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Economy and Rhetoric of Exchange in Early Modern Spain

by

Eduardo German Ruiz

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

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in the

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of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

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Abstract

Economy and Rhetoric of Exchange in Early Modern Spain

by

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In this dissertation I analyze four canonical works (Lazarillo de Tormes, La Vida es Sueño, “El Celoso Extremeño,” and Heráclito Cristiano) with the goal of highlighting material-economic content and circumstantial connections that, taken together, come to shape selfhood and identity. I use the concept of sin or scarcity (lack) to argue that Lazarillo de Tormes grounds identity upon religious experience and material economy combined. In this process the church as institution depends on economic forces and pre-capitalistic profit motivations as well as rhetorical strategies to shape hegemonic narratives. Those strategies have economic and moral roots that, fused together through intimate exchanges, surround and determine the lacking selfhood represented by the title character. La Vida es Sueño begins with defective selfhoods, too. Segismundo and Rosaura must negotiate spatial reinsertions and organic reconstitutions through material and rhetorical exchanges that, in the end, also shape their identities. One of the rhetorical exchanges in Calderón’s play adopts the form of an intertextuality, specifically a pretextuality that harks back to one of El Conde Lucanor’s medieval examples, which is grounded upon the “material” notion of hunger and the related theme of the master-and-slave dynamic between an ignorant master and his wise servant. In the Cervantes tale of the jealous man this dynamic of mutual inscription undergoes a renewal via the capitalistic and colonial circumstance faced by Carrizales, the protagonist. First he has to escape his circumstance; then he has to undergo reinsertion in order to survive as a functioning but deeply troubled self. His project of a viable selfhood appears unachievable unless through the added space and agency of colonial alterity. Only in this way can the subject be fulfilled and hegemonic narrative reconstituted, even if an ultimate or potential downfall also dooms the protagonist. Hence the slave plays an essential role in the formation of hegemonic identity (represented by Carrizales). The slave, one of the incarnations of dominant discourse, occupies an interstitial space, which allows him to expose, undermine, and ultimately make available to discourse such transformative powers as are required for hegemonic continuation. Finally I study Francisco de Quevedo’s metaphysical poetry in Heráclito Cristiano and trace there some of the colonial metaphors that, through their economic weight, pull the metaphysical content towards the sinner’s physical suffering, manifested psychologically as a need for conversion and a keen awareness of grotesque death.
Para mis padres
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I owe, too, a significant debt to all the faculty, graduate students, and staff of the Spanish Department. They have created an excellent professional environment and a pleasant atmosphere in which to work. Their unstinting moral encouragement and the Department’s financial support were throughout key and forthcoming, allowing me to bring this work to completion.

My family members were also very generous with their time, and it is fair to say that I could not have completed this essay without their patience and support.
Rhetoric of exchange can be preliminarily conceived as an ordering frame in literature having two complementary interpretations: the structuralist-psychological and the purely historical. The first one blurs historical specificity and instead focuses upon patterns of exchange thought to be common across literary time periods and cultures, as illustrated by the anthropological example of the so-called “exchange-marriage” that allows for the “circulation of women within the social group” and also determines “marriage regulations operating in human societies... such as incest prohibitions” (Lévi-Strauss 60). The second interpretation historicizes those modes of linguistic exchange so as to better understand the period of the text by stressing distinction from other apparently similar rhetorical practices and by elucidating psychological character in terms of social circumstances. If we pursue the latter course the method of placing non-literary and literary texts side by side proves fundamental, for while exchange can be found equally in Pedro Calderón de la Barca and Francisco de Quevedo as in Petrarch and Cicero, a comparative reading of the literary and non-literary (for example, Lazarillo and Juan de Mariana) may discern specificities and limitations leading, in turn, to a better understanding of the literary thanks to the corrective of history and the emphasis upon power relations, as suggested by Greenblatt (Brannigan 6).

1 I refer to an ordering discourse that shows, openly or not, relationships of power through linguistic strategies, not to the classical and early modern notion of rhetoric, for which see Menéndez Pelayo’s *Ideas Estéticas*, t. II, pp. 145-203, Mack’s study of Vives’s *De ratione dicendi* (1533), and Abbott’s on the failed effort by French scholars to replace classical rhetoric with semiotics. Briggs studies the influence of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* in medieval France and Italy.

2 I follow loosely Stephen Greenblatt’s historicism, which “explores the relations of power in a given culture” (Aram 74). Levinson points out the conscious effort of criticism to change the past, as well as the role of “pleasure” and the critic’s “libidinal investment” (Ryan 110). A similar interpretive strategy is “econopoetics, a term that considers how socioeconomic factors are central to the poetics of literary works” (Maiorino 3). Intertextuality comes into play as well, for as Kristeva puts it, in text “other texts crisscross and neutralize one another” and its “productivity” involves producers of text and readers (Piégay-Gros 10-11).

3 Issues of money, fraud, payment of debts, and avarice are significant in Cicero’s definition of “vir bonus” ‘the good man’ (*De Officiis*, III.ix, p. 347). For Petrarch, see *Remedies*, vol. 1, “Precious stones and pearls,” 110-117; “Cut gems,” 123-124; “Corinthian vessels,” 135-138; “Wealth,” “Discovering gold,” “Discovering treasure,” and “Usury,” 164-171. Gold and treasure appear scantily in *Canzoniere* and usually symbolize the poet’s beloved or her hair, v.g. poems 105:14 (poem and line number), 190 and 206:47. The speaker in one of Quevedo’s poems addresses God like this: “desnúdame de mí, que ser podría / que a tu piedad pagase lo que deb” (20) ‘strip me naked of myself, for it might be / that I paid what I owe your pity’. While I do not look into the psychological “economics” of Quevedo’s poetry in this paper, my view veers from the so-called “Stoic” interpretations criticized by Marcilly (71-85) and used by others like Martinez. For a discussion of usury, see Grabill (xiii-xvii).
Exchange involves a mixed, complex notion with psychological, social, and moral components. It is not a simple transaction of goods between two isolated individuals but among “collectivities that impose obligations of exchange and contract upon each other” (Mauss 5). What these collectivities of clans, tribes, and families exchange “is not solely property and wealth” but “acts of politeness: banquets, rituals, military services, women, children, dances … [W]ealth is only one feature of a much more general … contract” (5). By a somewhat loose analogy we can conceive of literature as a linguistic contract, a sphere where exchanges are taking place. Literature appears as a balancing order or a linguistic space where social and individual tensions find release by the commingling of diverse discursive practices. Discourses and counter-discourses of love, honor, politics, or religion interact and fuse in literature, evolving or devolving into different types of historically-determined selfhoods and statehoods.

Historicizing literature is not to be understood simply as a mechanical comparison but as functional literary practice intent upon period-conscious textual comprehension. Literature is also hybrid, a spiritual and material product like Karl Marx’s notion of the market, a place where ideology and reality converge, where human nature and real, or economic, transactions meet; and a space where “somehow both dimensions must be registered together, in their identity as well as in their difference” (Jameson 278). Viewed both as ideological creation and reality, the market resembles a photographic image and the reality in front of the camera. This reality contains human nature and historical materiality, but both, however, are conceived as eternal, that is, ideological, partly because of the dynamics established by the capitalist market. In a somewhat similar fashion literature, a discursive transaction, is accompanied by ideological—moral, philosophical, political—resonances that may be traced by the corrective of history.

This corrective promises that exchange can only acquire specific, restrictive meaning thanks to a historical fleshing-out, that is, by placing literary exchanges (religious or literary discourses that come to mean something through the logic of exchange) within the temporal and material-economical frames offered by historical, non-literary discourses. Following this approach, rhetoric may be considered an ideological mechanism that reflects, or fails to reflect, “the realities of social, economic, and cultural practice,” an order “at odds, or simply incommensurate with lived experience” (Pym ix, x). In Quevedo’s Heráclito Cristiano, for example, the notion of sin is inscribed within a concept of religion that essentially conceives of the individual, the sinner, as a debtor: he owes a debt to God⁴. This spiritual debt, an economic yet non-historical metaphor, is blind to periodization; consequently it cuts across cultures and time periods. It does, however, begin to show its fuzziness or historical limitations once we allow Quevedo’s psychological-economic self to stake the time boundaries of his empty, debt-ridden soul, the goal being to escape from the general to the particular, a move that involves a critical consciousness, not “of calling up the past and making it speak” as Levinson points out, but to “change the past, and let itself be changed by its own invention” (in Ryan 110). Phrased another way, the particularity and materiality of the past may be used in order to better understand an ideological past so far essentialized into an eternal or frozen mold impervious to

⁴ For examples of this motif in Spanish literature, see Salstad under “escritura de obligación” ‘promissory note’ and “letra de cambio” ‘bill of exchange’ (126-27). Duffy details the connection between spirituality and economy among British Catholics, who drew payment clauses in their wills to shorten “the pains of purgatory” (354-57).
historical contamination. The upshot is a change in the conception of the past conducive to an enhancement or uplifting of history out from the literary field.

The discourse of sin unveils, in so far as it is about exchange attempting to reach a balance in a psychologically unstable self, the economic system of the soul that inhabits the body, which since early Christianity has been considered a divine abode. Sin considers the sinner a devalued entity that has spent more than he has or will ever have, and by this adoption of economic language the metaphysical discourse of sin becomes weighted with the ambiguity of exchange, forcing the reader not to forget about the semantic materiality that supports it. This means that Quevedo’s religious poetry or a secular work like Lazarillo de Tormes, and indeed all literature driven by sin as a core component, cannot be fully appreciated without due consideration to the market exchanges that determine its shape: the markets of indulgencias, of devotional or religious books, and that of money and precious metals, to name a few.

In the first chapter I explore the market of indulgences, fundamental for any understanding of Lazarillo’s fifth treatise. A two-pronged approach structures my reading. The first one is a discussion of the economic grounding of the text, the relationship with the religious concept of the bond, and some of the discursive implications of this connection. Secondly, while taking into account such economic-religious reading, I explore with more detail some of the psychological stakes of the Lazarillo text and how the formation and transformation of meaning shapes the characters’ identity. The economy of the market is woven into the religious economy resulting in exchanges that, seemingly made up only of metaphysical worries, are fundamentally propped up by material exchanges rooted upon historical circumstances. Just as the early Christians resorted to the theme of slavery in order to explain their relationship with God, early modern men use the market to shed satirical light upon their psychological makeup.

The second chapter is an examination of literary “exchange” between Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s La Vida es Sueño and Juan Manuel’s medieval text El Conde Lucanor. This textual influence sets up a change of focus from the material or economic to the spiritual or religious, without, however, dragging Calderón’s play into the latter field. In fact the economic aspect is the starting point of the action: Rosaura and Segismundo are dispossessed material bodies desiring to relieve their pains under circumstances that remain problematic throughout. This is so because their initial bodily lack, manifested in such symbols as the prison, chains, wild furs, cross-dressing mask, or tumbling horse, continues and merely undergoes a shift in focus. Bodily lack seems to stand for lack of honor, a basic component in the process of individuation. The characters’ lack remains in the body, albeit in a sublimated fashion. The cure to Segismundo’s bodily lack, or deficiency of honor, consists in his freedom and recovery of royal status. Similarly Rosaura’s lack, the stain of seduction (religious sin and dishonorable social position) can be cured by means of the matrimonial tradition. These two characters end up adopting a pragmatic rationale that confers moral value to the uncertainty of doubt, which is predicated upon Segismundo’s problematic wager/play towards what appears to be “eternal.”

In the third chapter I analyze Miguel de Cervantes’s short story “The Jealous Man from Extremadura” from the perspective of the castrated black slave. My contention is that the eunuch plays a fundamental role in the formation of hegemonic identity, represented by the title character, and that the slave, one of the incarnations of dominant discourse, occupies an
interstitial space that exposes, undermines, and ultimately makes available to hegemony such transformative powers as are required for its continuation. In the fourth and final chapter I study Francisco de Quevedo’s metaphysical poetry in *Heráclito Cristiano* in order to trace some of the colonial metaphors that, through their economic weight, pull the metaphysical content towards the sinner’s “physical” suffering. The sinner and his pain are psychological manifestations of the subject’s lack, a keen awareness of grotesque death that drives him towards conversion/incorporation to hegemony.
Chapter 1

Economies of Sin in *Lazarillo de Tormes*

Etymologically, to sin means to miss or fail to follow through on the reciprocal obligation of exchange due a deity, which translates into a debt for the sinner. This debt implies a prior gift, either missing from or understood in the etymology and usually identified with God’s law or divine order, which allows man to lead a happy life. The sinner’s non-reciprocity is his error: he both misses the mark and goes astray in things pertaining either to the natural or moral order, as expressed by Covarrubias’s definition:

\[
\text{omnen deviationem vel declinationem a rectitudine opera debita sive in naturalibus sive in moralibus.}
\]

any deviation or falling off from righteousness of due works either in natural or moral behavior.

Even here we can discern the weight of the economic, however metaphoric it may be, in at least three of its logical components: *declinatio*, *debitum*, *opus* ‘decline,’ ‘debt,’ and ‘work.’ Covarrubias’s material metaphor in effect suggests the historical limitations of selfhood and statehood in early modern Spain, pointing to historically specific definitions barely covered by the trans-historical mask of sin. Spain’s decline, rising debts and repetitive bankruptcies, as well as dereliction of productive works, merely echo the self’s material decline, indebtedness, and unproductive laziness denounced by economists like González de Cellorigo (73-75). At the same time even “material” terms that express spiritual truths, like righteousness, *rectitudo*, and moral behavior(s), *moralia*, begin to shift in meaning towards the economic side. Furthermore,

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5 Greek ἀμαρτανω, “miss the mark, esp. of spear thrown,” “miss road;” “fail of one’s purpose, go wrong;” “fail of having, be deprived of;” “do wrong, err, sin” (*GEL*). Latin *pecco*, “to miss or mistake something; to do amiss, to transgress, to commit a fault, to offend, sin” (*LD*). *DA* gives, “Hecho, dicho o deseo contra la Ley de Dios y sus preceptos” ‘Fact, statement or desire against God’s law or his precepts.’ Outside the Spanish tradition, Milton’s *Christian Doctrine* defines it similarly as transgression: “Peccatum, uti ab ipso Apostolo definitur, est ἁνομία, seu legis transgressio…” By the law is here meant in the first place, that rule of conscience which is innate and engraven upon the mind of man; secondly, the special command which proceeded out of the mouth of God … Gen ii.17 “thou shall not eat it” (178-181).

6 The notion of sin is complex and contextual in the biblical text as well. In Luke 15:3-24, for example, the sinner is described by two metaphors and one parable, all three of which both agree and disagree with Covarrubias. The sinner is compared to a lost sheep (ovis); then, and most problematic and revealing, to a lost piece of silver, or money (drachma); finally to the prodigal son who takes his “portionem substantiae” ‘portion of goods’ and “dissipavit substantiam suam vivendo luxuriose” ‘wasted his substance with riotous living’ (*Bibliorum Sacrorum* 994).
Covarrubias’s definition conceives the state of sin as global and current, while righteousness and morality appear as things of the past. Decline or similar words like *engaño* become the *mots du jour* to define Spain’s malaise as well as her subjects’ material and spiritual dejection (Elliott 285-320, Braudel II.734-56). This explains why a Jesuit moralist like Juan de Mariana would look for the root causes of Spain’s decadence in the economic sphere and find there echoes of an original bond between economy and religion. Mariana’s stance is a typical one, as he belonged to a generational current of sixteenth-century Spanish thinkers that one author calls enlightened, among them Francisco de Vitoria and Domingo de Soto, as opposed to a more dogmatic and orthodox group of theologians and moralists.

Mariana: money as standard for a good republic

The money market exerts natural influence on the economy, and percolates across social, political, and literary discourses impossible to control even by the royal figure. In fact the king is controlled by it, or should be, according to Juan de Mariana’s treatise on money, *De monetae mutatione*⁷, 1609. The king ought to be denied the right to arbitrarily manipulate the weight, silver or gold content of the coin because the measure would financially injure his subjects; and, Mariana claims, affecting the real value of the coin amounts to taking away the people’s possessions:

Eodem enim pertinent hae artes ad emungendum populi marsupia construendumque pecuniam provinciae in aerarium, ne fuco caparis & fraude, metallo dantis legis maiorem valorem, quam pro sua natura & communi aestimatione (256).

These strategies aim at the same thing: cleaning out the pockets of the people and piling up money in the provincial treasury. Do not be taken in by the smoke and mirrors by which metal is given a greater value than it has by nature and in common estimation (260).

porque todo es uno y todo es quitar á los del pueblo sus bienes por más que se les disfraçar con dar más valor legal al metal de lo que vale en sí mismo, que son todas invenciones aparentes y doradas (40).

Independent from and beyond the king’s right and reach, value of coin springs from the coin’s metal content, which ought to be religiously guarded in order to protect the people who use it. Sometimes the king can attempt such manipulation, as in war and other emergencies, but the measure has to be brief and quickly reversed, thus guaranteeing little loss to the public. He does

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⁷ I transcribe some original Latin quotes from John Laures’s edition and study, followed by the English translation of *A Treatise of the Alteration of Money* in Grabill’s *Sourcebook*, 241-327, and by Mariana’s own Spanish translation in *Tratado*. By using the Latin text and its Spanish translation I hope to draw some conclusions that would not be otherwise apparent.
have the right to mint, for which he may get a “granjería” ‘profit’, but there has to be an adjustment, or an almost perfect balance, between what Mariana calls the intrinsic and extrinsic values of currency.\footnote{Some of these opinions mirror Nicholas Oresme’s, a fourteenth-century French theologian who also considered debasement and devaluation of coin a loss to the community. “Utilitas communis”, ‘the common utility’, becomes the criterion when appraising government monetary policies (Spiegel 72-74).}

“Intrinsic or natural” value attends to the quality and weight of coin as well as to the labor that goes into it, whereas “legal” or “extrinsic” value is the nominal value given by the state or the prince; in other words, the difference between worth and value, if we may use a distinction sometimes noted in English. Extrinsic value is a nominal value apparently independent from the worth of currency as established by metal content:

\begin{quote}
\emph{alter legalis vocatur & extrinsecus nempe lege Principis constitutus, penes quem est uti alliarum mercium, ita pecuniae praescribere pretia (257).}
\end{quote}

the other is called the legal value and is extrinsic, inasmuch as it is established by the law of the prince, who has the right to prescribe the worth of money as well as of other goods (261).

\begin{quote}
el segundo valor se puede llamar legal y extrínseco , que el príncipe le pone por su ley, que puede tasar el de la moneda como el de las mercadurías (43).
\end{quote}

But given that intrinsic and extrinsic values must coincide, as will be noted, the king should not arbitrarily “prescribe” the “prices” (\emph{pretia}) of money or goods, and even when he does, as in emergencies, his power is time-constrained and at any rate reversible. The market, worth of money, and well-being of the republic supersede the king, who ought to submit to those forcible principles. His power can be “worthy” only when he insures that value and worth come together, when royal actions protect the correspondence between extrinsic and intrinsic values:

\begin{quote}
In bene constituta republica penes quo rerum arbitrium, iis curae esse debet, uti hi duo valores exaequentur neque discrepent inter se (257).
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
In a well-constituted republic, it should be the care of those who are in control of such matters to see that these two values are equal and do not differ (261).
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
El verdadero uso de la moneda y lo que en las repúblicas bien ordenadas se ha siempre pretendido y practicado es que estos valores \[extrínseco e intrínseco\] vayan ajustados (43).
\end{quote}

The discrepancy of these two values amounts to nothing less than the disruption of the commonwealth, so that currency manipulation, and therefore value, become root causes that explain economic and moral upheaval. On the other hand, just as money affects ideological discourses, Mariana’s technical exposition incorporates rhetorical analogies outside the economic field, as when he compares bad currency with the king’s intention to pass rough cloths for velvet and brocade. The king becomes a trader at odds with his clients, whom he seeks to
cheat with debased or devalued coin and, in so doing, stands guilty of instituting a fictive, fraudulent society characterized by absurd exchanges:

Fictions enim & fraudes, brevi, arte detecta cadunt: neque si Princeps contra nitatur quidquam proficiat. An possit efficere ut saga rudia vendantur pro serico eteromallo, laneae vestes pro aureis? non plane ut maxime conetur, idque alioqui legibus esset permissum, neque cum aequitate pugnare (259).

