and *teniente de la Capilla Real*, Pablo Moreno, chamber musician of the royal household.<sup>23</sup>

Other congregants worthy of mention include the Trinitarian preacher and poet Fray Hortensio Félix Paravicino<sup>24</sup> and Andrés de Almansa y Mendoza, author of chronicles of news, festivals, and other public events. The Italian painter and art theorist Vicente Carducho (Vincenzo Carducci), who considered himself “natural de Madrid,”<sup>25</sup> was another prominent member. Francisco de Borja y Aragón, Prince of Esquilache and Viceroy of Peru from 1614 to 1621, joined the congregation on his arrival to Madrid in 1622 and dedicated himself to write poetry. The jurist Juan de Solórzano Pereira, known mainly for his compilation of the Laws of the Indies (*Leyes de Indias*) was another member of the congregation who wrote poems and emblem books; he joined with his wife doña Clara Paniagua de Loaysa y Trejo and their four children.<sup>26</sup>

It is interesting to note the presence of Miguel de Silveira, a New Christian physician from Portugal. Silveira was also a poet and belonged to the same literary circles as Lope de Vega, Cervantes, Quevedo, Espinel, and other famous writers of the time.<sup>27</sup> He was not the only member of a Portuguese family of New Christian origin to join the congregation. Fernando Tinoco, an important businessman, joined in 1638 along with his wife doña Violante Serrea.<sup>28</sup> While Silveira was most likely a crypto-Jew despite being well integrated into the court until 1630, Tinoco and other members of his family seem to have been Christians.<sup>29</sup>

The early and notable presence of writers, directors, and theatre troupes, as well as musicians and singers, can be attributed to the culture of literary and artistic patronage encouraged by the duke of Lerma and his entourage.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the most renowned wits (*ingenios*) belonged to this

<sup>23</sup> Entries in APSCO, Ms. “Libro donde se escriben los hermanos,” fols. 3<sup>r</sup>, 3<sup>v</sup>, 4<sup>r</sup>, 6<sup>r</sup>, 9<sup>r</sup>, 12<sup>v</sup>, 13<sup>r</sup>, 14<sup>r</sup>, 15<sup>r</sup>, 18<sup>r</sup>, 22<sup>r</sup>, 24<sup>r</sup>, 25, 28<sup>r</sup>, 29<sup>r</sup>, 29<sup>v</sup>, 35<sup>v</sup>, 41<sup>r</sup>, 43<sup>r</sup>. On the musicians and the pivotal role that music played in the congregation see Robledo Estaire, “Música y cofradías madrileñas.”

<sup>24</sup> Memorialized in El Greco’s famous portrait (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts).

<sup>25</sup> See Bass/Andrews, “Me juzgo por natural de Madrid.”

<sup>26</sup> Entries in APSCO, Ms. “Libro donde se escriben los hermanos,” fols. 21<sup>r</sup>, 42<sup>r</sup>, 72<sup>r</sup>, 103<sup>v</sup>, and 113<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Following the events surrounding the so-called Christ of Patience (see below), Silveira was placed under investigation by the Inquisition. With the help of Philip IV and the count-duke of Olivares, he managed to establish himself in Naples, where he published his monumental poem *El Macabeo* in 1638. On Silveira, see Caro Baroja, *La sociedad criptojudía en tiempos de Felipe IV*, 93–101.

<sup>28</sup> APSCO, Ms. “Libro donde se escriben los hermanos,” fols. 58<sup>r</sup> (Silveira) and 115<sup>v</sup> (Tinoco and his wife).

<sup>29</sup> Caro Baroja, *La sociedad criptojudía en tiempos de Felipe IV*, 41, 59–60. Pedro y Diego Tinoco appear also as members of the congregation in the 1650s: Martínez de Grimaldo, *Jardín de fragantes flores*.

