

Representational strategies of inclusion and exclusion in José del Olmo's narrative
and Francisco Rizi's visual record of the Madrid *Auto de Fe* of 1680

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Abstract

The *auto de fe* – the symbolic enactment of the Spanish Inquisition's religious, judicial and political authority – conveyed its function essentially via representational means. As well as serving as a theatre for the condemnation of those accused of heresy where mass was celebrated, the *auto* was a carefully choreographed affirmation of order and rank in society, set within defined spatial confines. The impressive ritual and ceremony associated with the event reached their climax in that held in Madrid's *Plaza Mayor* on 30 June 1680. This article explores some of the inconsistencies in the strategies of inclusion and exclusion that underpinned the spectacle via a close reading of the inquisitorial official José del Olmo's narrative account of the act of faith (1680) alongside the artist Francisco Rizi's complementary visual interpretation (1683) and examines the resulting challenges posed to a conventional interpretation of the proceedings.

1. Context

On 30 June 1680, the *Plaza Mayor* in Madrid was the setting for one of the most grandiose, showpiece *autos de fe general* ever held in the history of the Spanish Inquisition.¹ In a dramatic display of religious zeal and authoritarianism, witnessed by senior ecclesiastical and civil authorities in the presence of the king and his entourage, sentences were pronounced upon 118 defendants, brought from the prisons of local tribunals, all charged with dissenting from the required obedience to Catholicism. Of the accused, 65 were subject to punitive measures including imprisonment, hard labour, galley service, public shaming and exile, or a combination

of these penalties; 34 were sentenced in effigy since they had fled or died while awaiting the outcome of their trial; the remaining 19 unrepentant prisoners were condemned to death by burning the following day on the outskirts of the capital.

The vast majority of those sentenced that day were humble Portuguese immigrants or their offspring – street vendors, tobacconists, traders and cloth workers – accused, largely for propaganda purposes, of engaging in the secret practice of Judaism and thus undermining the integrity of Spain’s Catholic identity. The sentences they received were arguably too harsh for the nature of their crimes, but served to reinforce the pedagogic function of the *auto*: to inculcate an abhorrence of heresy via the public exposure of transgression and the shaming of those held responsible, enacted before an inquisitorial tribunal of judges - the counterpart of the divine court on high. The transgressors on this occasion were the descendants of Jewish converts to Catholicism (known as *conversos*) who had come to Spain from Portugal to escape the wrath of the Inquisition in their own country at the end of the sixteenth century and whose highly-prized skills as financiers and entrepreneurs ensured that initially they were subject to only intermittent persecution in their newly-adopted land. From the mid-seventeenth century however, as a people they were increasingly seen to represent the Portuguese nation that had successfully reasserted its political independence over Spain in 1640 and as a race associated with the religious heritage of their forefathers (Kamen, 1997: 287-96). As if to emphasize their guilt, in the trial records we find them referred to as ‘*portugueses de la nación [de los judíos]*’ (Portuguese of the [Jewish] nation) and in the sermon delivered at the *auto* as, ‘*pérfidos judíos*’ [...] ‘*pecadores más enemigos de Dios, y más dignos de ser castigados*’ (Olmo, 1820, II: 9). The Inquisition, with its overall activity in relative decline, seized an opportunity to renew its zealous purge of those of former Jewish descent, and thus impress its

indispensability on the Crown as the two hundred year-old protector of the nation's orthodoxy (Alpert, 2001: 130-8). [FIGURE 1]