Fictions and frauds, once discovered, quickly collapse, and a prince who opposes the people will accomplish nothing. Would he be able to insist that rough sackcloth be sold for the cost of silken velvet, or that woolen clothing be sold for cloth of gold? Clearly, he could not. Try as he might, he could not justly make such practice legal (263).

... porque estos valores forzosamente con tiempo se ajustan, y nadie quiere dar por la moneda más del valor intrínseco que tiene, por grandes diligencias que en contrario se hagan. Veamos, ¿podría el príncipe salir con que el sayal se vendiese por terciopelo, el veintedoceno por brocado? No por cierto, por más que lo pretendiese, y que cuanto a la conciencia fuese lícito; lo mismo en la mala moneda (45-46).

The true use of money forces the state, or the prince, to respect the required equivalency between worth and value because this adjustment allows well-ordered republics to exist (repúblicas bien ordenadas). Otherwise disorder would usher in falsity, fraud, and a fictional society where a prince’s arbitrary power to fix the prices of goods and money would quickly be offset by market exchanges that in time reveal the real value of goods and money. Fraud and fiction, false values enshrined by societies in decline, result from the overturning of economic values and become features of the Spanish society that Mariana is criticizing.

On the other hand the weight and measure of coin, apparently strict economic factors, find their origin in the religious sphere. By recording earlier historical-religious sources, Mariana connects the notions of money and religion with the sanctity of the bond, which is made to depend on the true weight of currency. Currency composition and weight, like the foundations of a building, need to be firm and stable so as not to disrupt commerce:

---

According to Elliott this happened in the 1620’s when royal monetary policy “minted nearly 20,000,000 ducats’ worth of vellón coins” (334). The so-called price revolution beginning in the sixteenth century was partly caused by increasing American silver shipments, as the economist Martín de Azpilcueta noted in 1556: “In Spain, in times when money was scarcer, saleable goods and labor were given for very much less after the discovery of the Indies, which flooded the country with gold and silver” (cited by Elliott 191). In his Commentary on the Resolution of Money, Azpilcueta mentions eight “causes” that change the value of money, two of which are “time” and “the lack or need of it:” “[J]ust as a measure of wheat is not worth as much in August when there is great abundance of it, as in May, when there is scarcity of wheat, or less amount of it,” “so the value of money may rise or fall” (in Grabill 66).
Quae eo pertinent, ut sit omnibus persuasum uti in structuris fundamenta immota manent & intacta, non secus pondera, mensuras, pecuniam, sine periculo non moveri & commercii detrimento (261).

Everyone wants the foundations of buildings to remain firm and secure, and the same holds true for weights, measures, and money. They cannot be changed without danger and harm to commerce (265).

Lo que pretendo decir aquí es que como el cimiento del edificio debe ser firme y estable, así los pesos, medidas y moneda se deben mudar, porque no se bamboleee y se confunda todo el comercio (47).

Again, value sustains the building of the state, and disruption of values resembles a quake that confuses and sends the market staggering. Measure and money (mensura, pecunia), the commercial foundations of society, are not to be falsified (vitiare), for vice also destabilizes moral values. At the same time that moral and material categories share and therefore confuse linguistic expression, as with vice, the material changes represented by commerce begin to occupy a space that moral values and expressions can no longer ignore. In fact Mariana establishes a connection between good standards of currency and good bonds, so that faith and money appear now as facets of a common concept. Faith opposes money adulteration; conversely the purity of currency determines the purity of metaphysical concepts like faith or the bond. The historical-spiritual connection between money and the bond explains the resulting fraud and other destabilizing fictions that come to characterize societies in crisis. Mariana states:

Id intelligebant antiqui, cum quo maior cautio esset, specimen hauro omnium rerum in sanctissimis templis reponebant, ne a quoquam temere vitiarentur… Tum ex illis verbis Levit. cap 27. nu. 25. Omnis aestimatio siclo sanctuarii ponderabitur, quidam colligunt suceptum inter Iudaeos more, ut siclus quatuor drachmas argentii appendens in sanctuario servaretur, ne quisquam illum auderet vitiare, de bonitate aut pondere partem detrahere facili ad legitimum siclum recursum (261).

The ancients understood this. One of their major concerns was to preserve a specimen of all these things in their holy temples so that no one might rashly falsify them… In Leviticus (27:25) we read: “Every valuation shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary.” Some conclude that the Jews were accustomed to keep a shekel weighing four drachmas of silver in the sanctuary to ensure easy recourse to a legitimate shekel, so that no one would dare to falsify it by tampering with its quality and weight (265).

 Esto tenían los antiguos bien entendido, que para mayor firmeza hacían, y para que hubiese mayor uniformidad acostumbraban a guardar la muestra de todo esto en los templos de mayor devoción y majestad que tenían… y en el Levítico, cap. 27, núm. 25, se dice: Omnis aestimatio siclo sanctuarii ponderatur. Algunos son de parecer que el siclo era una moneda como de cuatro reales; se guardaba en su puridad y justo precio en el templo para que todos acudiesen a aquella muestra y nadie se atreviese a bajarla de ley ni de peso (47).
In Mariana’s view of antiquity, weight requires a sacred specimen that guarantees the coin’s purity, and consequently weight and price coincide (*ponderatur, aestimatio, justo pecio*). The price or nominal value depends on the sacred specimen guarded by the temple. If the specimen is tampered with, the public estimation diminishes and the republic becomes a fictional and fraudulent world until the specimen regains its purity. The sanctuary is a religious guarantee and repository of faith, which is partially represented by the specimen inside, but temple and specimen, symbols of the bond and purity of faith, are also economic standards that prop up the true, non-fictive nature of a healthy republic through the purity of coin.

A literal translation of the passage cited by Mariana suggests that there were no temples at the time and that other types of coin were used besides the “sacred” or “sanctuary one.” Milgrom translates the *Leviticus* passage thus: “All valuations shall be by sanctuary weight, the shekel being twenty gerahs” (p. 1942), adding that “sanctuary weight” means literally “sacred weight,” which perhaps indicates coining the shekel “to contrast it with the ‘secular’ shekel,” the going merchant rate, Genesis 23:16, and with the royal weight, 2 Samuel 14:26 (p. 2373). Further complicating the issue, the weight may have referred to the price of men and women in the slave market, to their productive capacity, or even the weight of the person pledged (2371). Whatever the case, coin appears as a religious or quasi-religious bond, as well as a method to free the believer from vows or pledges he now wishes to change for a monetary obligation. After all, *Leviticus* 27 deals exclusively “with the tariff whereby vows and tithes might be commuted for a money payment” (*The Interpreter’s Bible* 131). Milgrom theorizes that these vows originated from “the earlier practice of vowing persons, who were intended either as human sacrifice (e.g. Jephtha’s daughter, Judg 11:35-36) or as life-long servants of the sanctuary (e.g. 1 Samuel 1:11).” They were vows which “by the time of Lev 27 had been reduced to fixed monetary valuations” (2369).

Mariana’s citation of Leviticus grounds the material and spiritual spheres of a Christian republic, locating in the temple the heart—a gold specimen—of the commonwealth and finding in the economic value of that specimen the keystone that explains that order. The bond that unites in faith the members of the community depends upon a socially acknowledged weight of coin the purity of which mirrors the moral wholesomeness of those whose exchanges hinge upon the sacred specimen. Religion guarantees and legitimizes exchange, the order of the republic, and the true appreciation of a reality uncontaminated with absurd, non-equivalent exchanges. Furthermore, the money-based spirituality of the bond brings into play private desire and social obligation which together steer individual behavior. And since the bond knots together metaphysical and material spheres in a social dynamic intended to cure the social ills that characterize a republic in crisis, it follows that such economic indicators as “lack of capitalization and debt” that affected Spain at the time (Sánchez 47), already noticed by other economists even before Mariana, were viewed not only as symptoms of Spain’s economic troubles but of moral decline as well10.

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10 In a *Memorial* written in 1558 Luis Ortiz proposes measures to keep Spain from losing money to the benefit of other nations and to promote domestic industry (El Alaoui 190-191).
Indulgences appear as special currency because their value, originally spiritual and sacred, comes from “Christ Our Lord,” “who gave them value.” Secondly, they only pay for the penalty, not the guilt, resulting from man’s sins, and that penalty has to be paid “either in this life or in purgatory…” indulgentiae solum respiciunt poenam, non culpam, et ita non a culpa, sed a pena absolvitur.

Indulgences in *Lazarillo de Tormes*: swindle or system?

Mariana’s warnings against any fraud and fiction in the economy of late sixteenth-century Spain may very well frame *Lazarillo’s* economic problems at the beginning of that century, when the market of indulgences represented a strong factor in peninsular economy, a fact echoed in the polemical and literary texts of the period. The *cruzada*, or crusade subsidy, was “granted by the papacy to the crown in the form of a bull of crusade in which spiritual benefits were conferred upon the faithful in return for a money offering” (Lynch 202). It was renewed every three years and by the end of Philip II’s reign “probably amounted to 20 percent of his entire income” (202). Covarrubias defines this spiritual benefit, or indulgence, as follows:

gracia, concesión, remisión. Comúnmente tomamos indulgencias por las gracias y perdones que los sumos pontífices y prelados conceden a los fieles en remisión de penas, estando dispuestos y capaces para recibirlas, del tesoro de la iglesia, de la abundancia de los méritos de Cristo Nuestro Señor, que les dio el valor, las cuales penas, sin embargo del perdón de la culpa, se habían de pagar, o en esta vida o en el purgatorio… indulgentiae solum respiciunt poenam, non culpam, et ita non a culpa, sed a pena absolvitur.

Grace, concession, remission. We generally take indulgences for the graces and pardons that the holy fathers and prelates grant the faithful as remission of their penalties, being ready and capable to receive them from the treasure of the church, from the abundance of merits of Christ Our Lord, who gave them value; which penalties, despite the pardon of guilt, would have to be paid either in this life or in purgatory… indulgences only forgive the penalty, not the guilt, and therefore they absolve from penalty, not guilt.

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11 Rico explains further in *Lazarillo* (116*-117*): “La recaudación de las limosnas, en efecto, estaba confiada a empresarios que anticipaban al erario real un tanto alzado, según contrato. La ganancia de tales mercaderes dependía del número de buletas despachadas, de suerte que, para expedir mayor cantidad, alquilaban predicadores especializados, quienes a su vez percibían una ‘cota’ o porcentaje de las ventas que consiguieran. No es maravilla que esa confluencia de intereses originara los ‘desafueros’, ‘engaños y embaimientos’ que las Cortes no se cansaban de vituperar” (116*). Some of the Spanish legislation of the period, however, was dead letter; the so-called abuses (“engaños”) were the rule and not the exception, which proves either a systemic abuse or a system where abuse—and the accompanying blind piety that allowed it to happen—was altogether normal. An ordinance of the Court of Burgos in 1512 sought to combat “las grandes opresiones y agravios” of “predicadores de Cruzada,” “mayormente en las aldeas, haziéndoles detener en las Iglesias uno, e dos, e tres días a la mañana e a la tarde que oyan sus sermones, non les dexando salir a sus oficios... y si algunos no la an tomado [la bula], llévanlos con grandes prisiones… a oír sus predicaciones” (Ruffinatto 228).
purgatory.” Covarrubias’s definition mixes the economical with the spiritual, or psychological, while the grant as coin expresses the desire to reach even beyond death into the supernatural economy of purgatory. Psychologically, too, the sinner has to be ready and willing to receive such concession, “estando dispuestos y capaces para recebirlas.” In other words the system of indulgences blurs material and spiritual borders via the emphatic weight of grace, a gift of an authority endowed with physical and metaphysical capacity: the “grace, concession” or “pardon” that “sumos pontifices” ‘popes’ and prelates “concede to the faithful.” Furthermore, the economy of the faithful supports the pope’s authority because sinners also require spiritual utility provided by the church via indulgences. The paradox of the market of indulgences proves the material and potentially heretical grounds of clergy and believers whose participation in it displaces or threatens to upset the purportedly spiritual goals of these transactions.

The tension between material and spiritual economies is apparent, for example, in Alfonso de Valdés’s denunciations in the 1520s that echo Martin Luther’s and Erasmus’s. Erasmus’s works circulated widely in Spain until circa 1535 when an anti-Erasman reaction caught hold in the peninsula. But already in the translation of his Enchiridion Militis Christiani, El Enquiridión o Manual del Caballero Cristiano (1526) the bulls of indulgence are critiqued as material worries that ought to be discarded. Visible things, identified with the flesh, belong in the empirical world of the senses:

Regla Quinta: que todas las cosas visibles se deven tener en poco, y que éstas son las que el apóstol llama carne; y cómo conviene levantarnos siempre a las invisibles (231).

Fifth Rule: that all visible things must be regarded as unimportant, and the Apostle calls these things flesh, and how it behooves us to raise ourselves up to the invisible ones.

Later on Erasmus, more directly, berates those who pin their hopes upon the traffic of indulgences and other material manifestations of faith, as if wishing to keep apart the spiritual and material components of that market. Walking on a pilgrimage, he suggests, has little to do with inner wounds and vices. The guilt of sin cannot be washed away with a bull payment:

Tú tienes creydo que con una bulla sellada con cera o con una blanquilla que ofreciste o una estación que anduviste, son ya del todo lavadas tus culpas, sin tener muy verdadera contrición ni arrepentimiento de ellas, muy errado estás.

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12 These worries were far from metaphysical; they fulfilled a strongly economic and legal requirement, as borne out by the testimony of wills, which expressed in a ritualized manner the self’s worldly and other-worldly obligations and so communicated the “unconscious of the community” (García Moratalla 16). Typically a woman wills the celebration of masses for her soul, that of her husband’s and close relatives’ “perpetually, forever and ever” (122-23). Among England Catholics “to die in charity meant... to die discharged of one’s debts” (Duffy 355) and non-payment of tithes could cause eternal damnation (356-57).

13 The Spanish translation softened Erasmus’s critique by eliminating or attaching some phrases, indicated with italics by the editor, D. Alonso. See El Enquiridión, “Apéndice I. La Traducción del ‘Enquiridión’”. In a footnote Alonso quotes from Erasmus’s Exomologesis regarding indulgences: “De Indulgentiis nihil docent Sacrae litterae, ac
Porque adentro está la llaga del vicio y dentro es necesario que se ponga la medecina (287).

If you think that with a bull sealed with wax, or a little money offered or a little pilgrimage, your sins are going to be completely washed away, without having true contrition or repentance, you are very mistaken. Because the wound of vice is inside and so it is necessary to apply the medicine inside.

Man’s tension between his bodily and psychological need, resolved through payments mediated by an outside institution, the clergy’s “bulla sellada,” proves problematic given that the payments leave man still in sin or error, “muy errado.” Thus the desire to break the spiritual from the material interests of selfhood shows an economic, early modern bias that opposes Mariana’s traditional return to the biblical text. It remains mostly a desire for an institutional break represented by the Roman bull instead of an actual (that is, fictive or literary) rupture that will only be realized much later in the Romantic period.

Similarly Valdés ridicules those who, like the duke in his Diálogo, hope to buy the salvation of their souls by paying exclusive attention to outward ritual and the market of indulgences. Instead their souls end up in purgatory, for the link that connects institutional market with private desire has been severed. The duke says,

“Well, I had ten or twelve bulls of the pope that delivered me from purgatory, so that I never thought paradise would escape from my grasp. (119)

Grants of indulgence, in this logic of parodic economy, guarantee the buyer entrance to paradise and, to the Pope and his peddlers, the benefits accrued in the sale. All established clergy and secular authorities working together (symbolized by Lazarillo’s alguacil and buldero) attest to the importance, economic weight, and abuses of a mechanism that remains nevertheless a functional matrix of society.

The function inscribed in this fluid social order precedes the abuses revealed in Lazarillo. Opposition to indulgences, and therefore its market practice, precedes also Erasmus and Luther. In the late fifteenth century Pedro de Osma’s De Confessione notes that indulgences could not really absolve people from their sins (Menéndez Pelayo, Heterodoxos 567-582). Following a formal process in 1479, his book was burned and Osma forced to abjure it14, but his critique

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14 Osma’s accusers claimed that his book rejected the sacraments of penitence, confession, and the value of indulgences: “en derogación del sacramento de la penitencia e confission de los pecados... como de las indulgencias apostólicas y de los prelados eclesiásticos” (Menéndez Pelayo 571). He claimed, they continued, that “los pecados mortales, cuanto a la culpa y pena del siglo futuro, se borran por la sola contrición”; “el papa no
remained alive and well in contemporary literature, and its abuses unabated. Traffic with indulgences would become, as Lazarillo’s “tractado quinto” shows, a for-profit business managed by professional preachers and swindlers, bringing the spiritual-religious sphere and economic market together; a space where sinners’ needs would be fulfilled and clergy and state profits increased. The traffic, in addition, laid bare Spain’s endemic corruption of government that reached the Spanish court itself, figuratively a temple emptied out of worthy coin “specimens.” Mariana’s work joins the chorus of contemporary critics or “arbitristas” that denounced the auctioning of state and clergy positions: “dícese que… no hay oficio ni dignidad que no se venda por los ministros con presentes y besamanos” (92) ‘it is said that… there is no office or dignity that is not sold by the ministers with presents and hand-kissing.’