<sup>30</sup> Sieber, “The Magnificent Fountain,” 85–116.



confraternity located in the “metropolis of the muses” (*metrópoli de las musas*), as José Martínez de Grimaldo called Madrid in his chronicle of the Santísimo Sacramento de la Magdalena.<sup>31</sup>

The duke of Lerma was received into the congregation on 23 February 1610 and elected as its Protector in 1613; he remained in this highest, most honourable post, in the congregation until 1617. Several of his immediate family members were also slaves of the Santísimo: his son Cristóbal Gómez de Sandoval y Rojas, duke of Uceda (who challenged and finally succeeded his father as royal advisor after the latter’s downfall in 1618); his other son Diego Gómez de Sandoval y Rojas, count of Saldaña; his uncle Bernardo de Sandoval y Rojas, archbishop of Toledo and General Inquisitor. Other titled members of the congregation included the count of Villalonso, the first titled noble to be admitted as a slave (31 January 1609), the duke of Osuna, the marquis of Peñafiel, the count of Santiesteban, the Admiral of Castile, the marquis of Cerralbo, the marquis of Alcañices, the duchess of Uceda, the duchess of Pastrana, the duchess of Peñaranda, and the countess of Miranda, among many others.<sup>32</sup>

The writers who belonged to the *esclavitud* were also members of the literary academies that flourished in Madrid at the time. The patrons of the literary academies were, in their turn, members of the congregation of the Santísimo Sacramento: Pedro Manso, who joined as the first brother on 26 December 1608, Félix Arias Girón (23 February 1609), and the count of Saldaña (14 May 1611).<sup>33</sup> Thus membership in the brotherhood united patrons and those they protected in a dense network that was part of the complex patronage system at the court. In the relationship between patrons and writers a rigid social hierarchy coexisted with the language of friendship and love as well as adulation and servility.<sup>34</sup> In fact, the very vocabulary of servitude so defining of the *congregaciones de esclavos* may well tap into the larger social economy of dominance and submission that characterized the court.

In the case of Cervantes, his membership in the *esclavitud* is likely also tied to his association with the Trinitarian friars.<sup>35</sup> As we have seen, one of the congregation’s founders was the friar Alonso de la Purificación, a Discalced Trinitarian within whose monastery the congregation had

<sup>31</sup> Martínez de Grimaldo, *Fundación y fiestas*, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> APSCO, Ms. “Libro donde se escriben los hermanos,” fols. 1<sup>r</sup>, 15<sup>v</sup>, 19<sup>v</sup>, 24<sup>v</sup>, 26<sup>v</sup>, 27<sup>r</sup>, 37<sup>r</sup>, 38<sup>v</sup>, 69<sup>v</sup>, 72<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> APSCO, Ms. “Libro donde se escriben los hermanos,” 1<sup>r</sup>, 5<sup>r</sup>, 38<sup>v</sup>. For the academies of Pedro Manso and Félix Arias Girón, see Astrana Marín, *Vida ejemplar y heroica de Miguel de Cervantes*, 316–318. Regarding the academy of the count of Saldaña, see Sieber, “The Magnificent Fountain,” 85–116. See also Sánchez, *Academias literarias del Siglo de Oro español*.

<sup>34</sup> See Sieber, Harry. “The Magnificent Fountain,” 101–110. Sieber focuses on the very different cases of Luis Vélez de Guevara and Miguel de Cervantes. On Lope de Vega see Wright, *Pilgrimage to Patronage*.

<sup>35</sup> Asunción, Domingo de la. *Cervantes y la Orden Trinitaria*.

been based from 1608 to 1615. Cervantes had been a captive in Algiers and his ransom had been paid by the Trinitarian order. He also was a member of the Venerable Third Order of Franciscans, which would eventually pay for his burial in a convent belonging to Discalced Trinitarian nuns.

Membership in a religious brotherhood was quite different from belonging to a literary academy. Brothers of the *esclavitud* were tasked with carrying out a series of religious and devotional duties that required commitment and dedication.<sup>36</sup> Lamentably, the congregation's books of agreements and accounts have apparently been lost, making it impossible to know the degree to which members, in particular writers and artists, participated in the governance and other activities of the brotherhood, especially those that took place in the "privacy" of the oratory, such as speeches, prayers, and flagellations.

