

= Roderigo Lopez =

Roderigo Lopez (also called Ruy Lopes , Ruy Lopez or Roger Lopez ; c . 1517 ? 7 June 1594) served as physician @-@ in @-@ chief to Queen Elizabeth I of England from 1581 until his death by execution , having been found guilty of plotting to poison her . A Portuguese converso or New Christian of Jewish ancestry , he is the only royal doctor in English history to have been executed , and may have inspired the character of Shylock in Shakespeare 's The Merchant of Venice , which was written within four years of his death .

The son of a Portuguese royal physician of Jewish descent , Lopez was raised a Catholic and educated at the University of Coimbra . Amid the Portuguese Inquisition he was accused of secretly practising Judaism , and compelled to leave the country . He settled in London in 1559 , joined the Church of England and became house physician at St Bartholomew 's Hospital . Gaining a reputation as a careful and skilled physician , he acquired several powerful clients , including the Earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham , and eventually the Queen of England herself .

The Earl of Essex accused Lopez of conspiring to poison the Queen by in January 1594 . Insisting his innocence , the doctor was convicted of high treason in February and hanged , drawn and quartered in June , reportedly after averring from the scaffold that " he loved the Queen as well as he loved Jesus Christ " ? a statement that , from a man of Jewish background , prompted mocking laughter from the crowd . Elizabeth 's three @-@ month delay signing Lopez 's death warrant is sometimes interpreted as evidence that she doubted the case against him . In any case she returned almost all of his estate to his widow and children .

= = Early life and family = =

Roderigo (or Rodrigo) Lopez was born into a family of Jewish origin in Portugal around 1517 . His father , António Lopes , was physician to King John III of Portugal , and had been baptised into the Roman Catholic Church under coercion in 1497 . Lopez was baptised and raised in the Catholic faith as a converso or New Christian , and educated at the University of Coimbra . He received a BA degree under the name Ruy Lopes on 7 February 1540 , then an MA on 4 December 1541 ; he enrolled for a medical course on 23 December that year . Records do not survive regarding his doctorate , but according to his biographer Edgar Samuel it is probable that he received it in 1544 .

Amid the Portuguese Inquisition , Lopez was alleged to be a Crypto @-@ Jew or marrano ? one of Jewish descent who professed the Christian faith , but secretly adhered to the Judaism of his ancestors ? and was compelled to leave Portugal . He settled in England in 1559 , anglicising his first name as " Roger " , and successfully resumed his practice as a doctor in London . He joined the Church of England . He soon became the house physician at St Bartholomew 's Hospital in Smithfield . A colleague there , the surgeon William Clowes , noted in 1591 that " Lopez showed himself to be both careful and very skilful ... in his counsel in dieting , purging and bleeding . "

Around 1563 Lopez married Sarah Anes (b . 1550) , the eldest daughter of another New Christian refugee from the Portuguese Inquisition , the merchant Dunstan Anes , who had settled in London in 1540 . According to Samuel , both the Anes and Lopez households secretly practised Judaism , which was then illegal in England , while outwardly conforming as Anglicans . Other scholars are ambivalent on the matter ; Lopez would always insist that he was a Christian . Roderigo and Sarah had four sons and two daughters , of whom at least the eldest five ? Ellyn (Elinor) , Ambrose , Douglas , William and Ann ? were baptised within the hospital precincts at St Bartholomew @-@ the @-@ Less between 1564 and 1579 . Lopez 's brother Lewis lived with them in Holborn ; a second brother , Diego Lopes Aleman , became a merchant in Antwerp and Venice .

= = Royal physician = =

Lopez developed a large practice among powerful people , including Robert Dudley , Earl of Leicester and the principal secretary Sir Francis Walsingham , and in 1581 he was made physician @-@ in @-@ chief to Queen Elizabeth I of England and her household , with a life pension of £ 50

per year . In June 1584 , Elizabeth granted him a monopoly on the importation of aniseed and sumac to England for ten years ; this was renewed in January 1593 . In 1588 he was given land and tithes in Worcestershire belonging to the Bishop of Worcester Edmund Freke . Gabriel Harvey , an English scholar of the era , remarked on Lopez 's rise on the title page of a book he owned , *Judaeorum Medicastrorum calumnias* :

Doctor Lopus , the Queenes physitian , is descended of Jewes : but himselfe A Christian , & Portugall . He none of the learnedest , or expertest physitians in ye Court : but one , that maketh as great account of himself , as the best : & by a kind of Jewish practis , hath growen to much wealth , & sum reputation : aswell with ye Queen herselfe as with sum of ye greatest Lordes , & Ladyes .

There were sections of English society at the time that believed there to be a plot , orchestrated by Catholics and carried out by Jewish physicians , to poison patients . Converso doctors in Iberia were similarly often accused of murdering their patients or attempting to poison them . In 1584 , an anonymous Catholic pamphlet denouncing the Earl of Leicester suggested that " Lopez the Jewe " was one of the earl 's agents " for poysoning & for the arte of destroying children in women 's bellies " .

Fluent in five languages , Lopez was involved in diplomatic intrigue , as many Christians of Jewish origin were at this time . Amid England 's war with Spain in the 1580s , Lopez became an important member of a circle of Portuguese exiles in England , and the Queen 's intermediary with the Portuguese pretender Dom António , Prior of Crato , who was staying near Windsor Castle . Lopez supported Dom António , but in 1586 one of the pretender 's entourage , António da Veiga , wrote to the Spanish Ambassador in Paris , Don Bernardino de Mendoza , claiming that he could persuade Lopez to poison Dom António . The Spanish did not act on this idea .

In 1590 , Lopez approached Mendoza , possibly on Walsingham 's behalf , with the intention of opening peace negotiations . The Spanish gave Manuel de Andrada , Lopez 's intermediary , a jewelled ring worth £ 100 as a gift for Lopez 's daughter . After Walsingham 's death in 1591 , Lopez continued exchanging letters with Spanish officials without the English government 's knowledge or authority . There is no surviving evidence to suggest that Lopez conspired against England or Elizabeth personally , but these Spanish connections would come back to punish him ? according to Samuel , " Lopez had acted stupidly and dishonestly " .

= = Trial and execution = =

By the early 1590s , Lopez was wealthy and generally respected . He owned a comfortable house in Holborn and had his youngest son Anthony enrolled at Winchester College . He incurred the fury of one of his former patients , Queen Elizabeth 's favourite Robert Devereux , Earl of Essex , when he described to Dom António and the Spanish statesman Antonio Pérez occasions on which he had treated Essex for venereal diseases . Learning of this from Perez , Essex began to assemble evidence implicating Lopez as some sort of fifth columnist in the pay of King Philip II of Spain . The Lord High Treasurer Lord Burghley initially thought Essex 's allegations against Lopez absurd ; the Queen herself also rebuked Essex .

Late in 1593 , Essex discovered a secret correspondence between Estevão Ferreira da Gama , one of Dom António 's former supporters , and officials in the Spanish Netherlands , and had a messenger , Manuel Luis Tinoco , arrested . Lopez 's courier Gomez d 'Avila , a London @-@ based Portuguese New Christian , was also arrested . Both implicated Lopez during interrogation . On 28 January 1594 Essex wrote to Anthony Bacon of " a most dangerous and desperate treason " , the target of which was Queen Elizabeth : " The executioner should have been Dr Lopus . The manner by poison . " Parallels were drawn with a letter written by Andrada to Burghley in 1591 , in which reference was made to a plot whereby the King of Spain would deploy " three Portuguese to kill her Majesty and three more to kill the King of France " . Tinoco was tortured and Ferreira da Gama threatened with torture until they confessed along the lines Essex suspected ; Ferreira da Gama , asked if Lopez might have been willing to poison the Queen , replied in the affirmative . Lopez was arrested and held first at Essex House , then the Tower of London . He confessed when threatened with torture , but promptly recanted this statement .

Revelations regarding Lopez 's secret correspondence with Spanish officials did not help his case , particularly when it emerged that he had given the Spanish information about the English court , and apparently donated money to a secret synagogue in Antwerp . Burghley and the spymaster William Wade were soon " ready to believe the worst " , to quote Samuel . Lopez , Ferreira da Gama and Tinoco were tried by a commission headed by Essex at Guildhall on 28 February 1594 . Lopez insisted that he was innocent . The prosecutor , Sir Edward Coke , denounced the doctor as " a perjured , murdering villain and a Jewish doctor worse than Judas himself ... [not] a new Christian ... [but] a very Jew " . The three were convicted of high treason and sentenced to death .

The Queen waited over three months before signing the death warrant ; this delay is sometimes interpreted as evidence that the Queen doubted the case against her doctor . Lopez , Ferreira da Gama and Tinoco were hanged , drawn and quartered at Tyburn on 7 June 1594 . Lopez insisted to the end that he was innocent and that his professed Christian faith was genuine . He fell into a state of depression , but on the scaffold gathered his resolve and , according to the 16th @-@ century historian William Camden , declared that " he loved the Queen as well as he loved Jesus Christ " . The crowd roared with derision and laughter , taking this , from a man of Jewish background , for a thinly veiled confession .

Lopez 's property was forfeited on his attainder . His widow Sarah petitioned the Queen to be allowed to keep his estate ; the Queen kept the ring given to Lopez 's daughter by the Spanish , but returned the rest . Elizabeth also granted £ 30 per year to Anthony Lopez to support him at Winchester . A letter written by the Spanish diplomat Count Gondomar to King Philip III of Spain a decade after the trial seems to indicate that Lopez and Ferreira da Gama had been unjustly convicted , and that there had been no plot involving the Portuguese doctor : " the King our master [Philip II] had never conceived nor approved such measures ... the Count of Fuentes neither received nor gave such an order , moreover it is understood that Dr Lopez never passed through his thoughts , because he was a friend of the Queen and a bad Christian . " Lopez remains the only royal physician executed in English history .

= = Possible literary legacy = =

Some historians and literary critics consider Lopez and his trial to have been an influence on William Shakespeare 's *The Merchant of Venice* (written c . 1596 ? 98) , specifically as a prototype for the play 's principal antagonist Shylock , a Venetian Jewish moneylender who hates Christians . The Lopez case prompted a revival of Christopher Marlowe 's play *The Jew of Malta* (c . 1589 ? 90) , which according to Elizabeth Lane Furdell began rehearsals in London the same day Lopez was taken to Essex House . There is a mention of Lopez in Marlowe 's *Doctor Faustus* (c . 1592) , comparing him to the title character : " Doctor Lopus was never such a doctor ! " This was probably added after Marlowe 's death in 1593 .