This level of corruption involves the different social and political classes that Lazarillo’s narrative microcosm illustrates. The trader of indulgences, the buldero, acts in unison with the alguacil, a state enforcer or policeman. Upon arriving in a village, the buldero buys the favor of the local clergy, the third party in the business, with fruits or little things, cosillas, an initial bribe that prompts the clergy to summon the locals to the church so that the trader may preach his spiritual wares. Backed by canonical and state law, they set about preaching the miracle of indulgences to the common folk, usually resorting to deceit and outright swindle:

Ansí procuraba tenerlos propicios, porque favoresciesen su negocio y llamasen sus feligreses a tomar bula. Ofresciéndosele a él las gracias… (113)

That is how he tried to get them [the clergy] to his side, so that they would favor his business and call their parishioners to take the bull. Offering him the graces...

This type of rhetorical exchange typifies Lazarillo: religious language loses spiritual meaning and spills over into the economical and marginal. The buldero’s business, negocio, consists in selling grants of indulgences, bulas. As commodities and legal tender, the grants allow the holder to buy God’s grace (gracia in Covarrubias’s definition), which guarantees the sinner’s salvation. But we also see that the buldero is offered “graces,” gracias, and so a strictly spiritual word suffers a semantic shift towards economic “profit.”

A similar change occurs in the first chapter when Lázaro steals some of his master’s coins by first putting them in his mouth. The blind man gets his coins from praying, rezar, but these alms, a product of piety, are for him nothing but a profitable business. Subsequently Lázaro’s kiss adulterates the coins by keeping some in his mouth, which amounts to a devaluing exchange (Rico, Problemas 93-112). The narrator’s body, tongue, and mouth merge in order simultaneously to endow orthodox texts with worth and to cheapen orthodoxy by parody. The blind man’s prayers for money and Lázaro’s mouth and tongue reaffirm the importance of bodily contamination in the creation of meaning.

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15 Similarly Guzmán de Alfarache’s wife, Gracia, “the Grace of God upon marriage,” becomes “a corporeal and sensual merchandise” (Sánchez 59). For Lazarillo’s chapter five, see Ricapito’s Bibliografía (395-97).
The tongue, the organ of language, proves ambivalent, equally capable of true or faithless prayer as well as of outright tongue-twisting trickery. The bodily exchange, manifested as a contamination that taints grace with material or monetary signification, displaces and seeks to replace its metaphysical, divine acceptation, gracia, God’s grace, a displacement whereby God as endower of grace becomes the substituted image and the buldero his replacement, the new god of the spiritual market.

Like bad merchandise or devalued currency, on the other hand, indulgences prove a hard sell; consequently the seller has to foist, violently, the grants onto the people or resort to deceitful artifice. The grants become now a sort of proto-capitalist symbol, proving on the one hand the need to sell and on the other the state intervention required to promote the existence of a market whose spiritual commodities respond to economic pressure as much as to metaphysical need:

Cuando por bien no le tomaban las bulas, buscaba cómo por mal se las tomasen, y para aquello hacía molestias al pueblo, y otras veces con mañosos artificios (115).

When they did not buy the bulls willingly, he devised how they would buy them through evil ways, and so he would harass the people and other times through deceitful artifice.

The buldero’s collusion with establishment clergy and the alguacil as state representative exemplifies the legitimacy of violence, a function linking the three (buldero, local clergy, and alguacil) and cemented by the weight and official sanction of canonical and secular law despite ordinances that sought, ineffectively, to combat those abuses. His arrival in town, reception, opening sermon, sale of grants of indulgences, and leave-taking must by law be attended by local townspeople: “se acordó de convidar al pueblo, para otro día de mañana despedir la bula” (115) ‘it was agreed to invite the people next day in the morning in order to take leave of the bull.’

This system integrates Mariana’s secular and sacred administration of the locality into the traveling buldero’s circuit of exploitation, but as a function of disorder where men and currency specimen have been adulterated, devalued, or thoroughly replaced by their opposites. The temple no longer fixed as a place of reference and its non-existent sacred specimen replaced by a fake bull of paper, the community that should benefit from those exchanges loses money and faith, hurled into a ripe environment where “deceitful artifice” can now drive this new economic order.

In fact “deceitful artifice,” mañosos artificios, is a key stratagem that this trading buldero introduces by apparent chance play. The buldero and alguacil pretend to play a game of cards

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16 Lazarillo and the picaresque update similar reversals common in medieval Latin parody, for instance The Garcineida, a twelfth-century money-satire from Toledo that, denouncing the gluttony and avarice of the church, metamorphoses gold (Rufinus, “red”) and silver (Albinus, “white”) into relics of martyr saints revered in Rome (Bayless 145-53).

17 Rico states that the law forced local folk to be present when bidding the bull goodbye (Lazarillo 115). Cf. Ruffinatto 228.
that leads to a heated argument in which the latter calls the other a sham and his wares, the grants of indulgences, fakes:

\[
\text{El llamó al alguacil ladrón, y el otro a él falsario (115)... decíanse palabras injuriosas. Entre las cuales el alguacil dijo a mi amo que era falsario y las bulas que predicaba que eran falsas (116).}
\]

He called the *alguacil* a thief and the other one called him a fake... they called each other insulting words, among which the *alguacil* told my boss that he was a faker and the bulls he was preaching were fake.

The nature of play accepts adulteration via artifice-driven trickery, a contradictory façade that guarantees the apparently genuine character of their exchange and functions as a rhetorical and behavioral trick that triggers the action and insures, by introducing the limited confidence of the buying public, the relatively true value of the tricksters’ words and the success of their fake commerce. Artifice involves the faked theater of moral behavior—pretending to adopt the skepticism of the populace towards the market of indulgences, exposing it for what it is, and faking a retreat into orthodoxy after the sale has been successfully executed and the profit insured. The strategic move partially reveals the truth, unmasking the *buldero* as a fraud, *falso*, and the *alguacil* as thief, what they really are, in order to fool the common folk. The subsequent falling-back into dominant *doxa*, however, does not take us back to pure orthodoxy but to a heterodox economic system the tricksters have occupied since the very beginning. This is how, besides attacking tradition by commodifying and exchanging physical and metaphysical things, the sale of grants of indulgences facilitates the encroachment of discursive unorthodox exchanges into higher hegemonic discourses.

This deception involves a measure of truth revealed through psychological trickery: the grants are like worthless and false coin because they may be counterfeit, not because of Osma’s doctrinal concerns. Yet their falsity turns out a profit through *artificio* and *industria*, words removed from the actual sphere of production, mere rhetorical devices meant to persuade, deceive, or convey a narrative (but nonetheless true) fraud. Deceit and profit are true because they flourish within hegemony and allow it to function. But artificial deceit, also a destabilizing argument, diminishes economic demand (the people’s faith on the traffic) and keeps bringing up the falsity of the trade and the worthlessness of indulgences as spiritual and devalued currency. Artifice and industry play a materially rhetorical role that supports Lazarillo’s fraudulent economy and reproduce false equivalencies and exchanges that undermine the structural, underlying meaning of orthodoxy.

One such psychological meaning involves the trickster’s pangs of conscience, which in order to be true (or what amounts to the same thing: believable) have to mirror the public’s skepticism about the grant trade. The *alguacil*’s statement in church, besides confirming the traffic as a profit business and the grants as bad coin, steers the discourse towards the sinner’s conscience, his domestic or spiritual economy. He claims the *buldero* deceived him:

\[
\text{el cual me engañó y dijo que le favoreciese en este negocio y que partiríamos la ganancia. Y agora, visto el daño que haría a mi consciencia y a vuestras}
\]
haciendas, arrepentido de lo hecho, os declaro… que las bulas que predica son falsas (117-118).

He deceived me and told me to favor him in this business, and that we would divide up the profit. And now, having seen the harm I would do my conscience and your assets, regretting what I have done, I declare to you… that the indulgences he preaches are false.

Grants may be false because even their nominal value is not guaranteed. They may not have been legitimately issued by church authority and lack therefore the capacity to cure the sinners’ owed penalties. This fact delegitimizes even grants that have the church’s imprimatur since both types of grants, fake and real ones, are perceived as equally devalued by the buying public; all of which means that, fake or real, their worth is not tied to a nominal, public economy but to the spiritual economy of each individual sinner. The public at first believe the alguacil when he denounces their falsity, but when he fakes, convincingly, a God-given epileptic attack for his heretical accusation, they turn on him and come around to the side of the buldero, who promptly sells the grants and makes his profit. The sinners’ needs endow the bulls with worth, a spiritual-economic value that hides yet another complexity: the buldero’s fraud, or at any rate his special merchant-like activity, is necessary in order for this value to exist, to prove successful and be realized in the market.

Because of its role as a bad coin, the bul a brings together the alguacil’s faked pangs of conscience and the sinners’ assets, haciendas. A typical business, it has to turn out a profit (negocio, ganancia) collected by an entrepreneur-buldero. Atypically, however, this economically disharmonious order involves the forgiving of the sinners’ sins and their salvation through a fraudulent market involving the bad currency of grants, whether official or unofficial, since in either case any theoretical specimen, like that propounded by Mariana, is non-existent or fundamentally nominal. As an example of incipient capitalism, the buldero’s exchange proves problematic and non-equivalent, a mixture of old and new phenomena, and, viewed through the lens of the ancient religious practices suggested by Mariana, as intending to conciliate outside and inside economies that appear not to have matching parameters of comparison but continue to prove they do.

One further complication of play involves the alguacil’s pretended rejection of the symbolic staff of authority, la vara. He plays the part of the oppressed by throwing it away in a performance that continues to be deceitful and devalued. But this very deceit incorporates the bull-buyers and sinners into his system of authority: the common folk who restrain the foaming alguacil become themselves like policemen or alguaciles, erstwhile sinners outside hegemonic order and now its guardians by virtue of the performance played upon them by the tricksters. Pretending to reject authority the alguacil gains the sinners’/buyers’ confidence by lowering himself to their level as devalued authority figure, sharing their circumstance and gaining their trust. This is how he, remaining throughout a devalued representative of the state, lifts them up to his level, a spurious empathy that hinges on the harm, daño, that places conciencia and hacienda side by side, so that a loss of one’s assets parallels harm to one’s conscience. Again, the functional link between material expenditure and spiritual need appears under the rubric of sin, which in Lazarillo acquires an open, materially-biased meaning. Sin evolves as part of an
economic enterprise. It becomes a function through which hegemonic classes attempt to maintain control of market exchanges and a fundamental aspect of the discursive order that affects an individual’s inner self-economy and his outer, material circumstance.

The buldero set piece, fundamentally different from the first three chapters of Lazarillo, shifts the anti-hero’s lack, from an almost exclusive identification with hunger and innocent naivete, to that of the spiritual hunger towards salvation and the redemption of sins. At the same time, the commercial bastardization of religion via the state- and church-sanctioned market of indulgences plants this chapter firmly upon material and historical fact, in spite of its being a folkloric and repetitive medieval motif (Martino I.243-63). This motif, at any rate, expresses in formulaic fashion a type of history that transcends specific historical events but is no less rooted upon them. The formula begins upon historical fact and in time becomes sublimated folklore. Subsequently it is recirculated and recharged with factuality as long as there is a close or approximate agreement between formula and event. The utility of the formula is possible thanks to its correspondence with historical fact as well as with the psychological implications that go along with such connection. These implications suggest a logical association among a multifaceted array of concepts such as the economic market, the spiritual market, the sinners’ psychological lack, their monetary loss in the exchange, and, tying all of these concepts together, the concepts of sin and deception.

Several nineteenth-century readings of Lazarillo characterized this work as an “epic of hunger” (Martino I.317), an assessment that connects it, as I will try to show in the next chapter, with the opening scene of La vida es sueño, where hunger, however, begins a slow process of metamorphosis into a metaphysical and pragmatico-political substratum. As an epic of hunger, Lazarillo is a work about loss, need, or lack—all three words used here interchangeably. Hunger is a contentual incarnation of the general concept of lack, one of its narrative appearances. In the buldero treatise this appearance recedes into the background, still a fundamental, underlying cause of the picaresque genre but yielding the upper hand to the forces of personal and social economies. The economy of capitalistic greed, of commodification even of spiritual scarcities, is a manifestation of a social crisis that pits the citizens of empire against one another and reaffirms the classical common place of homo homini lupus alluded to by Rivadeneira in more colorful terms than even Karl Marx could conjure up two centuries later. Thus, although the tricksters appear merely as medieval “echacuervos” they in fact are intimately embedded within a bureaucratic and economic system. This means that their formulaic intervention has undergone specifically historical changes that create a narrative space where an individual’s lack connects with his/her social or circumstantial one.

There are historical and proximate connections that crystallize this lack, specifically the crusade tax and the government’s fiscal troubles, as well as the caste battles going on in the Iberian patrias against Jews, Muslims, and indigenous and black peoples in America. The accusations leveled against the poor, heretics, and other marginalized groups (notably women, although admittedly this interpretation smacks of ahistoricity) usually undergo a projection shift upon those others, a process chiefly driven by a real or perceived resurgence of social crises that threaten the viability and functionality of the discursive order. In such matrix of perceived social
instability the concept of lack appears as both the cause of crisis and the space and method to overcome it. Character and identity become the character and identity of lack. In other words, identity and character exist not as whole, complete, or global conceptualizations but quite the opposite. They begin just at the moment and space when and where discursive order reveals its cracks and fragmented composition.
Chapter 2

Lacking selfhoods: the sins of the hungry body in *La vida es sueño*

Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s most famous play *La Vida es Sueño* (*Life is a dream*) puts in relief early modern questions pertaining to subject formation and government legitimacy that continue to have repercussions into the modern period. The subject and the state that provides him/her with cover depend directly or indirectly upon the value concepts of sin and honor that the play supports and undermines via the image of hungry, marginal bodies in pain. These value concepts and their attachment to suffering bodies suggest the formation of selfhood on the basis of an economics of scarcity that forces characters into competing not only for material goods but rhetorical advantages too. In fact sin and honor may be conceived as early modern notions of an essential lack that selfhood strives to fill up, an impossible task because selfhood, qua body, symbolizes sin or Christian lack allegorized in the body of the animal, the wild man, and the monster.

Imagery of the body proves historically flexible. It blurs periodicity and disclaims its organizing value when, following Calderón, we resort to Juan Manuel’s medieval text. The meeting of Segismundo and Rosaura recreates an encounter in Juan Manuel’s example, and both demonstrate a discursive exchange where the lacking and hungry body stands for material and cultural lack (freedom/honor and riches, respectively) on its way to the production of modern selfhood and statehood. Viewed this way, the body constitutes the beginning phase of modern selfhood suffering from material dispossession, unfortunate circumstance, or psychological imperfection.

Segismundo’s tribulations as he moves from tower to throne allegorize an evolving self that lacks freedom and agency. He is not free to escape from the tower or the dream world, he cannot make the right moral decisions, and he lacks military and royal powers. These traits characterize a deficient subject and, when resolved by the end of the play, produce an evolved, purportedly non-lacking individual. The scarcity that defines him shares the ideological components of orthodox Christianity and the “modern” circumstance characterized by crisis, so that scarcity may arguably be considered the economic foundation of *La Vida es Sueño*. Scarcity knots together the Christian notions of the sin of Rosaura’s dishonor and Segismundo’s furs, the original sin of Segismundo’s existential and Christian quandaries, as well as other modern, secular lacks manifested in the generational and representational crises apparent in the oppositions between Segismundo and Basilio, dream and reality, and between Rosaura’s and Segismundo’s hybrid sexualities. The play attempts to solve these conflicts by a series of exchanges that ultimately produce Segismundo as a negotiated and pragmatic selfhood, a crowned, yet doubting, prince.\(^\text{18}\)

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\(^\text{18}\) For the generational focus, see Francisco Ruiz Ramón’s *Paradigmas* (107-116). Regalado studies the importance of appearances and problems of representation (in Aparicio Maydeu I, 140-44). Calderón’s religious plays (*autos*)
As the medium of lack, bodily imagery creates a textual “body” with implications for the subject’s private, social, and moral outlook which remains unabated throughout the play. More than simply a changing phase in the development of the complete individual, the body seems to occupy a wider, more significant role over the material, economic, and sensual grounds upon which selfhood stakes its claims for completeness; specifically it remains throughout a key qualifying feature of male and female selfhood, Segismundo’s and Rosaura’s, without losing relevance as the play progresses to its close. The relevance of the body is somewhat at odds with Aylward’s modern critique contending a closed evolution that neatly ties together all loose ends, and with theological views like Bonaventure’s that see the body as a way station, omitting or making light of its significance at the end. This traditional approach predictably diminishes the body and enhances man’s spiritual agency, seemingly to avoid anachronism yet downplaying textual and contextual body imagery. Contrary to this view, Segismundo’s lack offers a first revealing trait of modern selfhood by emphasizing the body’s need for metaphorical food, a fact that ties intake to the acquisition of knowledge. Significantly, the body’s sustenance and survival begin and conclude the play, for Segismundo’s acquired wisdom guarantees the body’s integrity in the private and public spheres.

Similar to the needs of the hungry body, the sinner’s body is wracked by a lack that Segismundo evinces through the furs that cover him and Rosaura through the transgressing male clothes she wears. Both images express a sensual scarcity that places selfhood at odds with established, orthodox practices that denounce man’s animal sensuality and woman’s fallen desire. The body uncovers an irresolvable lack that is only temporarily relieved through Segismundo’s compromise of “good works” (buenas obras) and his decision to throw in jail the soldier that saved him. Good works, a Christian orthodoxy notion, acknowledges the body’s incapacity to survive by itself through the maze of institutional requirements, since a good Christian has to observe those works within established canonical practices and churches, while the jailed soldier episode entails locking up the very body that enables selfhood’s initial push towards freedom and integrity. Furthermore, if bodily desire is an image of Lacan’s unsolved and unsolvable “Real” (Žižek 1989: 47), the close of the play is Segismundo’s wakening reality. He regains consciousness and replaces the dream he abandoned with the symbolic order represented by his father’s kingdom and traditional gender- and marriage arrangements.

On the other hand the concept of “good works”, tied also to Bonaventure’s practice, carry psychological and economic weight related to Juan de Mariana’s definition of value as unveiling characteristically depict abstract and metaphysical categories through a flesh-and-body metamorphosis that, like the Catholic ritual of communion, makes religion sensual, as noted by Arellano in Calderón’s El Nuevo Hospicio de Pobres (14-15). The Bildungsroman approach focuses upon an evolving selfhood and entails scarcity of knowledge and power; thus LVES represents the evolution of Segismundo’s character through “pre-adolescence, adolescence, and young adulthood, each period being represented in one of the three jornadas,” while his schooling involves “the theological, the political, and the social” spheres, the latter of which includes honor and sexual desire (Aylward 340).