There is, however evidence that members participated in public festivals in ways specific to their occupations. The writers competed in literary jousts, while directors of theatre troupes staged comedies, at least during the early years. The presence of many royal musicians in the congregation suggests that music of the highest quality was also performed at their religious celebrations.<sup>37</sup>

Festivals organized by the Magdalena *esclavitud* received noble patronage. Those festivals included the *Octava* of Corpus Christi, the Forty Hours, the first Sundays of the month, the Conception of Our Lady, San José,<sup>38</sup> Saint Paul in his Conversion, and the commemoration of the departed. Prayers and candles were kept lit before the Eucharist during the three days of Carnival and on festivals that featured bullfights. Lent was honoured with *misereres* at church and speeches in the oratory. In 1609, the *Octava del Corpus* festivals received financing from the duchess of Villahermosa, the countess duchess of Miranda, the duchess of Osuna, the marquis of Villanueva, and the marquis of Peñafiel. Among the patrons found supporting the festivities in 1611 were the duke of Lerma and his son the count of Saldaña. King Philip III, his wife Queen Margaret of Austria, and the *infantes* (princes and princesses) had seats in the duke of Lerma's gallery.

Grimaldo described one of these festivities, where the *jeroglíficos* were composed by Lope de Vega:

The Cloister of the Convent was decorated for the last day's procession and the streets along which it would take place

<sup>36</sup> Martínez de Grimaldo, José. *Sumario de la Fundación, Constituciones, y Exercicios*.

<sup>37</sup> See Robledo Estaire, "Música y Cofradías madrileñas." Robledo emphasizes the imbrication of music and literature in festivals and rituals, and even suggests that poetry be subordinated to the demands of music.

<sup>38</sup> The congregation played an active role in ensuring that the festival of San José became a regular feature of the Spanish monarchy.

were adorned with rich decorative hangings and four Altars filled with supreme riches that formed two beautiful arcs so that beneath them the Santísimo Sacramento could pass. The procession was honoured along the way with dances and music. And to adorn the proceedings even further, and so that they served not only the devout and the rich but the clever as well, mysterious *Jeroglíficos* praising the Santísimo Sacramento were placed on the decorative hangings adorning the church and the streets. In charge of these were the Most Excellent Señor Marquis of Alcañices along with Fray Lope de Vega Carpio, that Phoenix of Poetry who has been worthily laureled at the Roman Court, justly applauded and admired by the whole globe.<sup>39</sup>

Unfortunately, very few of the poems that were composed during the early decades of the confraternity for the poetic jousts and other festivals have survived. When Grimaldo was writing in 1657 the only surviving announcement for a poetic contest were those for Shrovetide Tuesday in 1612. This contest, which was attended by Philip III, had taken place concurrently with the festival of the Ángel de la Guarda (Guardian Angel). Its purpose was to provide the public with “*sainetes* [short, comic plays] and well-seasoned entertainment” during the festival of Shrovetide. For the poetic joust, organizers invited “all the devout and, above all, ingenious scholars of poetry,” to gloss different verses, among which was the following:

Gil, apostemos los dos  
Que no es hoy Carnestolendas  
Pues nos da la Iglesia en prendas  
La misma carne de Dios.<sup>40</sup>

(Gil, let us both wager / That today is not Shrovetide / Since the Church but pawns us / God's very flesh.)

The early twentieth-century Trinitarian friar Domingo de la Asunción claims that in 1609 Cervantes participated in a literary contest

<sup>39</sup> “Para la procesión del último día se adornó el Claustro del Convento, y las calles por donde había de pasar con ricas colgaduras y cuatro Altares poblados de sumas riquezas erigiéndose dos hermosos arcos para que por debajo hiciese tránsito el Santísimo Sacramento, festejando la procesión a trechos danzas y músicas. Y para mayor adorno, y que no sólo sirviese lo devoto, y rico, sino también lo ingenioso, se pusieron sobre las colgaduras de la Iglesia, y de las calles misteriosos Jeroglíficos, en alabanza del Santísimo Sacramento, y cuidaron de ellos el Excelentísimo Señor Marqués de Alcañices, y Fray Lope de Vega Carpio, Fénix de la Poesía, y dignamente laureado en la Corte Romana, si justamente aplaudido, y admirado del Orbe todo.” Martínez de Grimaldo, *Fundación y fiestas*, fols. 11<sup>r-v</sup>, 17<sup>r</sup>, 18<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Martínez de Grimaldo, *Fundación y fiestas*, fol. 22<sup>r-v</sup>.

praising the Santísimo Sacramento and won a prize for his efforts. He also notes that for the *Corpus octavario* of 1612, Cervantes was commissioned to write thirty *jeroglíficos* to be placed on the walls of both the Trinitarian convent and the nearby palace of the duke of Lerma and that Lope de Vega was tasked with writing a religious comedy (*comedia a lo divino*) that was to be performed by the troupe of Alonso de Riquelme.<sup>41</sup>