2. The staging and recording of the *auto*

The performance of the *auto* was meticulously timed and stage-managed. Charles II, the boy king who had recently come of age but remained highly dependent on his advisors, needed a public platform, at which senior civil servants, churchmen, courtiers and foreign ambassadors would all be present, to impress both his subjects and his new French bride. What better way than via an act of faith - the ritual representation of inquisitorial power - thus enabling him to emulate his father, Philip IV, who had presided over two *autos publicos* in the capital: one in 1624 and another in 1632, upon which the 1680 *auto* was to be mirrored. As was customary on these occasions, the date chosen for the event coincided with a major religious feast day, in this case that of Saint Peter. The *Plaza Mayor*, built by Juan Gómez de Mora for Philip III between 1617 and 1619, was the ideal setting for the spectacle by virtue of its central location, its size (with a capacity to house the stage, tiered platforms and seating facilities for up to 50,000 spectators) and the symmetry of its architectural design, lending itself perfectly to open-air theatrical events. Since its construction, it had witnessed the proclamation of princes, the canonisation of saints, ceremonial bullfights and royal entrances (Escobar, 2003: 143-89). The exhaustive and costly planning arrangements for the staging of the event - including the physical construction of the arena, the purchase of decorative materials and religious objects, as well as the organisation of all the ceremonial activities - dominated every aspect of life in the capital during the preceding month. Given the significance of the event, it was decided that both a written and a visual account of the proceedings should be commissioned as records for posterity.

José Vicente del Olmo (1611-96), royal quartermaster to Charles II, who participated in the ceremony as an *alguacil* (warden) and *familiar* (lay functionary) of the Holy Office, was commissioned to write the official chronicle of the event. In accordance with his brief and role and employing typical Baroque hyperbole throughout, he heralded the occasion as a triumph for the faith, the monarchy and the values of the elite classes who dominated the proceedings and orchestrated its outcomes. The *relación* was their chronicle of events, as they wished it to be recalled, rather than as it actually happened. Above all, the narrative celebrates the majesty of the spectacle and emphasizes the civic unity and collaboration that ostensibly underpinned it rather than recounting the transgressions of the accused, reserved for less than thirty of its one hundred and sixty pages. Olmo was able to draw upon a number of precedents, including Juan Gómez de Mora's *relación* of the Madrid *auto* of 1632, whose format his own description replicates in detail. Authorised for publication in October 1680, the account was accompanied by an aerial drawing (with a key to the seating arrangements of all participants) by the Flemish artist, Gregorio Fossman. This, together with the narrative, was to provide the framework for the court painter Francisco Rizi's graphic visual depiction of the *auto*, completed in 1683.

Rizi (1614-85), the second son of an Italian painter who worked on the decoration of the Escorial for Philip II and whose name was 'hispanized' from the original Ricci, was one of the most influential Spanish artists and stage designers of the second half of the seventeenth century, painter to both Philip IV and Charles II (Palomino, 1987: 265-8; Brown, 1990: 192-8). As a pupil of the artist and sculptor Vicente Carducho, he soon found his way into court circles and gained a reputation for the elaborate stage sets he produced for plays performed at the *Buen Retiro* palace (Shergold, 1967: 304, 334). In 1649 Rizi was responsible for the street decorations and triumphal

arches constructed for the state entry of the second wife of Philip IV, Mariana of Austria, into Madrid, and who now, almost three decades later, presided over the events of 30 June as the Queen Mother (Malcolm, 2006: 110). Rizi fell out of favour at court in the 1670s when Juan Carreño was preferred as painter to the king. The commission to paint the *auto* of 1680 as the official pictorial record of the event, for display in the royal collection (now housed in the *Museo del Prado* in Madrid), marked his spectacular return (Brown, 1990: 238-9). Although Olmo's detailed account clearly cannot be synthesized in its entirety in a single image, via the techniques of representational strategy he deploys, Rizi accomplishes an overview of the event that, while remaining faithful to the *relación*, allows for several perspectives and interpretations to be contemplated simultaneously.