19 The triple way, based on the Trinity, leads the soul to purification, illumination, and perfection, or union with God, through the three methods of meditation, prayer, and contemplation (Bonaventure 30-39).
the disconnect between intrinsic and extrinsic values, which can potentially overturn society’s foundations. Segismundo’s value world shifts constantly between the spaces of the tower and the court, the real and the dream world, so that he is never sure whether his reality is “intrinsic” or “extrinsic.” Although in the end he assumes Basilio’s throne, thus intrinsically accepting his father’s world, he all the while recognizes the fluidity and confusion between the two. Moreover, while Mariana resorts to scripture in order to find a trustworthy economic specimen that will offer at least hope towards an economically stable republic, Segismundo’s “specimen” of value remains the problematic and doubt-ridden praxis of good works or “obrar bien” ‘doing good’, which, although falling within the purview of Christian orthodoxy, undergoes a pragmatic reinterpretation that suggests the weakened discursive order characteristic of playing, or betting. A negotiated subject, Segismundo is praxis and end-product of orthodox sin and the modern sin of confusion or doubt, the latter linked to economic instability and cultural malaise variously attributed to America’s flow of bullion, Spain’s decline in Europe, and other scientific and philosophical advances not fully benefiting the peninsula.

In terms of narrative, lack in this play and the comedia genre in general defines character. Male and female characters start out from a position of instability and loss, a fundamental vacuum that moves them, triggering them to act. By and large literature, regardless of genre, presupposes characters that have lost something they wished to fulfill or get back. Don Quixote loses his mind and yearns for a long-gone, perhaps never-existing, age of chivalry; the protagonist of Lazarillo de Tormes lacks money, food, and a social position that once obtained he wishes to keep by fulfilling his protector’s desires; Luis de Granada’s sinner has lost God’s grace and favor and is heavily invested upon making personal retribution in order to recoup his spiritual loss. This discursive sense of lack, pervasive in early modern Spain, infects the concepts of empire and nation that in material-economic terms begin to be conceived in decline, lacking, as it were. Psychological lack is on a par with the economic underperformance of nation and empire and partly explains, by the way, the legions of arbitristas, economic and social reformers that come forward with serious and not-so-serious proposals designed to stop the many holes that drain the homeland and weaken the citizenry, dreaming of every possible measure to staunch the bleeding.

The characters’ deficit of honor, a fundamental trigger in the comedia genre, is a lack experienced by men and women on stage, and each play points out ways to recover it in order to

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20 Aristotle: “Tragedy is a mimesis not of people but of actions and life… it is… for the sake of their actions that character is included.” Interpreting this quote from Poetics, Halliwell explains that the human subjects of drama are “agents” (Greek prattontes), which “implies that the fabric of tragedy, or indeed of all poetry, is the representation of human purpose striving for realization” (138-140).


solve the characters’ dilemma of emptiness, hollowness, or incompleteness. What seems to defeat the purpose of the comedia—what by the way may have contributed to its decline especially in Calderón’s age—is that the solution, in the end, fails to offer hope or true fulfillment, since the recuperation of honor becomes a foregone conclusion, a closed and sealed result that renders hollow the rhetorical and structural practices of Spanish theater no longer able to pass as novelties. Another reason is the separation between the comedia’s conservative goals as defender and preserver of honor and the purportedly loose morals of the Spanish populace and court, which together would conspire to leave literary canons behind. That is, since the comedia’s notion of honor feels archaic, the lacking text becomes a feature of modernity, modernity appears as broken or maladjusted time, and honor a rhetorical and nostalgic excuse.

In other words, if one of the avowed conservative goals of the comedia consists of its exemplarity, we attend to a hollow example: the tradition of honor no longer in place, if it ever was, characters who suffer lack become paradoxical. Their purported sins have ceased to be founded upon traditional or ideal values in the face of a new type of circumstantial or material honor that is now defined by economic crisis and social decline. Ideal and traditional honor, non-existent except as literary fare, recovers a mirror-like or capitalist existence by a theater commerce that stages the nostalgic desire of nobles and masses that pay real money in order to regain their lost ideal, a mirage that nonetheless moves them. This is how capitalist theater reproduces the past but only as staged loss. It stages a positive existence of lack as a place where nostalgic and modern desire are realized. Yet it is not a theatrically false reality, for theater has become by now a capitalist endeavor and therefore “intrinsically” real.

23 The figure of King Phillip IV, a contradiction of devotion and guilt, is but one example of courtly and royal power sins or flaws. In a 1656 letter addressed to María de Jesús de Ágreda, his confidant, the king says: “Bien conozco que todos nuestros trabajos vienen por nuestros pecados, y particularmente por los míos, y lo que más me conduce es que por ellos esté tan a riesgo de padecer la religión católica en todas partes” ‘I well know that all of our labors come because of our sins, and especially mine, and what pains me the most is that because of them the Catholic religion may be at risk to suffer everywhere’ (Ágreda 212, 45). Benassar notes the Spaniards’ tendency to avoid certain types of work, their “passion for service”, countless holidays, and limited work hours, all of which limited their ability to compete economically (102-104). Francisco de Quevedo’s intense attacks do not prove the loose morals of contemporary Spain, only the sense of her moral decline. For a standard defense of Spanish society, see Sánchez de Toca (139-149).

24 This argument complements Américo Castro’s in De la Edad Conflictiva, Taurus, 1972, where the cause of Spain’s malaise is attached to socio-economic and psychological obsessions having to do with anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim caste conflict, and to the forced but false idea of the unchanging or eternal Spaniard defined by the purity of his old Christian blood (67-87).
Scarcity calls attention to material and economic layers in literature. The economic sphere at any rate can be used as a general frame in which to inscribe abstract and cultural notions like honor, love, freedom, or agency. Strictly economic or materialistic language can be traced if we train our eye upon the issues of class that preoccupy the rebel soldiers in the last act (lines 2227-2305), where their avowed desire to have a “natural” and not a foreign prince cannot hide other conflicting desires: their rejection of a “tyrant” (line 2300) and inadvertent wish to elevate Clarín, a low-class buffoon, to the category of prince, however “hollow” (line 2267: “príncipe huero”). There is, however, one passage in which economics frames the old and new, where the medieval tradition undergoes a rhetorical negotiation with the modern practice of the comedia. This occurs when Rosaura, an empowered and crossed-dressed female, first encounters Segismundo. Occupying a higher hierarchy over an imprisoned though potentially dangerous and violent man, she obtains a measure of consolation (consuelo) from her unhappy state (desdichado) and “poverty” of honor upon seeing the jailed prince, who can cure his own lack by looking at Rosaura’s pain (penas):

Sólo diré que a esta parte / hoy el cielo me ha guiado
para habermme consolado; / si consuelo puede ser,
del que es desdichado, ver / a otro que es más desdichado.
Cuentan de un sabio que, un día, / tan pobre y miserable estaba
que sólo se sustentaba / de unas yerbas que comía.
¿Habrá otro, entre sí decía, / más pobre y triste que yo?
Y, cuando el rostro volvió, / halló la respuesta, viendo
que iba otro sabio cogiendo / las hojas que él arrojó.
Quejoso de la fortuna, / yo en este mundo vivía,
y cuando entre mí decía: / “¿habrá otra persona alguna
de suerte más importuna?” / piadoso me has respondido,
pues, volviendo en mi sentido, / hallo que las penas mías,
para hacerlas tú alegrotas, / las hubieras recogido.
Y por si acaso mis penas / pueden aliviarte en parte,
óyelas atento y toma / las que dellas me sobraren.” (lines 247-276).

I will only say that today Heaven guided me to these parts in order to console me, if it is consolation when an unfortunate sees another more wretched. People tell of a wise man that was so poor and miserable that he could only live on the grass he ate. He said to himself: “Can there be another one poorer and sadder than I?” And when he turned his face he found the answer, seeing another man picking up the leaves he was throwing away. I was living in this world complaining against fortune, and as I was saying to myself, “Can there be another person of more wretched luck?” you have answered full of pity, and now, regaining my senses, I find that you would have picked up my pains in order to turn them into happy
things. And just so that my pains might partially make you better, listen and take whatever of them I have left over.

This passage recuperates an old story from the medieval literature of exemplarity in Juan Manuel’s *El Conde Lucanor (ECL)*, example X: “De lo que aconteció a un omne que por pobreza et mengua de otra vianda comía atramuzes” ‘What happened to a man that because of poverty and lack of other food had to eat lupin’

In the story two rich men become poor and are reduced to eating grass. Lamenting his poverty as he eats and discards the leftover grass, one of them notices the poorer man picking up and eating his leftovers. Upon seeing this he takes heart, his despondency somewhat cured, and eventually manages to become rich again.

Juan Manuel’s example reads partially as follows:

[...]

Et quando aquello vio el que comía los atramizes, preguntó a aquel que comía las cortezas que por qué fazía aquello. Et él dixo que sopiese que fuera muy más rico que él, et que agora avía llegado a tan grand pobreza et en tan grand fanbre quel plazía mucho quando fallava aquellas cortezas que él dexava. Et quando esto vio el que comía los atramizes, conortóse, pues entendió que otro avía más pobre que él, et que avía menos razón porque lo devíe seer. Et con este conorte, esforçósse et ayudol Dios, et cató manera en cómo saliesse de aquella pobreza, et salió della et fue muy bien andante.

[...]

*Por pobreza nunca desmayedes, / pues otros más pobres que vos ve[r]edes. (Don Juan Manuel 92-95).*

[...] of these two men, one ended up in such poverty that nothing was left for him to eat. And though he did much to look for something he might eat, he could not get anything other than a little dish of lupin-seeds. And remembering when he was rich and how he used to be, and on the fact that hunger and poverty [con fambre et con mengua] were forcing him to eat these seeds, which have such a bitter and unpleasant taste, he began to weep copiously [muy fieramente]; nevertheless, because of his great hunger, he began to eat the seeds, and as he ate, he wept and threw the pods behind him. And while he was in this sorry and
dejected state [en este pesar et en esta coyta], he realized that someone else was behind him, and he turned round and saw a man close to him, eating the pods which he was throwing away, and it was the man I mentioned earlier.

When the man eating the seeds saw this, he asked the man eating the pods why he was doing it. The latter replied that he had been by far the richer of the two, but had now sunk into such great poverty and hunger [grand pobreza, grand fambre] that he was delighted [quel plazía mucho] to find the pods which the other man was discarding. And when the man eating the seeds saw this, he took heart [conortóse], because he understood that there was somebody poorer than himself, and who had less reason to be so. Thus encouraged [Et con este conorte], he made great efforts, and with God’s help he sought a way of escaping from his poverty, succeeded in doing so, and prospered.

[...] Never let poverty make you despair, / for you will always find others poorer than you (Juan Manuel 80-83).

In both versions scarcity appears central, becoming respectively Rosaura’s pain or mental anguish caused by her loss of honor and a man’s hunger and poverty. Economic content, openly present in the earlier, medieval version, occupies a higher level and brings attention to the material and spiritual consequences springing from loss of wealth. The resulting poverty translates primarily into bodily lack, causing the hunger that drives the man to subhuman abjection. As part of the overall message of Juan Manuel’s exempla, the story showcases the dangers of wasteful spending and the author’s lordly, class worries that tie wealth and nobility together. This is not the case in Calderón’s version, for the comparison involves two wise men suffering from poverty and hunger, ignoring how they came to that position, whereas the earlier example pairs up two rich men who have lost their riches, in effect, their status in the world.

Rosaura, too, has lost social status and honor, becoming damaged goods and unable therefore to marry Astolfo, the noble seducer who then rejects her on account of her belonging, or so he thinks, to a lower class. What she gains by her loss, ironically, is an excess of pains, so much so that she offers Segismundo the leftovers she cannot use: “And just so that my pains might partially make you better, listen and take whatever of them I have left over.” The resulting spiritual exchange of consolation begins with a material lack that Calderón’s reworked, medieval example locates in poverty and hunger, the sustenance of the body, and that the play’s characters find in the loss of human dignity and honor, the social and psychological status of selfhood. In other words psychological lack, though materially based, is erected as the concept that allows the rhetorical exchange to occur in a negative economy made up of products of pain and loss.

25 I have changed somewhat John England’s translation, especially at the beginning.

26 See Don Juan Manuel (vii-x). Hunger and the lacking body also play a significant role in other examples: V (the fox, the crow, and the piece of cheese), XII (the hungry fox and the rooster), XVII (the hungry man who gets invited to eat), XXII (the lion and the bull), XXIII (the work of the ants), and XLIX (the man thrown naked in an island). Diz discusses some of the open or implied material worries of Juan Manuel’s “aristocratic ideology” (75-82).
Negative, because it functions in terms of loss and dispossession and because it understands selfhood as lacking and desiring to cure itself through an ironic exchange of losses with others just as needful: the mechanism of consolation\textsuperscript{27}.

This psychic economy sees lack and the pains it causes as the common component that allows men to console one another through the spectacle of their mutual misfortunes, a series of dispossession expressed through the language of pain, tears, anguish, and desperation dependent upon such time- and cultural-specific themes as honor, fame, virginity, or freedom. One could argue that material and psychological dispossession stands for the accidents or failures than in Lacan’s system reveal the concept of the “real,” the inexpressible and traumatic void of death and enjoyment that Stravrakakis defines as follows, “the real is revealed (through its effects) in our encounter with death, failure, accident, void; in our encounter with lack […] the real is the domain of the inexpressible, the domain of death and inexpressible enjoyment (jouissance)” (3). Lack reveals the traumatic dispossess of selfhood, allowing nonetheless the psychological exchange of consolation and the nostalgic satisfaction of theater. But the void it also expresses remains. Lack expresses the void that attempts impossibly to define selfhood.

In Juan Manuel’s, exemplum we see that the transaction, although benefitting both parties, does so unevenly. The man eating the atramuzes gets consolation upon seeing a hungrier, more wretched man, who in turn gets the satisfaction of his own hunger by eating the leftovers. The first one gets primarily the psychological benefit of consolation and the other a bodily good, the food to assuage his body’s needs. The first man eats, too, but his eating does not imply the lessening of his psychic need, while the second man is “delighted” by the discarded pods, without feeling the need to “weep” at his abjection. The first man obtains the consolation to ease his mental pains until he sees the second one. Yet the pain of loss or lack (mengua, coyta) continues to be attached to material goods and bodily needs even with the first man, now the richer of the two because he at least possesses the lupin. We must bear in mind that consolation does not entirely cure pain or replenish material loss. Poverty and hunger remain, but the pain of loss is partially cured by the relationship of exchange, the commerce of consolation that consists in the spectacle of the suffering other. The exchange involves things immaterial to the giver but material to the receiver: the first man does not think of the pods as food but the second one does, and the latter does not see himself as a spectacle of degradation (since he does not weep, demonstrating not shame but delight in consuming the pods) while the first man scorn the spectacle.

It is worthwhile stressing that Calderón’s and Juan Manuel’s versions show differences that characterize the more material focus of the latter versus the honor-driven and existential impetus of the former\textsuperscript{28}. In Calderón wisdom appears as a trait of both men, something missing

\textsuperscript{27}Boethius’s medieval work \textit{The Consolation of Philosophy} features a “sick man” complaining of his fate, consoled by an allegorical Lady Philosophy who chases away the Muses of poetry for feeding him “poisonous sweets” instead of remedies (Adams 114-115). The first Spanish translation, Alberto de Aguayo’s \textit{Consolacion de la philosophia}, was published in Seville in 1518, with four editions by 1542 (Briesemeister 66).

\textsuperscript{28}Calderón’s play \textit{El Conde Lucanor} has nothing to do with Juan Manuel’s fictitious character. A typical comedia, we find in it a noble woman, Rosimunda, who must choose to marry from among three suitors; the chosen one
from Juan Manuel where they are described as having been rich but not wise. Wisdom at most may be implied, but the implication is far from clear. Naturally the medieval example, a larger prose work belonging in a different genre, contains details impossible to replicate in the play. The man eating the *atramuzes* is racked with physical and mental pain, hunger (*fambre*) and lack (*mengua*) that cause him to “cry most ferociously” ‘llorar muy fieramente’ and eat while “being in a state of pain and suffering” ‘estando en este pesar et en esta coyta’. Such level of detail contrasts with Calderón’s play where one single *décima* lays out the whole story, assigning to Rosaura, by context, the pain, tears, and desperation shown by the hungry man. In fact desperation is one of Rosaura’s traits throughout, most noticeable perhaps in her exchange with Clotaldo in the last act (lines. 2630 ff.), which she sums up by saying, “Todo mi honor lo atropella” ‘My [lack of] honor tramples on everything’ (line 2637). Her experiences fill out the skeletal, brief example, and suggest a change of focus from the bodily needs of Juan Manuel’s story to the transcendental but historical category of Calderón’s honor, which cannot be extricated from its economic grounding: Rosaura’s ‘*agravio*’ ‘shame’, a depleted honor, leaves her a lacking feminine subject who lost the metaphorical riches of her maidenhood as well as the economic status that virginity and marriage can produce.

The relationship between these two deficient characters functions through the psychology of mutual consolation, related to the Christian ideas of the body both as a private economy and holy space. These two opposing but connected ideas are expressed by Covarrubias:

> Aliviar la pena y el dolor y el consolar al pobre es hacerle limosna, la cual a veces por esta causa se llama *consolación*.

To alleviate suffering and pain; to console the poor is to give them alms; because of this alms are called sometimes *consolation*.

In Juan Manuel example the verb *conortar* is used synonymously, and Covarrubias’ definition states:

> Animar a uno amonestándole y dándole consejos sanos y buenos. *Conhortarse*, consolarse un hombre a sí mismo, buscando razones para no tener por tan pesado su trabajo… de *con y hortor, aris*.

To encourage someone by admonishing and giving him good and sound advice. *Conhortarse*, to console oneself by looking for reasons so as not to feel one’s work too heavy… from *con* and *hortor, aris*.

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must first rescue her father Federico, duke of Toscana, from the clutches of Tolomeo, Egypt’s sultan. Count Lucanor, who represents the discreet courtier, rescues the old duke and marries Rosimunda; the other suitors are Astolfo, representing the proud warrior, and Casimiro, the good-looking but vain sophisticate. The play does open with similar motifs: Federico is in jail along with a wild woman covered in furs, the witch Irifela who predicted Tolomeo’s future imprisonment (*Spanish Comedies*, vol. 1).
Consolar and conortar imply an action taken in order to encourage someone missing part of his soul or pleasure, to give him ánima (soul) or ánimo (encouragement). These meanings require the presence of one other person, as indicated by their transitivity and the preposition con, Latin cum (with), incorporated in the verb. This someone other must come in contact with the lacking self in order to complete him. On the other hand, in the religious acceptation of Covarrubias, consolación means “limosna” ‘alms’ given to the poor, on the surface a one-way transaction benefiting only the alms-receiver, whereas in Juan Manuel clearly a two-way exchange takes place: the poorer man gets his alms or consolation (the first man’s leftovers), while the first man obtains spiritual consolation upon seeing the other’s deeper poverty and more wretched condition. Consolation in the form of spiritual or material alms may help the Christian giver, who in the context of “good works” might expect the benefit of time off in Purgatory.