Although the *esclavitud* of the Caballero de Gracia did not house many writers, it could boast Lope de Vega among its founding members. Lope served as a member of the government of the congregation (*consiliario*) during its formative years and participated actively in its activities in close relationship with the Caballero de Gracia himself. Lope also organized its Christmas matins for three years between 1615 to 1617 and wrote an *auto sacramental* and carols that were performed by actors, musicians, and dancers, once again from Alonso de Riquelme's troupe.<sup>42</sup>

The poet even composed verses declaring his allegiance to the Santísimo Sacramento:

Hoy por esclavo me escribo,  
 dulce Pan, en tu prisión,  
 porque me dice la Fe  
 que eres Dios y pan de amor.  
 Todos me llaman esclavo;  
 yo digo que vuestro soy,  
 que es la hora del vencido  
 la gloria del vencedor.  
 Darse en amor a su esclavo  
 en maravilla de amor:  
 bien haya quien hizo  
 cadenas de amor  
 que se dé al esclavo  
 el mismo Señor

(Today, as a slave I inscribe myself, / Sweet Pan, in your prison, /  
 Because Faith tells me / That you are God and the bread of love. /  
 Everyone calls me slave; / I say that I am yours, / It is the hour of the  
 vanquished, / the glory of the vanquisher. / To give oneself in love

<sup>41</sup> Domingo de la Asunción claims that Cervantes took an active part in the jousts and religious activities of the *esclavitud*; see his *Cervantes y la Orden Trinitaria*, 181–188. See also Astrana Marín, *Vida ejemplar y heroica*, 324–327. I have been unable to locate the documentation cited by de la Asunción.

<sup>42</sup> Sánchez Romeralo, "Lope de Vega, esclavo del Santísimo Sacramento," 607–620; Roscales Olea, *El Caballero de Gracia*, 245–246; Robledo Estaire, "Música y cofradías madrileñas," 489, 498–499.

to one's slave / in the wonder of love: / May good come to he who made / Chains of love / To be given to the slave / the Lord Himself.)<sup>43</sup>

After the duke of Lerma's downfall, the Santísimo Sacramento de la Magdalena congregation managed to retain its hold within the ceremonial space it had so successfully carved out for itself at the court, although perhaps with less splendor. One sure sign that it had skillfully found its niche in Madrid is that its protectors included the Cardinal Infante Don Fernando (King Philip IV's brother), from 1628 to 1632, the duke of Medina de la Torres (son-in-law of the duke of Olivares, favourite of the king), from 1633 to 1636, and Prince Baltasar Carlos (son of the king), from 1637 until his premature death in 1646.<sup>44</sup>

Many members of the Santísimo Sacramento de la Magdalena had dealings with the Inquisition and the inquisitorial brotherhood of San Pedro Mártir. Lope de Vega was a *familiar* (i.e. a voluntary official) of the Inquisition and as such joined the brotherhood of San Pedro Mártir in 1604. The founder of the Magdalena congregation, Antonio de Robles y Guzmán, became a *familiar* in 1624, and its chronicler, Manuel de Aguiar Henríquez, served as Inquisition secretary in Cuenca. Slaves of the Santísimo Sacramento de la Magdalena and *familiares* of the Inquisition included Bartolomé Fernández, Gaspar Isidro de Argüello, and Juan Fernández Velasco, who sponsored a group of slave congregations inspired by the so-called "Christ of Patience."<sup>45</sup> The purpose of these confraternities, which adopted the titles of Cristo de las Injurias, Cristo de los Desagravios, and Cristo de la Fe, was to atone for damage done to a crucifix allegedly by a Portuguese family of New Christians in 1630, several of whom were condemned in the auto-da-fe of 1632 and later executed.

The inquisitorial brotherhood of San Pedro Mártir, along with the *esclavitudes* of the Santísimo Cristo de la Injurias, the Santísimo Cristo de los Desagravios, and two others advocating the Santísimo Cristo de la Fe, organized festivals of atonement in honour of Christ as well as literary contests. The court literati were called upon to participate. Those answering the call included the poets Gabriel Bocángel, Francisco López de Zárate, Luis de Ulloa, the Prince of Esquilache Francisco de Borja, and many others. Lope de Vega, who in 1631 and 1632 returned to govern the Caballero de Gracia *esclavitud*, yet again distinguished himself by writing over one hundred verses in sextuplets on the topic of "Feelings about Christ's Injuries." Among them was the following, which explains how Christ's death on the cross killed Judaism:

<sup>43</sup> Roscales Olea, *El Caballero de Gracia*, 246.