3. Symbols and ritual

The *auto de fe* conveyed its message and authority by means of the distinctive iconography (emblems, banners, costumes and crosses) that pervaded the elaborate ceremony and defined its liturgy. Just as with other public festivities and theatrical performances staged before large audiences, most of those in attendance, other than distinguished 'front row' guests, would have had a limited view of the proceedings from their distant vantage points, including the ordinary public. Hence it was vital to provide clear visual clues and aural stimuli to guide their comprehension of the *auto*, essentially designed to move the senses and emotions of onlookers via symbols and ritual (Bethencourt, 1992: 155-60). As Olmo relates, the 'invincible' audience (a military metaphor suggesting the ability of the ruling classes to conquer heresy) was unable to hear the formal hour-long address of the Dominican preacher Father Tomás Navarro, on account of the noise made by those (of lesser status) positioned at a distance outside the immediate confines of the arena who could not comprehend what

they were unable to see: *'no hai voz tan valiente que pueda sujetar tan invencible auditorio ni contrastar el rumor de los que por distantes no perciben lo que escuchan, y preguntando lo que no oyen se estorban unos a otros'* (Olmo, 1820, I: 76). Thus *'empleaban todo el conato en la admiración de ver lo que con palabras no se puede describir'* (1820, I: 65). This suggests greater power being attributed to visual rather than oral communication and concurs with the prevailing view of contemporary writers and philosophers, derived from Aristotle's *Poetics*, on the superiority of the eye over the ear in transmitting knowledge (Maravall, 1986: 253). On this premise, it could be argued that Rizi's image provides an experience of the event that is more akin to that of the actual audience than Olmo's written narrative. Rizi places the observer in an imaginary balcony overlooking the scene that approximates to that of the king and his courtiers directly opposite, giving us a kind of parallel authority over the proceedings. From this bird's-eye vantage point, he directs our attention to the symbols and images that are central to our understanding of the drama about to unfold before us.

We are witness to a public sentencing of prisoners positioned on one side of the arena (our right, the monarch's left) [FIGURE 2], by civil and inquisitorial judges on the other (our left, the monarch's right) [FIGURE 3], watched over by Charles II and his courtiers in the centre [FIGURE 4]. The whole event constitutes a moralistic drama about sin and redemption, akin to being present at the final day of judgement, when, according to Matthew's gospel, those who sit at the right hand of the Lord are rewarded with eternal salvation while those on the left are condemned to damnation (Flynn, 1991: 281-97). These were the same strategic directions via which those who were reconciled to the Church and those who refused to abjure their heretical beliefs

respectively left the arena following the delivery of the tribunal's verdict, mirroring the biblical points of reference.

The painting captures what might be considered the key cathartic moment of the proceedings when, following the taking of the oath by the king, the celebration of the mass and the delivery of the sermon, the repentant prisoners, accompanied by friars and *familiars* of the Holy Office, are being led towards the central part of the theatre, framed by a balustrade. [FIGURE 5] Here, where all gazes meet, two of those accused are simultaneously placed in elevated cage-like structures to hear their sentences being read aloud. Then, once reprieved, they are invited to cross the symbolic threshold between heresy (to the king's left) and salvation (to his right), to receive their absolution at the main altar where a large Green Cross rests, and be re-admitted to the Church triumphant (Avilés, 1997: 281-97). [FIGURE 6] As prayers are said, the choir would sing the psalm *Miserere Mei*. Subsequently, as the act of reconciliation took place, the musical accompaniment would evolve into a thankful *Te Deum*, underscored by the celebratory sound of drums, trumpets and the firing of volleys.

In accordance with tradition, the Green Cross had been carried through the streets on the eve of the *auto* in an elaborate procession led by senior friars, accompanied by royal officials and inquisitorial functionaries and guarded by a military escort of 250 Soldiers of the Faith (Bethencourt, 2009: 261-73). It was reminiscent of the pageant heralding the performance of liturgical plays enacted in honour of the feast of Corpus Christi, known as *autos sacramentales*, which employed allegory to glorify the redemptive powers of the Eucharist, and were staged by Rizi at the royal court (Thacker, 2007: 162-9). Once at the site, the Green Cross was enthroned and veiled in a black cloth, later removed when repentant defendants were reconciled to the

