



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (176)

TITLE: *The Limping Devil – El Diablo Cojuelo (Bilingual Edition)*

AUTHOR: Luis Vélez de Guevara

EDITORS/TRANSLATORS: Robert S. Rudder & Ignacio López-Calvo

ISBN: 978-1-934768-92-1

PUBLISHER: Stockcero

I. OVERVIEW & SIGNIFICANCE

Luis Vélez de Guevara's *El diablo cojuelo* (1641) is a cornerstone of Spanish Baroque prose, offering a unique blend of Menippean satire, picaresque elements, and theatricality. While highly praised by his contemporaries, including Cervantes and Lope de Vega, the original Spanish work was long obscured in the English-speaking world by its famous French adaptation by Alain-René Lesage (*Le diable boiteux*). This Stockcero bilingual edition represents a significant scholarly recovery, providing the first accurate and fluent English translation of Vélez de Guevara's actual text.

The novel follows the adventures of a rascal student, Cleofás, and a mischievous "limping devil" who reveals the hidden foibles of 17th-century Spanish society by literally uncovering the roofs of houses. Beyond its sharp social critique, the work is a "personal manifesto" of an author struggling with his own social origins (as a *converso*) and chronic financial instability. This kit facilitates an advanced study of Baroque satire, the mechanics of "maintain appearances" (*el qué dirán*), and the complex history of literary adaptation and cross-cultural influence.

II. CONTEXT & CRITICAL APPROACHES

This volume provides a rich framework for exploring the social anxieties and artistic innovations of Golden Age Spain.

Satire as Social Anatomy:

Examine the central motif of lifting the roofs. How does this literal "uncovering" function as a metaphorical anatomy of a decaying society? Analyze the specific targets of the author's satire (physicians, lawyers, hypocrites, pretenders).

Discuss the concept of "maintain appearances" in 17th-century Spain. How does the novel expose the gap between a person's public image and their private reality?

The *Converso* Subtext and Identity:

Analyze the biographical context of Luis Vélez de Guevara as a *converso*. How might his social origin influence the novel's pervasive cynicism and focus on hidden identities?

Discuss the character of Cleofás as a possible depiction of a *cristiano nuevo*, a "hidalgo to four winds" with an insubstantial lineage.

Genre and Structure: Novel vs. Menippean Satire:

Explore the debate surrounding the novel's classification. Why do some critics (like Peale) suggest it is a Menippean Satire rather than a traditional picaresque novel?

Analyze the structure of "trancos" (leaps). How does this fragmented narrative form suit the handicap of the devil and the thematic focus on disjointed social scenes?



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Theatricality in Prose:

Discuss the intersection of novelistic and dramatic traits in the work. Given Vélez de Guevara's prolific career as a playwright, how do stage conventions (apartes, spectacular scenes, the role of the *gracioso*) inform the prose of *The Limping Devil*?

Analyze the episode of the playwright in the inn as a meta-theatrical satire of contemporary dramatic styles.

Comparative Literature and Adaptation:

Examine the transformation of the work through Lesage's *Le diable boiteux*. How did the French adaptation alter the tone and focus of the original, and why did Lesage's version become the primary vehicle for the story's international fame?

Trace the influence of the "Devil Upon Two Sticks" trope in English literature, from Tobias Smollett to Charles Dickens.

III. ADVANCED DISCUSSION & RESEARCH PROMPTS

The Ethics of Observation: Discuss the role of the devil and the student as spectators. Does their detached, aerial view provide an "objective" critique, or is their perspective itself colored by the devil's "naughtiness" and the student's desperation?

Xenophobia and National Identity: Analyze the novel's portrayal of foreigners and expatriates. How does the "Limping Devil" use international comparisons to either defend or critique Spanish character and governance?

The Power of the Surname: Focus on the scene in the third "leap" where names are changed for more noble-sounding ones. How does this reflect the broader obsession with blood purity (*limpieza de sangre*) and social mobility in the Baroque era?

Baroque Language and Translation: Given the "virtually incomprehensible" nature of some Baroque passages, evaluate the translation strategy of Rudder and López-Calvo. How do they balance accuracy with the need to recreate the "vividness" of the Spanish world for a modern English reader?

The Mirror of Fortune: Conduct a close reading of Leap IX (the parade of Fortune). How does Jarnés use allegorical figures (Avarice, Flattery, Fickleness) to depict a society in decline?

Gender and the Baroque Gaze: Examine the portrayal of female characters (Tomasa, Fortune, the "madhouse" inmates). How does the period's inherent misogyny manifest in the satirical treatment of women as agents of deception or chaos?

IV. SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Text:

- Vélez de Guevara, Luis. *The Limping Devil – El Diablo Cojuelo*. Edited and Translated by Robert S. Rudder & Ignacio López-Calvo. Stockcero. (TK ORDER: 176)

Key Secondary Scholarship:

- **Azorín Fernández, Dolores.** Introduction to critical editions of *El diablo cojuelo*.
- **Davis, Gareth A.** "The *Gracioso* in the Theatre of Luis Vélez de Guevara."
- **Levisi, Margarita.** "Novela y teatro en *El diablo cojuelo*."
- **Peale, George.** *Ingenio y cortesanía: Luis Vélez de Guevara y el Palacio del Buen Retiro*.
- **Profeti, Maria Grazia.** Studies on the theater of Luis Vélez de Guevara.



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- **Vega García-Luengos, Germán.** Research on Baroque dramaturgy and patronage.
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V. RELATED STOCKCERO RESOURCES

- [Classic Spanish Drama & Beyond: 5-Book Bundle.](#)
- **Other titles in the bundle:** [*Los engaños de un engaño*](#), [*El prodigio de Alemania*](#), [*Carlos II el Hechizado*](#), [*Campanas a medianoche*](#).
- **Related Golden Age authors:** Pedro Calderón de la Barca, Luis Vélez de Guevara.

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