In the larger plot structure of LVES Rosaura seems to begin at the bottom of a social order ruled by the discursive notion of honor. She has nonetheless discarded the female dress that limited her movements and actions, and roams free, though fallen, in the wild, mounted upon a metaphorical hippogryph. Hence when she appears on stage she occupies a higher, more exalted status than Segismundo, who lacks what she possesses, namely freedom, agency, and movement. She is the richer man and Segismundo the poor other whose contemplation will bring about her consolation. The psychological lack that both suffer, however, is not merely imaginary non-completion. For in losing her honor by Astolfo’s seduction she also lost the social status and economic benefits accorded the wife of a prince of Muscovy, while Segismundo’s prison incapacitates him to act out his desires. Rosaura willingly offers consolation by recounting her suffering (a tale cut short by Clotaldo’s arrival) and, unwillingly, as a problematic other, one composite of man and woman, a hybrid monster that fascinates Segismundo and awakens his erotic desire.

Juan Manuel’s consolation may have strictly economical, caste-based meaning, for poverty and hunger are discursive tools to teach a lesson to the noble class and to console it in its purported lack. The exemplary, rhetorical hyperbole of hunger and poverty is designed to learn from the ills of the poor and unfortunate, and in LVES from a fallen subject (Rosaura’s case) who lost a key piece of her identity and wholesomeness and now requires a measure of satisfaction from a representative of her oppressors, that is, Segismundo as man. The example is hyperbolic because, although Count Lucanor (perhaps Juan Manuel’s voice) declares himself to be poor in the narrative frame, requiring his adviser and storyteller Patronio to unfold the example, we can hardly draw any comparison between the count and the poor men in the narrative who are forced to resort to animal fodder in order to survive. When the count says, “algunas vegadas me contese de estar tan afinado de pobreza que me paresce que quer[r]ía tanto la muerte como la vida,”[sometimes it happens I am so pressed eith poverty that it seems I would want death as much as life], we are not to draw the literal conclusion that the depth of his poverty makes him want to die. Rather, we see it as a rhetorical move emitted from a position of discursive power, using the body of the hungry poor in order to self-teach and learn from it. Hyperbole and exemplarity lead to identification with the lower stratum of materiality, the other’s hungry body, as well as the value it holds as source of pedagogical lessons for those in power.
Besides such socio-economic content, consolation entails a psychological economy through the sensual and intellectual components of vision and imagination enabling a mechanism of exchange that benefits both fallen figures and allows them to begin to fill out their empty selfhoods. Upon seeing Segismundo’s pain, Rosaura recovers her wits, or lost senses, “volviendo en mi sentido” (line 269), and like Juan Manuel’s poor man, she thenceforward persists in the process of helping herself in order to achieve what she desires: the cure of her lost honor and therefore the completion of her lacking persona. Seemingly a purely metaphysical exchange, Rosaura’s consolatory commerce never abandons the body as the locus and cause of her misery. Her sexual initiation was a bodily experience, and its present consequence is her hermaphroditic dress that continues to show her body as a problematic monster whose vision, in turn, allows Segismundo’s discovery of his sensual drives, a sleeping jouissance or scarcity that he satisfies upon looking at her.

The play reprises vision and poetry, content and form, from traditional cancionero Spanish poetry, a fact that further approximates Golden Age and medieval literature and blurs each period’s divisionary borders. Segismundo states upon seeing Rosaura:

tú solo, tú, has suspendido / la pasión a mis enojos,
la suspensión a mis ojos, / la admiración al oído.
Con cada vez que te veo, / nueva admiración me das (lines 219-224).

You only and only you have caused to reel the passion of my anger and the admiration of my eyes and of my ears. Every time I see you, you renew my admiration.

The language of cancionero demonstrates an intricate link with the comedia in thematic and formulaic terms, for in both we encounter the fuzzy lines resulting from sexual, erotic or same-sex themes as well as the so-called “conceptual” expression involving fairly complex poetic conceits. Segismundo’s speech to Rosaura, seemingly a man, suggests just such homosocial tension, typical of the comedia and indeed of Spanish literature, as attested for example in the ballad of the damsel warrior. This fact places Calderón’s prince astride a constantly renewed

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29 A typical preoccupation with sight and love can be found in love poetry before the sixteenth century, for example in this fifteenth-century canción: “Quien tanto veros dessea, / señora, sin conoceros, / ¿qué hará después que os vea, / cuando no pudiere veros?” [He who so wishes to see you, lady, without knowing you, what will he do, having seen you, when he cannot see you?] (Manrique 126-127).

30 Sedgwick’s homosocial desire (21-22) is based upon René Girard’s bond of “rivalry,” also applicable to the comedia, but the latter has the additional feature of misunderstanding appearances (Segismundo not knowing Rosaura is a woman) that allow potential “homosexual” tensions as borne out in this episode.

31 The ballad begins, “Estaba un día un buen viejo” [Once there was an old man]. This old man, the father of seven daughters, curses his wife for not giving him any sons, whereupon the youngest daughter changes her name to “Don Martinos,” dresses like a warrior and goes to war, where the king’s son, suspecting the truth, falls in love with her (Romanciero 313-15).
tradition: a jailed, befuddled selfhood sees his dormant instincts wake up thanks to the fashioning energy behind the rhetorical figures of the monstrous wild man or the hybrid cross-dressed female. If these sexual tensions and attendant potentialities for shaping character are true, Segismundo’s lack goes beyond his expressed loss and pain, affecting his very notion of sexuality. In so far as Segismundo expresses *cancionero* themes and conceits, he recuperates a problematic and literary tradition that diminishes the canon by exposing its cracks as poetic lack.

On the other hand vision becomes spectacle, a consolatory *and* commercial theater that reaffirms the preponderance of the senses, that is, of the material grounding that threads together Juan Manuel’s noble man’s lost wealth, social status, and hungry stomach, and Calderón scarcity-wrecked selfhoods of Segismundo and Rosaura. The first one faces the overwhelming lack of imprisonment and bestial existence while the second must confront the sexual politics that led to her discovery of lack, the violation of a prior, virginal self-sufficiency by Astolfo’s phallus-like will. This latter she needs to regain in order to reclaim her honor while compensating for the loss through her male clothes. Phrased another way, vision and spectacle complement the exemplarity and theater of the suffering body, which functions as a primal epistemological axis that grounds the self on the level of the sensual and material. This lacking body, as container and double of selfhood, will undergo a measure of fulfillment and molding as the play progresses but will remain nonetheless paramount in determining Rosaura’s and Segismundo’s mature traits until the end. In Segismundo’s case, the body symbolically transfers upon the imprisoned soldier, who then carries the suffering body that the prince has managed to overcome or hide behind his newly-acquired courtly power.

Sin as lack: man as animal

Just as in Juan Manuel’s example, where lack, *mengua*, causes excruciating pain, hunger, and tears, leading to a learning experience that is the jumping-off point for narrative construction and discovery of selfhood, in *La Vida Es Sueño* sin, and the lack that defines it, finds in the rhetorical body the locus from which selfhood begins to map out its outlines, limitations, and possibilities. To sin, “to err” or “miss the mark,” is a bodily fault that can be remitted through indulgences as in *Lazarillo*, with good works in the case of Segismundo, or in Rosaura’s case, the sacrament of marriage. However, before Segismundo considers the quandary that the notion of good works presents to him, his initial inquisitiveness belongs to an Adam-like figure whose main and atypical trait is the ignorance of his sin. As a wild man, he is allegorical sin mysteriously tossed in the dank prison of despair caused by his ignorance or, worse, the assigned guilt he does not understand or deserve. As Adam, he occupies an orthodox position, but as an ignorant and despairing wild man he represents the lack and figure of modernity.

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32 Don W. Cruickshank considers Segismundo’s refusal to pardon the soldier his first error; he escapes one prison but enters “another, the one which confines every adult” (Frederick de Armas, *The Prince in the Tower*, 74).
If his father Basilio, then, is a God-like figure, the law of the father who rules the kingdom and has built the tower and decreed his son’s imprisonment, Segismundo replaces Adam, although his original sin, atypically, is not the direct transgression of the father’s command but the threat that his existence-as-son promises to his father, his kingdom and rule. Nonetheless the doctrine of original sin lacks consistency even in orthodox tradition, and Segismundo’s purported ignorance may simply prove that after all he is not the figure of Adam (as he is not in reality), but simply a man whose ignorant despair caused by his not knowing, weakness, and lust springs from the evils that Adam’s original disobedience unleashed upon humanity. Some of these medieval, doctrinal tenets are in full display in King Alfonso X’s *Libro del fuero de las leyes* [Book of the right of laws], which blames present evils upon original sin. Adam’s sin “begat two evils:” “of guilt” and “of penalty,” where the former includes original sin, cured by the sacrament of baptism; mortal sin, healed by penitence, and venial sin, cured by extreme unction at the time of death. In turn, the evil of penalty comprises the following four evils: “not knowing” (*no saber*), cured by ordination or induction to priesthood; “weakness of will” (*flaqueza de voluntad*) in resisting the devil’s temptations, cured with the sacrament of confirmation that affords Christians “the force to keep from sinning;” carnal lust (*codicia carnal*), cured with matrimony, and the “innate evil of humankind (*maldad innata del ser humano*)”, reined in with the antidote of communion” (Craddock 4).

In our literary examples, missing or wandering off (the literal meaning of “to err”) applies to Rosaura as the fallen woman who has succumbed to carnal appetite and to Segismundo, ignorant or unable to know the path he ought to take so as not to wander off into lust or violence, as he does in the first two acts. As sinners they are both represented in appropriate attire and circumstances. Rosaura wears a man’s clothes and mounts a fallen horse turned into a monstrous hippogryph (Maurin 162) while Segismundo, a beastlike creature covered in furs, is, as a wild man and a monster, the very figure of sin. Craddock explains that Alfonso’s laws do not quite match the seven mortal sins with its respective sacramental remedies, a fact that would later be codified and corrected more strictly. Much later the Tridentine Counter-Reformation would try to accord doctrine a solid canonical foundation, a task that involves harmonizing the diffuseness of sacred text, trying to establish ground interpretive rules to wall text in and leading it into the power discourses of doctrine. Some of the Tridentine views accord with Alfonso’s laws because both follow biblical sources and established Catholic custom. For example, Trent’s “Decree concerning original sin” establishes that Adam “transgressed the commandment of God in paradise,” which provoked God’s “wrath” and caused Adam’s death, the “captivity” under “the empire of death, that is to say, the devil.” Furthermore this transgression injured “his posterity,” causing the loss of “holiness and justice” for humankind. However, through the sacrament of baptism “the guilt of original sin is remitted” (*Canons* 23).

The conflict of sin makes selfhood aware of its limitations and mindful of compromise. Rosaura’s lust and, more clearly, Segismundo’s ignorance, wrath, and lust escape canonical definitions and thereby reveal additional fissures that further confuse each other’s notions of selfhood. Rosaura and Segismundo are products of sin, a lack that predates them and affects their ancestors. And simultaneous with the transfer of the parents’ faults onto their children, the symbolic order of the father affects them too, potentially benefitting the selfhood of fictional
characters who end up adopting the very patriarchal law that once oppressed them and which now dooms them to recreate the inexpressible lack of death and erotic desire that survive across generations. The ensuing negotiation produces lacking selfhoods aware of their existential and social limitations, of their bestial component and the fundamental ignorance that defines them.

At the beginning this metaphorically lacking animal openly misbehaves to prove his/her despair, ultimately undergoing a taming of the passions and maturity of control, not so much because s/he is sure about what he does, but because he bets on “good works” just in case. This fact, along with the stressing of categories such as crime, law, justice, and reason, intensify the secular weight over the play. Crime (delito) in the play emerges as a modernized version of orthodox, original sin and involves a crisscrossing of philosophical, existential, and political spheres apparent throughout, as summarized by Segismundo’s soliloquy in the first act. His complaint addresses the heavens (cielos) and the personifications of the principles of law, justice, or reason (167: “ley, justicia, o razón”), which are placed opposite a neuter God (Dios) who grants things and animals the privilege of freedom (libertad) yet allows justice to keep it beyond human reach:

¿No nacieron los demás? / Pues si los demás nacieron,
¿qué privilegios tuvieron / que yo no gocé jamás?
Nace el ave y… / …las etérea salas / corta con velocidad…
¿y teniendo yo más alma / tengo menos libertad?
Nace el bruto y… / la humana necesidad
le enseña a tener crudedad, / monstruo de su laberinto,
¿y yo, con mejor instinto, / tengo menos libertad?
Nace el pez… / … y … / a todas partes gira,
midiendo la inmensidad… / como le da el centro frío,
¿y yo, con más albedrío, / tengo menos libertad?
Nace el arroyo… / … y … / le dan con majestad
el campo abierto a su huida, / ¿y teniendo yo más vida
tengo menos libertad? / … ¿Qué ley, justicia, o razón
negar a los hombres sabe / privilegio tan suave,
excepción tan principal, / que Dios le ha dado a un cristal,
a un pez, a un bruto y a un ave? (119-172).

Were not all things born? Well, if all things were born, what privileges did they enjoy that I never did? The bird is born and… cuts speedily across ethereal space… and I, having more soul, have less freedom? The brute beast is born and… human need teaches him cruelty, a monster in his labyrinth. And I, with better instinct, have less freedom? The fish is born… and … swerves everywhere, measuring the immensity… given by the cold center [of the ocean], and I, with more free will, have less freedom? The creek is born… and… with great majesty opens up the field for its flight, and I, having more life, have less freedom? …What law, justice, or reason knows how to deny men such sweet privilege, such major exception, that God gave to crystal water, fish, brute, and bird?
God grants freedom to animate and inanimate things as well as man. But beside or underneath God there remains a law that affects man only and denies him God’s gift of freedom. Segismundo’s ignorance and despair, understood as narrative strategies, update the old motif of the split between body and soul against which Catholic dogma warns the sinner. Luis de Granada states, “el hombre no es ánima sola, ni cuerpo solo, sino cuerpo y ánima juntamente, porque el ánima sola sin el cuerpo no hace hombre perfecto, y el cuerpo sin el ánima no es más que un muladar de gusanos” (Guía 223) [man is not only soul or only body, but body and soul together, because the soul alone without the body does not make a perfect man, and a body without soul is nothing but a sewer of worms]. The old struggle between body and soul shows Segismundo’s humanity still fighting beastly desire and soul’s ignorant reason. Segismundo in the tower is a beastly man outside society and outside the natural world with which he draws those animal comparisons. In addition, his theatrical animal features are agentive: harbingers of a rebellion that is to achieve full-blown status later in the play. The fur and sins that characterize him, lust, murder, pride, disobedience, and rebellion, are expressions of lack that shape his character and the type of freedom he is to acquire. Freedom, however, remains a conflictive notion because of the analogies proposed. Bird, brute, fish, and brook share the strictly human concept of freedom expressed negatively as lack, since Segismundo does not have it, which is contrasted with his excess or oversupply of soul, instinct, free will, and life (más alma, mejor instinto, más albedrío, más vida). The potentialities of his soul are excessive but contradicted by his bodily chains, while his body, which ought to share with inanimate and animate things freedom of movement, rebels against this diminution. In short, lack reveals human limitations and excess; it is both the language of dispossession and oversupply.

The double metaphor of the river and the snake combines human and natural forces that further confuse the notion of liberty. The added layers of the snake’s biblical echoes and the river’s wild force increase the hybrid complexity of the prince, a half-man and half-beast. Moreover, his predicted escape from the cave, like a new Minotaur, man and brute, emphasizes the conflation of human and natural components, a mythical logic that, blending human form and bestial-fantastic imagery, leads to the pairing of vigil and dream as opposed but complementary orders within which abstract categories acquire their meaning: soul, instinct, free will, life, and freedom mean something only through the sift of contextual layers that include fundamentally natural and human forces, the lack of them, and the mythical values that drive the play and help define the characters’ selfhoods.

On the other hand, if we read Segismundo’s fault as a crime rather than a sin, the argument move us from the strictly religious into the secular plane and a theory of the state, not the least because his learning experience (obtained by the way as a result of his lack: faults or crimes) consists chiefly of mastering himself and thus be able to take advantage of what fortune may provide—either the meta-theatrical pseudo-dream in Basilio’s palace or the real dream, the

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33The phrase zoon politikon, zoon and polis, man’s animal and social components, goes back to Aristotle’s Politics I, 2, 1253; cited and commented by Labarrière, 114-20, 230-31, who states that “Western metaphysics” is organized on the difference between man and animal and upon language as proof of man’s reason. Descartes, in a letter to Morus, states, “language (la parole) is the unique sign and the only assured mark of the thought hidden and enclosed in the body.” Man has logos whereas animals have only phônê, voice (85).
one come true and brought about by the storming of the rebel soldiers in the third act. The first
dream ends in defeat: the prince cannot master himself and consequently gets thrown back in the
tower, to reflect again upon the need for self-control just in case the dream happens to be true.
And by the time his second upward reversal comes along in the third act, he ponders on it calmly
after a sudden twitch of intemperance: instead of striking Clotaldo he lets him go to join his
father’s army. Finally, having managed to correct his secular faults, or crimes, he is able to gain
the self-control that leads to the possession of his kingdom.

These tensions alone, however, do not explain Segismundo’s behavior and character
development, for he partakes of a traditionally Christian discourse and the historical,
contemporary one where Spain is immersed. As noted before, Segismundo’s fur-covered body
repeats the motif of the wild man, in turn a metaphor of sin, vice, or desire, as in Diego de San
Pedro’s Cárcel de Amor, where the chained lover is led off by a wild man covered in furs, the
allegorical figure of desire. On the other hand Spain’s history of crisis and confusion in the
seventeenth century has thrown Catholic dogma off balance. Social and economic changes,
designed to regain a balanced republic in the face of monetary debasements and war spending,
have repercussions upon the makeup and fashioning of selfhood. Hence prince Segismundo’s
double figure: symbol of sin or vice as well as a historically restricted self under critical pressure
from within and without, not unlike other literary figures of social conflict like Lazarillo or
Andrenio, the protagonist of Baltasar Gracián’s El Criticón.

Christian discourse, the first component, typifies early modern Spanish literature, and
Calderón’s work continues this centuries-old trend. At the turn of the sixteenth-century, for
example, Hernando del Castillo publishes Cancionero General, where we find Francisco del
Castillo’s “Dialogue between human misery and Consolation” (Diálogo entre la miseria humana
y el Consuelo). Man, represented by human misery, complains of his fate and suffering while
Consolation, the voice of orthodox discourse, advises him not to let himself be driven to despair.
Consolation’s Christian rationale corrects man’s confusion as well as his battle between desire
and reason: all things were created to serve man but he suffers on account of original sin. The
dialogue is a short allegorical piece, much like the longer allegorical plays (autos) that Calderón
would write more than a hundred years later. “Human misery” says:

> Cuando pienso que nací / yo, humano y frágil natura
> combatida, / no sé qué será de mí / con tanta desventura
> en esta vida. / Siempre me persiguen penas
> y congoxas y tormentos / y pasiones… //
> Lloro, río, gimo, y canto; / huyo, espero, temo y oso / lo que dudo… (Castillo 439-441).

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34 Some of the wild man’s characteristics are identical with those attributed to the American “savage” and go back
to classical times: they are cannibals and violent, eat raw meat, abduct children, and cannot speak (Husband 1-3,
65 ff.). See Mandeville’s Travels, 140-148, and footnote 2 on the medieval “popular demand for monsters”. In this
context Segismundo is the starting alterity that forms the basis for the construction of Spanish selfhood.

35 Daniel L. Heiple views the play as “accepting the pessimism of disillusionment” but advocating “a heroic action in
face of defeat and futility” (De Armas, The Prince in the Tower 131).
Si algún deleite tiene / mi natura fatigada / en esta vida,
de triste causa le viene, / después de necessitada, / socorrida.
Hambre es causa del sabor / que deleita al apetito / al comer;
remedio a sed y calor: / primero siento conflito / que placer. (442).

When I reflect that I was born of human, frail, beaten-down nature, I do not know what will happen to me, with so much misfortune in my life. Pains and dejection, torments and passions are always dogging me. I cry, laugh, moan, and sing. I flee, wait, fear, and dare what I doubt. If my fatigued nature finds any delight, it comes from a sad cause, for nature is helped after being in need: hunger is the cause of the flavor that delights appetite when one eats; it is the remedy to thirst and heat; first I experience conflict, and then delight.

Scarcity, or need, is bound up with sensuality, and as in Juan Manuel’s example, represented by hunger, the bodily lack that explains on the one hand the literal meaning of materiality and, on the other, epistemological concepts like taste, feeling, or inner conflict. In thus voicing bodily need, the poetic dialogue somewhat detaches itself from its Christian corpus and approximates the personal and economic necessity of selfhood, the circumstance here called “condition:” “Mi humanidad se queja, / que, si mi entendimiento / bien me guía, / mi condición no me dexa / que use de lo que siento / que devría” [My humanity complains, and if my understanding guides me well, my condition will not let me use what I feel I ought to]. Similarly Segismundo’s initial condition reprises a selfhood deceived by desire, lacking in reason, and thrown in confusion, all traits of the soul before its Christian rescue: “Mi desseo, que me engaña, / dulce voluntad destierra / a la razón. / […] Congoxosa confusión / siento de mi mal sin medio (443) [My desire fools me and my sweet will exiles reason. My unsolvable pain makes me feel grievous confusion]. Incidentally, notions such as “engaño” and “confusión”, deception and confusion, traditionally attributed almost exclusively to the seventeenth-century baroque, permeate orthodox Christian discourse since its inception, for they are discursive notions meant to rationalize the apocalyptic crises, whether material or metaphysical, that affect the “present” of all ages and periods.

Segismundo’s soliloquy resumes the discourse of the body that all dominant doxa are presumptively founded upon, while the mechanism of consolation remedies disruptive bodily forces not only to reaffirm religious dogma but to ease human nature’s suffering and confusion when left at the mercy of desire and passion. From the self’s point of view, the cure provided by consolation justifies dogmatic discourse, while scarcity or hunger, playing similar roles in Juan Manuel and Calderón, determine an epistemological and axiological function. Hunger allows the self to gain an awareness of the senses (specifically of taste, “sabor”) and of the value derived from such knowledge: the measure of enjoyment and pleasure that comes from the realization of being in need and the awareness of an inner and bodily conflict produced by the circumstance of lack.

Segismundo’s answer to his needy body is a negotiated retreat in the face of the dominant discourses of royal and matrimonial institutions, yet one that does not offer the almost total surrender we see in Castillo or the devotional writings of Luis de Granada, who repeats the
existential (bodily) limitations of the self that we read in Calderón’s play and Castillo’s “dialogue”. But both Granada and Castillo offer the closed-out, definitive, dogmatic discourse that promises to fill up the hole in the sinner’s lacking body. Granada states,

¡O miserable el día de tu nascimiento y mucho más el de tu muerte, porque será principio de tu condenación! ¡Cuánto mejor te fuera nunca haber nacido, si has de ser para siempre condenado! (Guía 106)

O miserable day of your birth and more so that of your death, because it will be the beginning of your damnation! How much better it would have been if you had not been born, if you are to be damned forever!

The Christian notion of birth leaves man in a miserable state, too, but the sinner who repents can attain salvation, the very goal of Granada’s book. Hope in birth and after death remains a possibility so long as the sinner seeks redemption, the payment that will cover his debt to God and free him from eternal damnation.

As far as the secular worries that accompany the prince’s conflicts with his father’s, we see sinful, deficient behavior informing issues of government, personal freedom, inheritance, and sensual awareness rather than strictly religious, orthodox worries. Those issues are demonstrated by the conflicts, respectively, with his father Basilio, his jailer Clotaldo, the kingdom’s inheritance, and his relationship with Rosaura and Estrella. One further problem is the existential quandary that makes him believe that his crime (delito) belongs rather in the philosophical sphere rather than in secularity or religion, seemingly and earthly resolution that sidesteps dogmatic discourse. If this is so, dogmatic sin is no longer the issue and loses value, brought down to the level of the secular, for Segismundo’s ultimate triumph consists in escaping his prison and becoming king, all the while realizing the limited reality of those accomplishments. The reduced value of such praxis is suggested at the beginning of the play when, after questioning his enslavement, “¿qué delito cometí...? ‘What crime have I committed?’ he understands on the same breath the nature of the crime. Birth implies such understanding. Birth and crime are interchangeable and simultaneous, to be born is to commit the crime: “Aunque si nací, ya entiendo / qué delito he cometido” (107-108) ‘Although if I was born I already understand what crime I have committed.’ This formulation of original sin in the first act will in the third resolve into the epistemological doubt that allows for a negotiated notion of humanity, specifically proven by Segismundo’s hesitant embrace of good works, no longer the dogmatic vision of Trent or Augustine, by his decision to throw the soldier-liberator in his own tower, and by his capacity to conquer himself, an ethical as well as political necessity that allows him to stabilize a kingdom in crisis, as Ruiz Ramón notes (Aparicio Maydeu II.430).

In the first act, though, the answer to Segismundo’s despair and lack of freedom is suggested by his own argument. The very fact that he is born and in possession of a soul and

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36 Augustine rejects the dichotomy faith/works and proposes instead dead faith versus the faith that works through love (Gal 5:6), a faith that is active in love, which later Christianity assimilates with charity (On Christian Belief 222-23); Canons (45-46).
free will—features of the human condition—causes his imprisonment as well as the capacity to understand his resulting despair. The freedom of animals and things constitutes a species of forced or constricted escape, a mere displacement responding to either natural or human law, or “necessity:” the bird escapes to the “ethereal halls,” the fish to the “cold center” of the ocean, the creek, like a snake, to the “open field,” and the “brute” [Minotaur], “monster of his labyrinth,” flees the cave once “human necessity” has instructed him in “cruelty.” These rhetorical analogies and metaphors of hierarchical spaces define freedom as a rationale of movement that establishes each creature’s natural space, except for Segismundo and those others who, like Rosaura and the soldier, cannot be restricted to subjection, whether in the tower or a similar lower status. This latter standing points to contemporary material and cultural conditions significantly covered by the multi-layered discourse of honor.

Man’s natural space of freedom drives him to his destiny, though in the first instance a type of freedom that finds the etiology of bodily need in the biblical myth of the fall from paradise (Gen 3.16-19; 3.7-10). Since postlapsarian nakedness, labor pains, work, and death become man’s natural destiny, freedom intersects with Segismundo’s metaphorical and existential prison and destabilizes any straight definitions of freedom or imprisonment. The problem of freedom, man’s standing in the cosmos and the relationship with his world come up constantly in contemporary thought; they are staples of orthodoxy and literature at the time (Green II, 213-278; Rico 11-12, 128-137). In such a context Calderón’s play lays out an answer at the intersection of the economic, metaphysical, and literary spheres. Spain’s socioeconomic crises and decline, her strict orthodoxy as the product of Counter-Reformation, the denunciation of Jewish and Moorish influences and obsession with clean blood certifications (limpieza de sangre), as well as the problematic mythical content of literature, all of these factors drive La Vida es Sueño to its problematic and doubt-ridden conclusion, an analogy of the doubtful future of a declining empire.

Having revealed so far a sinful and consolatory economy, the motif of the body adds the further development of a rhetorical-mythical economy: the inclusion of the mythological body looks upon the monster as a hybrid entity whose space and makeup are characterized by faulty, defective structures. The space of the monster is the space of the labyrinth and his/her time that of the apocalypse, two of the key mythical and figural images of Spain’s crises and decline for which Calderón’s autos become the appropriate literary vehicle (Elliott 1989:213-61; Egido in Aparicio Maydeu 11-134; Kermode). Qua monsters, Segismundo and Rosaura are pivotal characters that push the drama beyond exclusively private concerns and onto the public arena of empire and discursive national identity. Characterized by lack or displacement, they are symbols of the shifting and doubtful foundations which ground Spanish orthodoxy. At the same time they reflect the larger European trends towards pragmatism and philosophical doubt, which Cascardi calls the ambiguity of illusion (1984: 9, 19).

As a paradigmatic play that structures some of the key components of seventeenth-century thought, La Vida es Sueño begins with the medieval paradigm of the body whose transformations and limitedness (pain, suffering, lack, hunger, violation, imprisonment, animal desire) also point to the limits of the play’s larger metaphysical and political messages. These limits emphasize the fragility of honor, the privileging of doubt, and the pragmatic politics and
metaphysics based upon the wager. Segismundo’s triumph over Basilio’s astrological science reinforces this complex message, a defeat of tradition that supports the uncertainty of fate and amounts to a “medieval” turn towards the goddess Fortuna, incorporating, however, the modern components of doubt and play, which accept illusion as a value, the illusion of what is “eternal” (presumably hegemony and orthodoxy) just in case the dreamer’s fantasy turns out to be factual.
Chapter 3

The agency of slaves in Cervantes’s “Jealous Man from Extremadura”

Early modern peninsular selfhood seems to be dislocated and lacking in space, possessions, and psychological fulfillment. This material and spiritual lack, as well as dislocation, are keys to reading literary characters in general, while economic exchanges in literary texts function as the medium to allow deficient characters to recoup their perceived loss of property or space. But though they emerge as functions to explain selfhood within the metropolitan center of empire, lack and dislocation overflow the center’s imperial borders and come to define newly-evolving colonial selfhoods represented by migrating Spaniards and by forcefully colonized subjects located outside those borders and now straddling the space between center and periphery. The contradiction between overflow and simultaneous lack characterizes the crisis of the Spanish empire, where spatial and material lacks cease to be exclusively geographic and concrete, becoming psychological factors that determine the characters’ evolving makeup. Characters internalize new material factors and expanding peripheries as an awareness of lack, and they then project this lack, as a metropolitan and psychological factor, onto the periphery in hopes of escaping their material and psychological deficiencies. Nor is this instability of selfhood only a current appraisal of early modern man’s troubles, for a sense of crisis characterizes the contemporaneous views of Francisco de Quevedo and works like Lazarillo and La Vida es Sueño. This colonial overflow can be read as a figure of bloated empire and its inflationary demands and measures, which leaves—and reveals—the empty spaces which marginal alterity eases into. The result is a change in the type of selfhood advanced by dominant ideologies over the imperial sphere.

37 These included friars and conquerors as well as economic and social “rejects” like the protagonist Carrizales, the figure of the “new rich” “indiano” that, having made their way back home from America, preferred “to invest in status rather than trade or industry” (B. W. Ife, in Cascardi 26-27).

38 See José Antonio Maravall, Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of a Historical Structure (1986); Américo Castro, De la Edad Conflictiva, where Spanish crisis and character result from the clash of three “castes,” Jews, Moors, and Christians, the latter ending up the winners (16). Pedro de Rivaldeineira, in his Tratado de la Tribulación (1589), claims that contemporaneous calamities like heresies, religious wars, and proliferation of false prophets were allowed by God in order to punish society for its sins, especially pride, which leads to suffering as a learning experience. Luther’s “perverse and diabolical sect,” in spite of its evils and “perturbation of peace,” had led “Catholics to always vanquish and triumph over the heretics” because “God does not allow evils in the world except to draw more good from them” (Obras Escogidas 424).
The image of the father and the parable of the prodigal son

A historical reading of Miguel de Cervantes’ *The Jealous Man from Extremadura* (*El Celoso Extremeño*) suggests just such sense of social and personal crisis. If we undertake this type of reading, we notice a shift in the weight of character development and self-formation onto metropolitan and extra-metropolitan others, the latter becoming fundamental in delimiting and defining selfhood, destroying or undercutting it. These others run the social, domestic, and colonial gamut: Loaysa, the parasitical seducer; Marialonso, the sexually frustrated duenna or domestic caretaker; the white and black female slaves who participate in the conspiracy; Luis, the old black eunuch slave guarding the house, and Leonora, the fourteen-year old wife whom the protagonist, Carrizales, buys and uses in order to cover up his deficiencies—his defining lack as dislocated outsider and out-of-time old man wishing to fulfill a life-long dream. In fact the novella’s others (instances of psychological alterity) are impersonations of the protagonist, as El Saffar among other critics has noted:

the characters who emerge out of the monomania of his jealousy are embodiments of Carrizales himself. For the jealous man has been created by the womanizer, just as the wealthy man was created by the free-spender … The total character is a composite of all these roles, each of which is linked to its opposite. (42)

Not quite incidentally, lack and dislocation are also traits of the prodigal son, Carrizales’ own biblical trope at the beginning of the novella: “un otro Pródigos” ‘another Prodigal son’. He goes away from home and loses very nearly all of his inheritance, finding himself, at forty eight years old, with no place to call his own, no wife and no prospects. Unlike the character in the biblical parable, though, this early modern prodigal son lacks a father figure who will allow him back in the fold. Instead this simultaneous role of father, household deity, and God goes to the forces of empire, history, and gender: America becomes the foster mother or “refuge” where the prodigal son, in a paradox of hegemonic subjectivity, becomes reconstituted and ready to fall back onto the fatherland of metropolitan empire, which, by a reluctant acceptance of *Indianos* like Carrizales, fails to cure lack or dislocation and only postpones the tragicomic outcome.

The story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) is also a parable of loss, dislocation, homelessness, and desire for re-inscription. It begins as a rebellion of selfhood and concludes with a conservative rejection of individual loneliness, leading to self-humiliation and self-blurring into the symbolic fatherland and homeland, a desire for belonging that is expected to cure the sense of estrangement represented by the lost, wasteful, and hungry son. And if the

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39 This novella is one of the key America-themed creations of Cervantes’ oeuvre, for which see Diana de Armas (Cascardi 2002). The novel and novella form entails a sense of crisis, which calls for the use of irony and reader participation (Aylward 176-77; Forcione 90-91), as well as characters defined by anxiety. Carrizales “suffers anxiety in all circumstances” and his jealousy may be described as “insecurity, self-doubt, and sense of exposure to assault” (El Saffar 42).

40 For the idea of woman as a “handy” “European other” see Fernández (977).
parable is an allegory of human existence and man’s wish for immortality, the father figure stands for an omnipotent and savior god. Although responding to these mythic and pre-historical factors, the parable gets a capitalist and imperial update through Carrizales’ wasteful and lustful adventures in Europe and his profit-driven, colonial activities in America. The prodigal son, having spent his inheritance recklessly and been reduced to envy the food of pigs, is a body-driven, animalistic self. Therefore his newly-found conversion is at least doubtful, just like Carrizales’ motives as he embarks for America. Self-interest and re-acquaintance with bodily or animal need underlie the self’s fall and the beginning of his re-ascent to civilized patriarchy and domestic economy.

Father and home are instances of law, culture, and civilization opposed by the negativity of loss and selfish individuality. But neither fatherland nor the father’s rule can or means to erase negativity, as this is the foundation of the law and what sets the son’s learning process in motion. Upon arriving home, the son is dressed, fed and feasted: the animal body is satisfied, cured of hunger. Before that happens, however, the sin must be confessed via the self’s humiliation to the father. This confession recognizes the self’s lack, his inability to cope with it, and his need for reinsertion in a larger cosmic, or worldly, whole. Selfhood is dead without father and fatherland, a type of death also tied to lost inheritance or economic livelihood: “For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found” (15:24). Upon collecting his share and leaving, the son symbolically breaks the family bond via the partition of the inheritance, the father’s “living” (βίος), which connotes both familial and economic life: “Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living” (15:12). By abandoning his fatherland and wasting “his substance with riotous living” (Houlgate translates ζων ασώτως as “prodigal living,” 142), an uncontrolled satisfaction of bodily need that depletes his economic inheritance, which is the father’s symbol of life-long work and savings, the son’s loss becomes total, for it involves geographic displacement and economic depletion, a metaphorical death as an individual through the destruction of his economic (“law of the house”) or familial self-identity.

As noted before, the analogy breaks because Carrizales is a fatherless son, a hidalgo “nacido de padres nobles” ‘born of noble parents’ who, “muertos ya sus padres y gastado su patrimonio, vino a parar a la gran ciudad de Sevilla” (99) ‘his parents now dead and his patrimony wasted, ended up in the great city of Seville.’ Instead of father, he finds in the colonial and imperial space of the Indies the tools to cure his bodily and economic needs, which make him ready to attempt the reinsertion into his (dead) father’s law and space. Spanish colonial empire replaces the father’s law and home, so that Carrizales’ identity formation is divided between the Indies and Spain, between the colony and the metropolis. Cervantes’s

41 Tertulian “interprets the younger son as typifying mankind, first sunk in heathen darkness and then redeemed through Christ” whereas for Luke he “represents the publicans and sinners, and the elder brother the self-righteous Pharisees” (Creed 197). It is also a “drama of self-alienation and self-recovery. He leaves his home (falling action, sin, aversion, loss); then, at the extremity of his suffering, he ‘returns in himself’ and literally ‘rises up’ to return to his father (rising action, grace, conversion, recovery)” (Robbins 34). For Houlgate it is a parable of covetousness, hence of economy and materiality. Jamieson et al. also stress the importance of “home” and the son’s “conversion” (319).
definition of the Indies confirms America as both imperial excess and lack, a space required by an empire in crisis. America therefore is a “remedy”, “refuge”, and “safe-conduct”, and also a problematic emptiness, a space where “deceit”, “con game[s]”, and “trickery” operate:

Viéndose, pues, tan falto de dineros, y aún no con muchos amigos, se acogió al remedio a que otros muchos perdidos en aquella ciudad se acogen, que es el pasarse a las Indias, refugio y amparo de los desesperados de España, iglesia de los alzados, salvoconducto de los homicidas, pala y cubierta de los jugadores a quien llaman ciertos los peritos en el arte, añagaza general de mujeres libres, engaño común de muchos y remedio particular de pocos (Cervantes 99).