Church. It echoed the whole pedagogical function of the *auto*: the triumph of light over darkness and the victory of the established church over its enemies. [FIGURE 7]

By virtue of its omnipresence, the Green Cross is the great protagonist of the event. Flanked by the sword of justice and the olive branch of mercy, it adorns the standard of the Inquisition, the royal coat of arms, as well as ceremonial objects and attire. A large proportion of the theatre's elite audience, from ladies in waiting to members of the aristocracy, are captured by Rizi displaying the emblematic insignia of the Holy Office in miniature on their persons in the form of brooches or pendants, thus identifying themselves with its cause: the threat of vengeance (via the sword) and the promise of forgiveness (via the olive branch) (Avilés, 257). (See FIGURE 6.) By becoming a *familiar* of the Inquisition's own confraternity of *San Pedro Mártir*, members of lay society were able to take an official part in the ceremonial proceedings and enjoy papal dispensations, together with associated social privileges. These included the wearing of its black uniform, with a distinctive emblem of intertwined crosses visible on the left arm of their sleeve, and the chaperoning of impenitent prisoners at the ceremony, with the aim of encouraging them to save their souls. But, as Olmo himself relates, so many members of the court and titled nobility offered to serve the Holy Office on this special occasion as *familiares*, for which proof of Old Christian heritage was a requirement, that for the sake of speed, the number of informants called upon to verify the purity of their line of descent was reduced to those living in the capital only, since their genealogical pedigree was deemed beyond reproach (I: 38-44). It was thus an emblem that identified those who wore it as inherently above judicial scrutiny - hence the desire of the favoured elite to flaunt it as Rizi appears to acknowledge - in contrast to those on the other side of the

arena whose New Christian (*converso*) ancestry instantly defined them as being racially impure and suspect, if not guilty, of religious backsliding by default.

4. The representation of the elite: ‘*un autorizado congreso de nobleza*’

Approximately two thirds of the physical space within the arena is filled by senior members of the Spanish aristocracy (*la grandeza de España*), indicative of their dominance over the immediate proceedings, as well as the wider socio-political order. True to his own aristocratic roots, Olmo describes the assembly of inquisitors, councillors, civil authorities and religious officials who sit on the richly-decorated tiered platform to the king’s right (and our left), in ascending order of importance within the distinct ceremonial protocol of the *auto* as, ‘*un autorizado congreso de nobleza, justicia, letras, canas, religión, zelo, y las demás virtudes*’ (1820, I: 71). Directly overlooking the stage and facing the viewer, we can observe the ‘golden balcony’ reserved for the royal party. (See Figure 4.) Olmo remarks upon the monarch’s fortitude in witnessing the *auto* with steady nerve from seven in the morning until nine at night, *sin que el calor le destemplase [...] ni la dilación tan prolija le fastidiase*’ (1820, I: 70), defining this as the mark of a truly great Christian king. The balconies alongside the royal party are described by Olmo as, ‘*muy poblados de personas ilustres*’ (1820, I: 70), including foreign envoys and dignitaries as well as members of the court and titled nobility for whom attendance at such events was compulsory. Performing the role of actors on the stage as much as witnesses to the drama, each was assigned to his or her place by the *Mayordomo Mayor* (Lord High Steward), the Duke of Frías (Don Íñigo Fernández de Velasco), who sits to the left (our right) of the royal balcony. His rival at court, the Duke of Medinaceli, Grand Chamberlain to the king and recently appointed as Prime Minister, is notably absent

from the central frame, endowed on this occasion with the honour of carrying the standard of the Inquisition in the opening procession.