<sup>44</sup> Martínez de Grimaldo, *Fundación y fiestas*, fol. 244<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> Sánchez de Madariaga, *Cofradías y sociabilidad*, 227–231, 599–606. The events of the Cristo de la Paciencia have been studied by Caro Baroja, *La sociedad cripto-judía*, 48–53 and Pulido Serrano, *Injurias a Cristo*.

Éste, abrazado a la columna fuerte  
de su cruz, que la vieja ley deroga,  
mató la sinagoga  
con su sagrada muerte.<sup>46</sup>

(This one, embracing the strong column / of his cross, which strikes  
down the old law, / Killed the synagogue / With his sacred death.)

Toward the middle of the seventeenth century, literary activity and music had become integral parts of the festivals organized by congregations. José Martínez de Grimaldo, Agustín de Palacios, and José de Miranda y La Cotera, councilor (*regidor*) of the city of Madrid and poet himself, published several books about the festivals mounted by the Santísimo Sacramento de la Magdalena *esclavitud*. In them, these authors placed great emphasis on the contributions made to these festivals by the literati, both “professional” and amateur, as well as on literary production within the context of the celebrations.<sup>47</sup> Grimaldo published his book *Fundación y fiestas* (Foundation and Festivals), in which he played an ingenious game: while hardly a trace remained of the poems written for the congregation by the likes of Lope de Vega, Grimaldo enlisted the talent of many poets of his own day to fill his book with verse. Sonnets, romances, octosyllabic quatrains (*redondillas*), quintuplets, riddles (*enigmas*), *seguidillas*, *glosas*, *jeroglíficos* allowed for a wide range of styles and tones, from the dramatic to the burlesque.

The list of writers who worked with Grimaldo or from whose poetry he drew inspiration is very long, tallying in at around forty. The contemporary writers he commissioned included Gabriel Bocángel, Agustín Palacios, Sebastián de Olivares Vadillo, Jerónimo Camargo y Zárate, Juan de Zabaleta, Carlos Magno, and José Pellicer. Among the deceased poets whom he cited was Lope de Vega.<sup>48</sup>

In its heyday of the early seventeenth century, the Santísimo Sacramento de la Magdalena *esclavitud* reflected the court of Philip III and his royal favourite, the duke of Lerma. For writers and artists, belonging to the congregation brought social prestige and public recognition. It meant gaining a foothold within the social structure of the court by means that were flexible and legitimized by religion. Above all, it was a way of assuming a place within the complex system of patronage being reconfigured at the time. Moreover, surviving evidence points to the importance of

<sup>46</sup> Pulido Serrano, *Injurias a Cristo*, 261–263, 303.

<sup>47</sup> Miranda y la Cotera, *Días festivos del Circulo del año*. Palacios, *Florido vergel al pan de flores*. Some of Martínez de Grimaldo’s books containing poetry are *Ramillete de las flores que del Jardin del Ingenio* and *Jardin de fragantes flores, mesa de gloriosos frutos*. Although many of the poems that were written during the poetic jousts and festivals have not survived, what does remain constitutes a literary corpus deserving of further study.

<sup>48</sup> Martínez de Grimaldo, *Fundación y fiestas*, s. f.

contributions to the congregation's spectacular festivals made by artists including musicians, poets, as well as members of theater troupes. Poets and writers played an especially key role in providing both language and content to forms of religiosity made fashionable by the Santísimo Sacramento de la Magdalena and the Santísimo Sacramento del Caballero de Gracia *esclavitudes*, along with others that followed in their wake. Verses penned by Lope de Vega as slave of the Santísimo Sacramento illustrate both the new fraternal language and the renewal of devotion to the Eucharist promoted by these congregations. Particular mention has been made of those dedicated to atoning for supposed offences against the Eucharist and images of Jesus Christ and the Virgin. Literary production inspired by these festivals of atonement shaped their confessional anti-Protestant and anti-Jewish meaning through the power of art.