So, seeing himself so lacking in money and not with too many friends either, he took shelter in the remedy which many other lost people in that city resort to, which is to pass over to the Indies, refuge and protection of the desperate men from Spain, church for the bankrupted, safe-conduct for killers, cover and con game for gamblers that experts in this art call “ciertos”, general trickery of loose women, common deceit of the many and particular remedy of the few.

Metropolis in this context is a problematic mis-designation, for it refers to the fatherland as feminized space. At any rate the “mother city” is no longer Spain alone but America, too. Of course the fatherland continues to be Spain and, as such, involves the order of empire and the father’s law into which Carrizales, becoming a symbolic father himself, wishes reincorporation. The novella also includes the tension between Spain as empire or nation and the local patria of Extremadura. Carrizales, one of the “lost”, “desperate men from Spain,” is also Extremaduran, but he refuses to live in his province, or patria, because of its poverty and lack: “la estrechez de su patria era mucha y la gente muy pobre” (102) ‘the lack of his patria was vast, and the people very poor.’ He chooses Seville, the quintessential imperial and colonial city of Spain, where although America’s goods and Spain’s laws constitute his identity, Spain’s snide marginalization turns him into a colonial father who either recreates his colonial space (the slave presence) or finds within Spain the original spaces that are then transplanted to the colonial world (his isolated house). Fernández considers the first alternative as follows: “Carrizales’s house can be viewed as an ínsula [island] inhabited by a racially diverse group of natives, who are maintained in perpetual childhood… by the zealous… and extremist precautions of the indiano governor” (974). The second alternative is also possible: in erecting an isolated space that shares elements of the prison, convent, and seraglio, Carrizales has merely found, and made his personal re-insertion into, a niche that is already part of metropolitan and imperial society, which contains in itself the very “colonial” traits that will be reproduced and displayed more openly in the away space of coloniality and otherness.

By definition the Extremaduran’s jealousy is a lacking and dislocated selfhood. Jealousy, the fear of betrayal, is also a lack of trust in a world given over to treachery and double-dealing, to dishonesty and fraud. It is domestic and personal disillusionment as well as fear of losing a selfhood whose precarious existence, seemingly in a constant state of near disintegration, requires it to be walled in, like Carrizales’ house-fortress, and safely kept away like the profits gained in America. This man’s jealousy incorporates domestic fear and greed, qualified by an ending that reveals a tragic lack manifested as impotence, emasculation, generosity, and
annihilation. His selfhood, moreover, suffers dislocation, for the protagonist does not belong in any proper space. Though outside his fatherland, Extremadura remains a sign of the heart of empire, notably because many conquerors hail from this region. Having produced the representatives of early modern Spanish selfhood, Extremadura hardly recuperates those emigrants, soldiers, friars, and conquerors that leave to pursue prodigality and regeneration in Europe or America. Those who remain die off; Carrizales returns to find all of his friends and relatives dead in Extremadura, an infertile land no longer accepting exiles and with a sedentary population that shrivels to a figural death. Such inhospitable homeland dislocation pushes the man back into the literary “Babylon” of the times, Seville, geographically, economically and culturally the point of departure for any definition of Spanish imperial and colonial selfhoods.

The anti-hero’s dislocated space: Carrizales’ house and Seville

Not only is Seville the point and port of departure for Carrizales’ refashioning trip to America; it is also the space where multiple races, languages, and interests crisscross, a commercial hub that allows Spanish selfhood (the figure of Carrizales) to be lost, reconstituted in a colonial American elsewhere, and finally annihilated. Seville, the space where heteroglossic and multicultural exchanges occur, is also the economic portal between European finances and America’s gold and silver, which entails the logic of native and black exploitation. Moreover, any such domestic points of contact with foreign elements threaten the very essence and existence of hegemonic subjectivities—whether Seville or the threshold of Carrizales’ house inhabited by the black old eunuch. Financial centers like Seville, channels through which American gold and silver flow out of Spain, leave the metropolis economically weaker. For this reason Seville may be considered a cosmopolitan center more in tune with the wider dynamic and interests of European capital. Indeed this phenomenon that does not begin or end at these contact points, for they are only media of exchange and wealth transfer, but at outside and opposite poles that lie, on one end, in the colonial periphery and, on the other, in European

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42 “Extremeños participated in and often were central and decisive figures in some of the most dramatic and important events and episodes of the early years of exploration, conquest, and settlement” (Altman 210). Though unfocused, Mario Cuesta’s Extremadura y América (1992) makes a similar point.

43 Altman’s study, somewhat at odds with this interpretation of Extremadura’s decay, states that extremeños remained oriented “toward family and kin and the bonds of common origin” (213), but her focus is the beginning of the sixteenth century and not quite that of Cervantes’ novella one hundred years later, a fiction that reflects a new reality and questions a worn-out ideological telos. Altman does illustrate this reality citing the case of one hidalgo in seventeenth-century Mexico who, unable like others to “find a comfortable niche,” asks “his brother [in Spain] to send him the bachelor’s degree he had earned in law” so that he can work as a lawyer (214-215).

44 Seville as Babylon became a commonplace at the time, a center where races and tongues intermixed. Rodríguez Marín details some of these phenomena in the context of Monipodio’s criminal world in Cervantes’ short story “Rinconete y Cortadillo” (137-51). See Elliott, Imperial Spain 182-83, 186-87, and Defourneaux, Daily Life 74-90.
capitalist centers whose functioning system bypasses Spain’s direct, political, and military controls already made obsolete by accumulating and competing capitals. This analogy, applied to the self’s domestic space, suggests that Carrizales’ fear of losing control, or not having it at all, begins and ends within his material-economic sphere. The fear of losing his money drives him to put it in safekeeping, and mirrors, at the same time, the spiritual fear of losing his wife’s honor and fidelity. Similarly, the house portal guarded by the eunuch is the space and figure of a domestic and indeterminate Babylon, the paradoxical and liminal space whereby riches flow in and out; that is, the “jewel” or treasure represented by the woman’s fidelity, as well as the cause of her contamination, must pass through the slave’s quarters. The slave watches over, controls, and determines much of the protagonist’s life, character, and ultimate end, and thus reveals himself a source of his master’s desperation and self-doubt.

As dislocated and Babylon-like space, Seville is the space of crisis where antiheroes (selfhoods lacking in heroic traits) gather and seek their new identity. It has been pointed out that the protagonist is one of the few “anti-heroes” of the Exemplary Novels (Casalduero 135-36), and that his self-doubt presages the development of novelistic prose and the result of an awareness of the “abyss” that confronts modern man, an emptiness opened up by social and cultural crises. The hero is tragic not because his fall concludes a glorious life (in fact we know that Carrizales always struggles to fill up the void of his economic and psychological life) but because glory has always escaped him; and as insecurity is one of his main traits, desire for control and fear of losing it are wracking passions that ultimately doom him to extinction. Carrizales’s economic void is his lost inheritance and recovered riches, while his psychological need is tied to his lost youth and to the jealousy that he, a one-time dissolute, now reasonably fears.

This hovering sense of crisis is heightened by the antithetical structure of the novel: old and young, poor and rich, marriage and non-marriage, house and tomb (Casalduero 143), honor and dishonor set up a contrasting and “critical” narrative order. By highlighting these extremes, the novel form erects them as structural and rhetorical exchanges which correspond to a newly-developed awareness, in turn grounded upon such melancholic and material lacks as the protagonist’s loss of youth, wealth, and self-sufficiency. In the end his belated riches fail to satisfy him and only increase his cares, a sense of failure apparent in the novel and also non-expressed as demonstrated by the American gap in the narrative, a silent sojourn that suggests his income, though legitimate, may have been ill-gotten, and at any rate looked down on in the metropolis as something improper. Hence he, like Indianos generally, suffers social marginalization (Castro 216).

The house remains a key but indeterminate figure, somewhat similarly as the space of the slave. Its inhabitant Carrizales is, after all, a marginal Indiano in Spain and an Indian vis-à-vis Europe. Accordingly the house may be the figure of Leonora’s fidelity, of Carrizales’ honor, or of Spain’s empire—which is the public dimension of a desire for integrity of self. For Casalduero the house represents the woman’s fault and Carrizales’ sin, which is a misconception of sin simply as a mechanical phenomenon that leads him to think that he can control it physically by erecting walls and barriers, whereas in actuality true and virtuous will is an “interior castle” that must be, therefore, free and spiritual (144). Such informed and modern vision accords with the concluding manumission of the slaves, which is to be executed, however,
only after the dissolution of hegemonic selfhood occurs, that is, after Carrizales’ death. His death is a postponement of the desire of reason amounting to a future utopian desire that acknowledges slavery as a current and pragmatic social need. Carrizales’ death-bed last will allegorizes this procrastination.

Other ironic facets highlight the ending’s “rational” and anti-traditional critique of Lope de Vega’s code of honor comedia as well as the frustration and loss of the protagonist’s desire (Ricapito 116-18): Carrizales has no children and presumably his money goes to the religious order that his widow, now a nun, joins. The testament is the self’s will post mortem that, by eschewing traditional honor’s prescription that stains be washed with blood as in Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s El Médico de su Honra (The Physician of his own Honor), chooses self-punishment and, simultaneously, the reward of all the others’ desires. This conclusion acknowledges that alterity is part of hegemonic selfhood and as such must be satisfied in order for hegemony to reach completion. Under this view Carrizales’ will summarizes a section of Spanish laws and critics’ views that since the beginning of the conquest sought, rather uselessly, to redress the abuses suffered by natives and slaves at the hands of their masters, and to assert and reestablish a domestic colonial order being threatened by the first conquerors’ and encomenderos’ abusive and internecine battles.

The woman who becomes the husband’s “mortal enemy” (Ricapito) represents, as noted before, one of the others that undo imperial selfhood. And if Iberian women can be categorized as barbarians, metropolitan men may become “slaves” or “Indians.” Since at least the middle of the sixteenth century Spaniards began to call their peninsular homeland, mockingly and ironically, the “Indies” vis-à-vis the financial Europe that appropriated most of their American gold and silver; and just as Spanish conquistadors fooled Indians into giving them their silver, lands, and allegiance in exchange for worthless beads or trinkets, Europeans beyond the Pyrenees fooled Spaniards into turning over their silver in exchange for manufactured merchandise that Spain could potentially produce. Luis Ortiz, an economist writing in 1558, offers a representative complaint against this capitalist exchange and compares it with the colonial exploitation suffered by American natives. Other European nations, he claims, produce manufactured goods from Spain’s raw products and then sell them back to Spain at twenty times the profit:

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\text{que es vergüenza y grandísima lástima de ver y muy peor lo que burlan los extranjeros de nuestra nación, que cierto en esto y en otras cosas nos tratan muy peor que a indios, porque a los indios para sacarles el oro o plata llevámosles algunas cosas de mucho o de poco provecho, mas a nosotros, con las nuestras propias, no solo se enriquecen y aprovechan de lo que les falta en sus naturalezas, mas llevamos el dinero del Reino con su industria sin trabajar de sacarlo de las minas como nosotros hacemos, y el remedio para esto es vedar que no salgan del Reino mercaderías por labrar ni entren en él mercaderías labradas (30-31).}
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\[45\] Saint Pedro Claver, ministering in Cartagena at the time and called the apostle and liberator of black slaves, did not clearly condemn the slave trade and tried to conciliate it with the slave masters’ interests (Boukangou, vol. 1, 176).
[and it is a shame and great pity, and worse, to see how foreigners mock our nation, and certainly in this and other things they treat us much worse than Indians, because in order to exact gold and silver from them, we turn over to them some things of great or little profit, but with our own things not only do [foreigners] become rich and profit from what they lack in their natures, but they draw out the money from our kingdom with their industry without laboring to dig it out of the mines as we do, and the remedy of this is to prohibit that goods yet to be manufactured be taken out of the kingdom and that manufactured goods be allowed to enter].

Such “indianization” of Spaniards and barbarianism of women demonstrate some of the rhetorical exchanges that America brought to bear in the creation of European selfhood and national and imperial spaces. The capitalist dynamic of accumulation that involves a fundamental American origin escapes its strictly economic boundaries and invades the cultural and literary spaces where the shaping of subjectivity and empire takes place. Cervantes’ Don Quixote, furnishing an additional example of this phenomenon, compares the sorry condition of old, abandoned, and sickly Spanish soldiers to that of old black slaves set free in order not to spend any more money feeding them, thus condemning them to the freedom of starvation: “y echándolos de casa con títulos de libres, los hacen esclavos de la hambre” (II.24) [and throwing them out of the house with the title of free men, they make them slaves of hunger]. In other words, the Spanish soldier, the very symbol of colonial oppression and instrument of the imperial project, does not escape unscathed or remain isolated from colonial and contaminating exchanges; suddenly he becomes disposable chattel like the black slaves he once guarded or enslaved, his subjectivity transformed into his oppressed other. The point has been noted by David Brion Davis’ The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture: slavery involves a contradiction, for during the Renaissance there was a “momentous division between an increasing devotion to liberty… and an expanding mercantile system based on Negro labor in America” (cited by Quilligan, in De Grazia 215). The paradox of slavery, adds Quilligan, implies that “the master-subject appears to come into being only with the slave-object. The positions of slave and master are mutually-constituting” (De Grazia 215-16). This idea, of course, is based upon Hegel’s nineteenth-century philosophical systematization of the master and slave dynamic (111-19).

These discursive exchanges influence colonial and metropolitan selfhoods by introducing American concepts in order to define and create hegemonic ones, which is how American alterity becomes an essential basis for European hegemony. The position of the old black eunuch Luis in Carrizales’ domestic order illustrates the problem. As the character Loayza puts it, the slave is the first element that will destabilize Carrizales’ integrity:

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46 Naturally Ortiz ignores the exploitation of natives and blacks in the mines. For the status of the mining industry and gold and silver riches at the close of the sixteenth century, see José de Acosta, Book IV, chapters 4-13 (166-93). Elliott claims that American silver covered Spain’s bankruptcy of 1575-76 and allowed Phillip’s renewed imperialism in the 1580s and 1590s in Portugal, the Armada against England, and further wars in France and the Netherlands (269-70).
Cuatro o cinco veces había dado música al negro (que por solo él la daba), pareciéndole que por donde se había de comenzar a desmoronar aquel edificio había y debía ser por el negro (Cervantes, *Novelas* 108)

[He had played his music four or five times for the black man, and did it only for his sake, thinking that the black man was and should be whereby that building would begin to crumble to bits].

True to this prediction, the black slave will open the hole under the door, break the nails of the lock, and introduce the improvised musician Loaysa into the house. Luis, a gatekeeper, controls inside/outside exchanges by his very position in the locked portal that connects Carrizales’ walled-in honor with Loaysa’s streetwise dishonor. In fact the slave, as bought and sold merchandise, is himself a figure of exchange and part of Carrizales’ property, an asset that props him up and a symbol of his American profit. The narrative informs us that Carrizales has grown tired of the commerce that made him rich; and although we do not know for certain what kind of trade he practiced in Cartagena and Peru, Cartagena was a hub of the slave trade at the close of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries (Ruiz Rivera, in Meisel Roca 360-66) and the conclusion may be drawn that the slave trade might have been one of Carrizales’ American enterprises.47

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47 The slave trade in Cartagena was monopolized by the Portuguese thanks to their advanced infrastructure in ships and African colonies. They were in cahoots with enterprising government officials that unloaded slave cargos away from the harbor in order to avoid taxes and increase profits (Ruiz Rivera, in Meisel Roca 361). Marmaret M. Olsen, *Slavery and Salvation in Colonial Cartagena de Indias* (Gainesville: c2004); Huguette Chaunu, *Seville et l’Atlantique 1504-1650* (Paris: 1955-1959).
with slavery either as a trader, which we do not know for certain, or as slave owner, which we do. We are left to judge of his anxiety indirectly through his posthumous manumission. Seemingly by the prospect of freeing his slaves he frees his conscience, relieving untoward frustrations that helped him to survive but contributed to produce or intensify a flawed personality characterized by uncertainty, fear of loss, and mistrust.

These hegemonic justifications of slavery respond to legalistic\(^{48}\) and psychological needs meant to address the master’s anxiety partially caused by colonial exploitation. Yet, as noted by Quilligan’s Hegelian insight, subject and master figures are mutually-constituting\(^{49}\), and justification becomes a mechanism to fix the master’s psychological ailment, which in this case the figure of the slave expresses either as the fear of impotence or the loss of control. Alterity is the self’s reversed face of desire that has been cut off from consciousness: the castrated slave symbolizes Carrizales’ long-gone sexual power, a frustrated but continuous desire that feeds his anxiety. Castration, Carrizales’ self’s condition, is also an inefficient figure of tamed, threatening desire, for the domestic and interstitial presence of the slave works to defeat hegemony’s surface efforts to stamp out lost or forbidden desire. While allowing instinct to enter the domestic space, the slave shines a light upon impotence and sterility as hegemony’s disintegrating traits. But hegemony does not or cannot shun this figure of colonial lack and in fact re-inscribes the alterity of the slave as a basic determining factor in the private (house) and public (nation/empire) domestic orders, a recognition of the central and foundational role played by the other in the formation and definition of hegemony’s character and spatial claims.

The slave as the other is not, as noted before, the only instance of Spanish alterity. Besides the slave, otherness implies the others’ opinion about a subject’s honor, a cultural notion linked to the idea of social crisis: the caste conflict among Moors, Jews, and Christians (Castro 77-78). By highlighting it as a repressive check on selfhood, honor appears as a type of otherness rooted within hegemonic order, so that the origin and shape of Spain’s nationhood and empire is part of an internalized conflict taking place among the clusters that make up orthodox order. Early modern Spanish man’s integrity and reputation are determined by the public’s opinion of his honor (honra), which causes anxiety, devalues true individual virtues, and values rumor-mongering. Lope de Vega’s play Los Comendadores de Córdoba explains the process as follows:

Honra es aquello que consiste en otro. / Ningún hombre es honrado por sí mismo, / que del otro recibe la honra un hombre… / Ser virtuoso un hombre y tener

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\(^{48}\) For a discussion of this problem in sixteenth-century Spain, see Venancio Diego Carro’s introduction to Domingo de Soto’s *De iustitia et iure* (1:liv-lviii). The consensus granted indigenous peoples certain natural and sovereign rights, only to take them away by resorting to international and commercial rights under the guise of the “communitas orbis” and “auctoritate totius orbis” (lvii); similarly by the divine right of evangelization and instruction, intervention and conquest were justified (lviii).