The seating arrangements of the royal party, subject to the same aforementioned protocol, follows the natural line of authority (from left to right): Charles II sits alongside his new bride, Marie-Louise of Orléans, and at her side is the Queen Mother, Mariana of Austria, dressed as a nun (as she had been since the death of her husband 15 years earlier). All too apparent to the observer is the discomfiture in this arrangement. Given Charles' well-documented physical and mental incapacities, from 1665 Spain had been ruled first by his mother acting as Queen Governor, aided by a *Junta de Gobierno*, then by a succession of favourites and ministers, drawn from the aristocracy, competing for authority over him. In 1677 Juan José of Austria (the half brother of Charles) established his own Regency and attempted to remove the influence of the Queen Mother from court by banishing her to Toledo (Lynch, 1992: 348-74; Kamen, 1990: 328-45). His premature death two years later prompted her immediate return to the political fold, just as her son, now aged nineteen, was about to engage in a diplomatic marriage with the niece of Louis XIV. The *auto* formed part of the post-wedding celebrations that welcomed the arrival of the new queen and the return of the old one to dominate her son. It might be more accurate, therefore, to say that the real line of authority in the golden balcony ran from right to left.

One of the Queen Mother's strongest allies was the Inquisitor General, Don Diego Sarmiento de Valladares, concurrently the Bishop of Plasencia, who is captured by Rizi directly underneath the royal balcony, following his administering of the oath of allegiance to the king, accompanied by the royal confessor and the secretary of the Inquisition of Toledo (See Figure 4). He is robed for the occasion in spectacular fashion as a pontiff with biretta in hand and is depicted clearly by Rizi as the supreme

judge, highly conscious of the power he wields over the monarch and the whole proceedings (Maura y Gomazo, 1954: 362). He will soon take his seat on a throne elevated high above the left-hand side of the arena and significantly covered with a canopy, protection normally reserved for the royal dais alone. (See Figure 3.) As well as being placed in a position superior to that of the king, he sits on same level as the most recalcitrant prisoners directly opposite him. While this can be read as emphasizing the contrast between justice and infamy, it also creates a symmetrical link between them.

When we examine the scene ‘close up’ through Rizi’s lens, the outward display of harmony and cooperation between crown, church, court and civic authorities emphasized through the visual narrative can appear all too orderly and deliberate. There is no mention in Olmo’s text of the ‘behind the scenes’ disputes between competing authorities that frequently disrupted seating arrangements on such occasions or of the quarrel between the *San Pedro Mártir* brotherhoods of Madrid and Toledo who argued over which of them should carry the White Cross, the symbol of their order, in the opening procession. To avoid embarrassment, a compromise agreement was reached for them to swap it over half way through (Maqueda Abreu, 1992: 220). Beneath the surface there lay much more tension between the assembly of the elite, disguised by both Olmo and Rizi via an over play of their authoritative presence.

5. The portrayal of victims: ‘*un túmulo de horrores y lástimas*’

In accordance with his brief, the corresponding sombre platform reserved for prisoners to the king’s left (and our right) is designated by Olmo as ‘*un túmulo de horrores y lástimas*’ (1820, I: 71). Rizi makes a sartorial distinction between the finery worn by civil and ecclesiastical dignitaries (the heroes of the drama) and the

infamous yellow tunics (*sanbenitos*), emblazoned with the red cross of Saint Andrew on back and front, and conical hats (*corazas*) worn by convicted prisoners (the corresponding malefactors), that publicly expose the gravity of their crime and associated punishment. Hardened heretics, clothed in tunics marked with a double cross and bearing flames and dragons pointing upwards, some gagged and tied with rope, occupy the highest tiers of the platform (in accordance with their most shameful status as impenitents), while those who had abjured and would be reconciled to the Church, identifiable by a single cross on their tunics, are seated lower down. An inverse hierarchy thus pertains in the victims' seating arrangements when compared to that of their judges on the opposite side of the arena. Positioned on poles rising up above the other detainees are the effigies of 34 prisoners who had either fled or died (with boxes carrying the bones of the latter) and who would be sentenced *in absentia*: a grim reminder that there was no escape from inquisitorial justice either in life or death. (See Figure 1.) The effigies evoke the grotesque masks worn by actors in sacramental plays epitomizing sinful behaviour and the poles are a chillingly reminiscent of the stakes on which the condemned would meet their end. Mingling among the accused are various members of the religious orders, including Augustinians, Dominicans, Capuchins, Franciscans and barefoot Trinitarians, identifiable by their distinctive coloured habits and hand-held crosses, addressing the spiritual needs of those in their custody who would shortly meet their end.

True to the cause of the faith, Olmo points to the difference in physical demeanour between those unremorseful heretics who remained resolute in their beliefs and those who repented: '*se notó una diferencia tan grande entre los reducidos y pertinaces, como entre los escogidos y réprobos. Éstos iban con horrible color en los semblantes, con los ojos turbados y casi brotando de llamas, y toda la fisionomía de los rostros,*

de tal suerte, que parecían poseídos del demonio’ (1820, II: 76). Rizi captures this idea in a vivid depiction of the emotions of those condemned to death. He presents the spectator with disturbing images of one prisoner who appears wide-eyed as if in disbelief at the severity of the punishment bestowed upon him [FIGURE 8]; another unrepentant heretic is depicted gagged and bent over with fear and dread at his fate and whose dark complexion seems to suggest the double discrimination afforded Portuguese *conversos* on account of their race and creed [FIGURE 9]; and a third is portrayed steadfast in appearance, seemingly resigned to his lot [FIGURE 10]. These visual metaphors of physical and mental suffering and humiliation arguably speak louder than words and anticipate Francisco de Goya’s drawings of victims of inquisitorial persecution, undertaken at the beginning of the nineteenth century when many liberal thinkers were calling for the permanent abolition of the Inquisition on the grounds of its historical propensity for abuse. Meanwhile, emerging from the confessional underneath the platform to the right, can be seen a repentant female prisoner, one of two who renounced their sins that day following the delivery of the sermon. Olmo describes the conduct of these converts in quite different terms: ‘*los conversos iban con tal humildad, consuelo, conformidad y espiritual alegría, que pareció casi se les tralucía la gracia de Dios*’ (1820, II: 76) [FIGURE 11]. Here was the moral message of the *auto* in action and the key moment of the whole proceedings: the reconciliation of a remorseful penitent to the bosom of the Church, highlighting the merciful aspect of the inquisitorial process in contrast to its punitive side. This act of clemency, so Olmo relates, prompted the spontaneous applause of the whole auditorium (1820, II: 30).

Significantly, in contrast to the visible strength evinced by the elite, the general public, whom the *auto* was intended to instruct, are conspicuous by their absence

from the proceedings. Within the genre of *relaciones de autos* as a whole, the tendency was to incorporate the public's emotional reaction to the events unfolding before them through the narrator (their pleas, cries and cheers at different intervals), while it was customary for complementary illustrations to exclude them in favour of an autocratic reading of events (Flor, 2002: 181). According to this tradition, Olmo refers to them as enthusiastic witnesses along the route of the procession and at the scene of execution of unrepentant heretics, but not present at the *auto* itself (1820, I: 55; II:75). Fossman's plan suggests that there was no physical space made available inside the actual arena for additional spectators drawn from the streets of Madrid. They had to watch events from outside or beneath the scaffold, as in contemporary theatrical productions. A sea of faces is just discernible in Rizi's image underneath the central stage that may represent elements of the *pueblo* being closely guarded by the heavy presence of the Inquisition's military corps. Only a few months earlier, with Castile in the throes of its worst monetary crisis of the century, the capital had been the scene of popular disturbances directed against wealthy town councillors, accompanied by cries of '*¡Muera el mal gobierno!*'. When the mayor was threatened with violence from angry workers, the President of Castile was forced to intervene to preserve the peace (Villars, 1973: 163-4; Maura y Gomazo, 353-4). It was against this background of civil unrest that the Crown chose to put on a lavish spectacle, to be paid for largely by *madrileños*, thus highlighting its insensitivity towards prevailing economic circumstances.