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##### *Abbreviations*

APSCO = Archivo de la Parroquia del Santo Cristo del Olivar, Madrid  
BNE = Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid

##### *Manuscript Sources*

Madrid. Archivo de la Parroquia del Santo Cristo del Olivar (APSCO)  
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[*Forma del Juramento, que de la pia, santa, y loable confession de la Inmaculada Concepcion de la Santissima Virgen Maria, Madre de Dios y Hombre, hizo la devota, y santa Congregacion de Esclavos del Santissimo Sacramento, que esta en el Convento de Santa Maria Madalena [...] Domingo a diez de Febrero de mil y seiscientos y diez y nueve*], [s.l., 1653]. BNE, VE 65–14.

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\_\_\_\_\_. *Jardin de fragantes flores, mesa de gloriosos frutos, taller de las mayores maravillas, compendio de las finezas del amor. Todo lo comprehende el maravilloso, y esclarecido nombre de la Congregacion de Esclavos del Santissimo Sacramento; cuya abundante mesa los regala, y en humilde retorno festejan sus maravillas sus agudos ingenios con tiernos, y afectuosos motetes. Despican los ultrages que padeció en Londres el Pan Divino con finezas amorosas de repetido culto, de annual veneracion*, [s.l., 1653].

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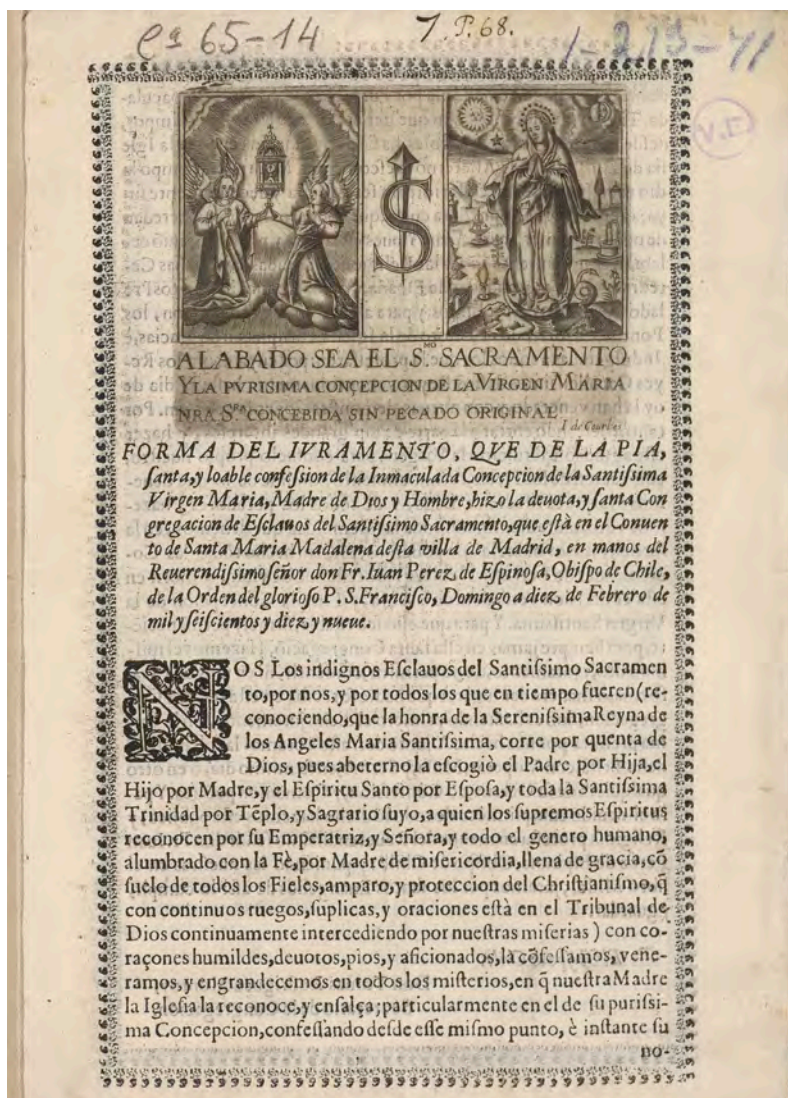


Figure 1. "Forma del iuramento" (Oath) of the "Immaculada Concepcion de la Santissima Virgen Maria" in the Congregacion de Esclavos del Santissimo Sacramento (1619). By permission of the Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid.