

## Dr Roderigo Lopez

Roderigo Lopez was born in 1524 (or 1525) in Crato, Portugal into a new Christian or crypto-Jewish, family. Lopez studied medicine in Coimbra and graduated in 1544. He was driven out of Portugal by the Inquisition, suspected of secretly practising Judaism. He ended up in London and changed his name to Ruy Lopez (or Lopes).

After a career as an importer of aniseed and sumac and a fundraiser for shipping ventures in the city, Lopez was admitted as the first regular physician to practise at St. Bartholomew's hospital and subsequently became a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1567. Soon his reputation assured his success amongst the highest classes of society, and he was appointed Queen Elizabeth I Chief Physician around 1586. He associated with Sir Frances Walsingham, Robert Dudley, the Earl of Essex, William, and Robert Cecil, but he died a traitor's death. Lopez was accused of treason and espionage. There were many accusations against him, including that he had been bribed and turned into a Spanish agent.

After Walsingham's death in 1590, Lopez had become entangled in a power struggle between rival intelligence agencies headed by Lord Burley, which utilised a number of crypto-Jewish merchants and the Earl of Essex.

At Essex's instigation, Lopez was arrested in January 1594 and examined about his part in an alleged plot to poison Elizabeth. He was condemned for leading a double life, Jew and Christian, physician and spy. This was revealed by the Earl of Essex who exposed intelligence leaks from Madrid, Brussels, Paris, and Constantinople.

Dr. Lopez's London was that of Shakespeare and Marlowe. It was coloured by the plague, wars with Spain and constant threats of political intrigue. According to Lopez's biography, Dominic Green, Lopez had been a secret actor in the sleazy world of espionage. A shadow play of Catholic hunters and ciphered males. Lopez was condemned as a double and triple agent, accused of plotting to poison Elizabeth in return for 50,000 crowns.

Under torture, a confession was extracted, and a guilty verdict obtained on the first day of his trial. Together with two supposed Portuguese accomplices, Lopez, portrayed as worse than Judas himself, was executed in June 1594.

The large and jubilant crowd screamed, "Hang the Jew!" as he was taken to be hanged, drawn, and quartered after reportedly averring from the scaffold that he loved the Queen as well as he loved our Lord.

Although he was sentenced to death, almost all of his property was restored to his family by verdict of Queen Elizabeth. A detail of his picaresque life, is rumour to have fathered an illegitimate son with the widow Mrs Allington who left the child on his doorstep with the following note: 'Senior Lopez, here I come. Open the gate and take in thy son. Thy Spanish creed I will not disgrace. Behold the image of thy face'.

This charismatic figure has influenced writings by Marlowe, Shakespeare, and James Joyce.