The concern that the general public might create an adverse disturbance if allowed into the auditorium may have resulted in their being confined to a limited space out of sight or otherwise obliged to look on from a distant vantage point from which we observe the proceedings. The ceremony, aimed at swaying collective consciences by

reminding spectators of the trial that would await them at the day of judgement and evoke both their pity and fear, appears to have been one from which the *pueblo* was effectively and ironically excluded. This naturally leads us to question the whole function of the *auto* and the inclusive code of religious values it purported to transmit.

6. Conclusion

Our reading of this carefully choreographed display of pageant and theatricality embodied in the narration and depiction of the Madrid *auto* suggests that by 1680 the didactic function of the event - to rid society of the spiritual malaise of heresy and enforce a common confessional identity - was to all intents and purposes a pretext for an exaggerated manifestation of the ideals and political ambitions of the elite. As the French Ambassador, the Marquis of Villars, who witnessed the ceremony as a guest of honour, shrewdly observed: '*ce grand apparat de la punition de quelques misérables est plutôt un effet de l'ostentation des inquisiteurs que d'un véritable zèle pour la religion*' (Villars, 188-9). As an indication of this we need look no further than at the figure of the Marquis of Povar and Malpica in the bottom left foreground overlooking the edge of the theatre. As he poses for Rizi's canvas with his entourage, dressed to impress in black taffeta embroidered in white and silver, Povar - the hereditary Protector of the Inquisition - appears relatively unconcerned by the solemnity of the ritual unfolding before him. [FIGURE 12]. Rizi's representation of the drama from the wide lens perspective of a stage designer and the all-seeing eye of the artist paradoxically exposes these inconsistencies.

The historical evidence points to a dismantling of Inquisitorial authority and ceremonial from the late seventeenth century. Within a few years of the 1680 *auto*, under the new administration of the Count of Oropesa, a special *junta*, set up to investigate the powers of the Inquisition, was to criticise the extent of its jurisdiction

and privileges, including the immunity enjoyed by the tribunal. In 1689 the Council of Inquisition decreed that the death sentence (now only applied on the rarest of occasions) could be pronounced at smaller-scale and less costly ceremonies (known as *autos particulares* or *autillos*) held in churches rather than exclusively at the elaborate *autos generales* (Lea, 1922: 209). As a result, these gradually became redundant (the last one was held in Madrid in 1720) and accordingly, as heresy became a less contentious issue in society, so their primary function - to impress the popular imagination and coerce obedience to the faith via a dramatic display of authoritarianism - also came to an end.

In conclusion it can be argued that, from a strategic perspective, the deliberate over-exposure of the ruling classes, faithfully transferred from Olmo's text to Rizi's image, and the corresponding under-exposure of the *público*, reveal the weaknesses rather than the strengths of the mini-state represented at the *auto*. The recourse by the elite to such an exclusive, 'over the top' means of diversion can be seen as a method of neutralizing the potential for civil disobedience and distracting attention from the fragile premise of their own power base, and by extension that of the monarchy itself, rather than responding to an urgent need to keep confessional dissidence at bay. It is thus, ironically, the onlookers who have the most inclusive and conceivably most objective overview of the whole proceedings from the outside, while those who control events from the inside merely see reflections of their own illusory pretensions to grandeur. A century after its production, Rizi's representation of the *auto de fe* had become acknowledged in the new annals of liberal history as a defining image of the decline of the Spanish Inquisition rather than a celebration of its triumph.

ENDNOTE

¹ Other studies include: Caballero Gómez, M.V. 1994. El Auto de Fe de 1680. Un lienzo para Francisco Rizi, *Revista de la Inquisición*, 3: 69-140; Noble, P.E. 2001. Una fiesta casera: Sebastián

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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