\(^{49}\) Early modern Spanish examples of the master and slave dynamic are Cervantes’ Don Quixote and Sancho and Baltasar Gracián’s allegorical pair of Critilo, “judgment” or reason, and Andrenio, “man” or brutal instinct (*El Criticón* 9-17). See J. A. May, *The Master-Slave Relation* (11-23).
méritos, / no es ser honrado... De donde es cierto, / que la honra está en el otro y
no en él mismo (quoted by Castro 77).

Honor is that which consists in the other. No man is honorable by himself, for he
receives his honor from the other. To be virtuous and with merits does not make a
man honorable. Therefore it is true that honor lies in the other and not in him.

In this context the castrated slave symbolizes the others’ opinion about Carrizales by his double
condition of slave and castrated individual. Qua slave, he is an American merchandise that
proves his master’s devalued indiano character; and as castrated individual, he embodies an
impotent selfhood ripe for Loaysa’s public and honor-breaking penetration. The public opinion
of Carrizales, the key determinant of his honra, displays him outside his house as a newly-rich
indiano who has bought his nobility and been contaminated by American climactic and racial
exposures. Inside his domestic space, the motif of the slave’s castration completes this public
exposure and leads to his final annihilation.

Castration, the figural condition of selfhood as the extreme category of impotence,
symbolizes an unconscious fear, initially in the sexual and subsequently in other spheres
analogically comparable, specifically in Carrizales’ sterility. Such barrenness dooms him to die
without heirs and renders him unable to perpetuate the cycle of imperial and hegemonic stability,
a fact that makes imperial growth the product of individual and collective lack. At this point
Lacan’s notion of the unconscious as discourse about the Other (“discourse de l’Autre” 312)
may perhaps shed further light on the figure of the castrated slave and the various interpretive
facets of infertility. Expressive of unconscious desire, the slave’s existence is an uncanny
presence—demonic and domestic at the same time. Moreover, the slave’s psychological space is
interstitial, a species of vacuum or blurry no man’s land which causes an ideally delimited and
orthodox selfhood to fear disintegration. Interstice, too, is the space of the demonic, as Loaysa’s
characterization of the slaves attests. Guiomar, the black female slave, joins the black man Luis
as they lead the group of revelers with torches within Carrizales’ domestic space:
“alumbrándolos el negro y Guiomar la negra” (the black man and the black woman Guiomar
were shining lights on them). The eunuch, a figure of sterility and impotence, cements these
domestic paradoxes, becoming an active agent and guaranteeing the master’s sterility by opening
the house to a potential act of licentiousness.

Cervantes’ novella suggests this type of psychological and figural reading because of the
slave’s predominant position in Carrizales’ domestic, economic, and psychological orders. This
position partially reflects those historical changes that came to affect and highlight the notion of
slavery, as it ceased to be the apparently accessory social phenomenon that it was during the
Spanish Middle Ages and came to increase in scope and positional structure in the sixteenth
and seventeenth centuries. Moreover, the contradiction of slavery, decried by the traditional

50 “In Alfonso’s day [around 1260-1300] slavery was mostly an urban phenomenon, less frequently agricultural,
notably domestic and artisan;” most slaves were white and, later, “Saracen captives” (Burns xxiii). For a
bibliography on medieval slavery, see Burns, note 29; Gabriel Boukangou’s Esquisse; Vicente Graullera Sanz, La
Esclavitud en Valencia en los Siglos XVI y XVII (1978); José Andrés-Gallego, La Esclavitud en la América Española
view of Christianity that sees itself as a model of purity\textsuperscript{51}, becomes accentuated and engrained in the socio-economic fabric of early modern Spain. Already in the Middle Ages, however, king Alfonso X’s \textit{Siete Partidas [Seven Divisions]}, which codify in the vernacular much of Spain’s legislative potential circa 1256-65 (Craddock 126), established the low condition of slaves, their lack of rights and economic objectification\textsuperscript{52}. Slaves were akin to cattle or goods and could be bought, used, rented, loaned, or pawned (Carlé 118-119). When the penalty of death was imposed, the slave had to suffer it cruelly by being thrown to “wild beasts so that they kill him” (“a las bestias bravas, que lo maten,” \textit{Partida} VII, Title XIV, Law XXII); if the master had been murdered, his slaves should be tortured in order to find out what happened (\textit{Partida} VII, T. XXX, L. VII); with some limited exceptions they could not be witnesses, give an oath, vouch for anybody, be judges, or join a religious order (Carlé 116-117). The practice of slavery in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seems to have perpetuated these customs and laws and made them a common practice in spite of the opposition from some friars, Sandoval among them.

Not only did slavery become an intricate part of some colonies like Cartagena, but of Spain as well, especially in the south\textsuperscript{53}. There is evidence of slave trade growth in Seville before Columbus’ voyage, and slave presence is noted in legal documents such as wills, sale contracts, inventories, liquidations, confiscations, repossessions, and dowries. The involved parties comprised slave buyers and owners from the upper classes, liberal professions, and artisans. Traders, aristocrats, church figures, artisans, scribes, and silver-workers (Franco Silva) transacted in this commerce, so that one hundred and fifty years after Columbus’ arrival the slave trade was, in the words of a nobleman writing to the king, “‘the largest, healthiest, and safest rent that Your Majesty has in all of his kingdoms’” (Vila Vilar, 1977, 4). Hence slaves are not only sources but symbols of income, and their domestic presence becomes a statement of status, especially for those living in the metropolitan center. Here again hegemonic selfhood’s need for reassertion through a contradictory symbol brings forward the very symbol of otherness that both sustains and undermines it. The slave is indicative of the interdependence and decentering that characterizes the clusters that inhabit and make up the colonial worlds.

The slave’s labor and physical presence, however, is only one instance of otherness in a colonial order where American native exploitation figures prominently. In general, any such imbrications of the slave economy into the metropolitan world tend to dilute the markers of difference that orthodox thought erects in order to keep away what Boyarin calls the other competing “clusters” of ideological and discursive content in a changing society (20). The yet-to-be “orthodox” cluster, backed by state force and state organization, generates the notion and space of heresy (3-4) and places in it the other clusters that threaten its ideological existence. In this context Carrizales’ loss of sense of metropolitan borders involves a contradiction: his \textit{becoming} rich and re-integrated into the Iberian community he abandoned has happened and

\textsuperscript{51} Carlé: “It is surprising that [slavery] a concept so in disagreement with the admirable Christian doctrine belonged to a people [the Christians] that was struggling... against the enemies [Muslims] of that doctrine” (119).

\textsuperscript{52} Slavery is covered mainly by \textit{Partida} IV, Titles XXI-XXII. See Burns, \textit{Las Siete Partidas} (4:977-986). Some of these practices were operational in the Caribbean as late as the nineteenth century (Fergus).

\textsuperscript{53} See Vila Vilar’s introduction to Sandoval’s \textit{Un Tratado}, 15-25, especially footnotes 1 and 3.
been made possible outside and beyond the metropolitan borders, in the marginal space of slaves and colonial alterity. Simultaneously, his wish for becoming reintegrated inside the metropolitan borders suggests a negation of the past spent outside as a foreigner, pilgrim, prodigal son, or colonial other—a conservative desire that reveals the potential of the colonial perspective not just for metropolitan attack but, conversely, for a reinstitution of tradition and renewal of heresies that allow for the demonization of otherness, even if the latter strategy involves self-demonization and self-immolation, as in Carrizales’ example.

Carrizales as Other; America as space of otherness

As a figure of Spanish selfhood, Carrizales lacks definition, a fact that corresponds to the metropolis’ dissipating borders. His selfhood is a contradiction that opposes colonial and metropolitan time and space (respectively, the negation of his colonial past and his metropolitan past as a prodigal son), a fact that produces a broken subject that straddles both of them and ultimately, rife with opposing tensions, breaks apart in his own annihilation: he becomes whole, fulfilled, and non-contradictory only in death, a suicide of sorts that replicates similar literary strategies at the time. Selfhood ceases to be Iberian, that is, metropolitan, imperial, and hegemonic. Instead it becomes Creole and hybrid but fails at reintegration, for it lacks the required erotic energy and remains marginal, allowing penetration in spite of the tall walls erected for the sake of its self-integration and self-containment. The very American riches that permit these walls or borders to go up and fulfill material and spiritual selfhood (house, walls, dowry as bride-buying, wish for heirs, and negation of the past) also open avenues of invasion by the other. The American gold and silver that flood Spain is an economic-material fact that allegorizes the barbarization of the metropolis, Spain first and then the rest of Europe. Europe, however, self-immunizes against this contamination by demonizing Iberia as an instance of alterity: the black legend is Spain’s heresy of barbarianism that nonetheless has to be supported by the economic-historical record of Spain’s decline versus an upswing of the now “civilized” Europe beyond the Pyrenees, the one dictating Spain’s heretical excommunication from the civilized world (Fuchs, in Greer 94). Furthermore, as accumulated capital leaves Spain and settles in northern Europe, the latter’s value increases not just economically but politically and discursively, which authorizes the definition of Spain and Portugal as Europe’s new barbarians and “Indians,” the West’s heretical others, the “negroes” of Europe (Fuchs).

This movement of capital corresponds to an equivalent shift in discursive power that proves America’s functional relevance as “invasion” into Europe. America’s barbarian

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54 Compare the obsession with death in Quevedo’s religious poetry, Luis de Góngora’s passive, non-agentive, and detached pilgrim of Soledades, or Lazarillo de Tormes’ self-destructing and self-diluting strategies designed to make him fit in a hostile world.

55 See Braudel I, 476-517. Spain’s “political” silver shows the foreign (the Netherlands) and self-defense expenditures (479) during the reigns of Phillip II and Phillip III. The Spanish Parliament, the Cortes, “complained
characterization sets up the positive or orthodox side of European civilization, a negative component that also partakes of orthodoxy, for after all Carrizales is the product of this hybrid mixture of European and American cultures, and he himself, as reconstituted European subject, sets up and authorizes the other’s (the black man’s) agency within his domestic and public space. This other is entrusted with the fundamental watch over the integrity of orthodox selfhood as well as the inside/outside exchanges necessary for orthodoxy’s survival. Furthermore, America’s precious metals play the positive role of enriching or revalorizing Europe, which seeks to move further away from this barbarian influence even as she draws out America’s wealth and uses America’s “negative” potentiality to prop up the West’s orthodox and civilizing discourse. In turn, Spain becomes an “other,” “Indian,” “black,” or “Moor,” and the gateway through which economic exchanges begin to sustain Western Europe via the exploitation of American and African natural and human resources, and discursively by Spain’s “barbarian” contribution to European identity. This new continental orthodoxy is born and reaffirmed during the periods of discovery and conquest, a shown for example with the concepts of race and racism, whose modern crystallization, according to Mignolo, occurs “during the European Renaissance as an intrinsic part of the consolidation of capitalism” (in Greer 313).

The slave’s linguistic otherness: ladino versus bozal

As noted earlier, America’s silver represents only part of Carrizales’ new persona. The black slave placed at the entrance of his domestic space stands for another significant part, the African contribution that complements Spain’s colonial experiment. Blackness is a multifaceted discourse of alterity that involves color, music, language, age, gender, sex, geography, religion, demonology, commerce, capitalism, and taboo. All of these themes call for definitions that hinge upon transatlantic exchanges more or less present in Cervantes’ short story. True: some of them are mere replicas applied earlier or simultaneously to Native Americans, and more or less intense depending on the degree of black participation in Europe’s historical and fantastic worlds. To begin with, the language of blacks is a low substandard that distinguishes blacks who speak the language better (ladinos) versus recent slaves whose command is rather defective (bozales), Luis being the former and Guiomar the latter. Yet their command of Spanish does not make them any less barbaric, for Luis’s voice in fact initiates the undermining of Carrizales’ domestic foundations. The longer the slaves’ captivity, the more their language skills, but the less their true Christianity and trustworthiness even after their Christian conversion and baptism, and the less their economic value. It does not seem a coincidence that ladino came to mean what it means today: a person of low social extraction, generally a full-blooded Indian or black that is not to be trusted; someone familiar with the ins and outs of the dominant order but ready to trick, and steal from, the good people that make up ordered society, that is, from “civilized,” city-

that the country simply ‘served as a bridge over which the products of our mines pass to foreign hands, at times even to our worst enemies” (Cocker 110).
dwelling, clear-skinned Mestizos or white people\textsuperscript{56}. Luis’s tricks fit this later stereotype of selfishness, lack of social concern and cohesion, an untrustworthy ladino- hood that doubles as a type of false conversion\textsuperscript{57}.

Being a ladino, implying that the slave is “proven… in service and tricks,” diminishes his/her value, while conversely the condition of bozal increases it, which is why the slave owner has an incentive not to turn a bozal into a ladino, that is, not to Christianize or hispanize the slave, as well as to lie about the condition of his slaves and to pass as many of them as bozales, thereby increasing their value and his profit. Thus the slave trader enters into conflict with the friars’ evangelizing mission, although both shape the larger imperial project of black exploitation and inscription. The friars’ worry about the damnation of blacks remains basically a psychological remedy for both exploited and exploiter but is at bottom also an economic factor that seeks to sustain blacks’ psychic health and productivity and justifies the friars’ social function. The slave trade involves this type of contradictory economic and discursive value exchanges:

Valen menos baptizados, y enseñados, que por baptizar; por decir, que sin son baptizados y tienen nombres de Christianos, y saben las oraciones y cosas de Dios, los tienen por ladinos y antiguos entre nosotros, y que assi tienen menos valor, como gente que se vende ya provada, y no aprobada en servicio y mañas. De aquí les viene, que no solo no procuran que sean enseñados y baptizados; pero lo impiden por todas las vías posibles, negándolos y ocultándolos, y persuadiendo a veces a los mismos negros les está mal baptizarse, para que ya que ellos no puedan escusar el darlos a quien los quiere enseñar, los negros se escusen, y rehúsen el aprender (Sandoval 239).

They are worth less baptized and taught than yet to be baptized; that is, if they are baptized and have Christian names and know prayers and things of God, they (slave traders) think they are ladinos and old among us, and so have less value as people already sold and proven, and not approved, in service and tricks. This is why the traders not only refuse teaching and baptizing slaves but impede it by all means possible, hiding them and denying they have any, and sometimes persuading blacks themselves that baptism is harmful, so that if the masters cannot make any more excuses to those who want to teach them, the blacks can make excuses and refuse to learn.

\textsuperscript{56} Originally “ladino” referred to one well-versed in Latin or, later on, in Spanish; then a discreet, smart, or crafty person; the pejorative “tricky” was applied first to Moors or foreigners who learned Spanish well enough to be confused with Spanish speakers; after the conquest the term applied to Native Americans and blacks. “Bozal” meant a “black that does not know any other language but his own”; etymological origin is uncertain, perhaps from “bezo” thick lip, or “embozar” to cover one’s face or mouth (Corominas; Covarrubias).

\textsuperscript{57} Conversion involves a hegemonic perspective upon the converted as well as indeterminacy within hegemonic discourse; the question “what makes a Christian?” admitted contradictory answers even as pagan Europe began to undergo conversion during and after the fall of Rome (Fletcher 62-65).
Ladino-hood as conversion implies the paradox of increased knowledge and insertion in hegemonic discursivity—baptism, prayers, things of God—and reduced economic value, that is, the colonial contradiction between the value of education, or knowledge, and the slave as representative of value. Ignorance, non-education, and unfamiliarity with the imperial project are conditions that foment slavery by increasing its value, whereas conversion, already problematic because it is assumed that many bozales are incapable of understanding baptism and taking communion, further loses discursive value through this economic loss: the bozal’s raw savagery is worth more than the ladino’s change toward conversion. Conversion via educational baptism becomes reduced to the category of “service” and “trickery.” This equation (baptism and conversion equal trickery) unveils the imperial project as a paradox that emphasizes economic content while throwing in doubt the essential value of evangelization. The ladino is by definition a converted individual, but his conversion is defective, bastardized by his increased familiarity with hegemonic order, which allows him to skirt, play with, and trick it. This self-defensive move against that order allows the other’s self-construction and highlights the material aspects of conversion.

Another aspect of black (or indigenous or feminine) otherness is subsumed into the orthodox blackness of the devil, connected in turn with the figure of the female slave, who binds together diabolic and sensual components. This continuous aspect of black otherness complicates the linguistic themes of colonial slavery suggested before. Guiomar, whom Marialonso the duenna describes disingenuously as a virgin, “hasta esta negra es doncella” (123) [even this black woman is a damsel], has her own destabilizing voice and space in the very heart of Carrizales’ walled-in interior, so that it may be argued that black presence controls entrance (Luis) and organizes inner activity (Luis and Guiomar both). Discussing whether or not Loaysa ought to take an oath to obey the women before being allowed in the house, Guiomar interjects in broken Spanish:

Por mí, más que nunca jura, entre con todo el diablo; que aunque más jura, si acá estás, todo olvida (123).

As for me, even if he never swear, let him in with all the devil; for although [he] swear more, as long as he be here, everything’s forgotten.

As a black dialect, bozal appropriates and modifies standard usage, and breaks and forces grammatical rule into the other’s language, which is a nonstandard, non-grammatical, heretical rule. If Boyarin’s “clusters” are linguistic-dialectical varieties as well as, analogically, cultural groupings with vying interests, Guiomar’s own interested cluster involves first of all a linguistic otherness and, secondly, a cultural-racial component. The literality of her bad, non-standard Spanish, which violates grammatical order and presumably resembles and reproduces her African native tongue (Lipski 93), is a strategy to displace dominant discourse and replace it with non-discursive, non-dominant, heretical language. This linguistic difference acts simultaneously with the cultural, multifaceted component.

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Narayan (231-35); Griffiths and Cervantes, Spiritual Encounters. Griffiths explains some of the problems of using “conversion” and syncretism as analytical terminologies (2-3, 26). For one, conversion is missionary terminology while syncretism “is so present in religions that the term [becomes] superfluous.”
Guiomar’s *bozal* language is bound up with the heresy of the sensual body (one of these cultural facets), which in this case involves the mockery of the Spanish tradition of female honor and maidenhood, the denial of ceremonial oaths—hegemony’s linguistic orthodoxy—, and the embrace of diabolic, heretical language. As a woman, she is a gendered existence complicated by a sensual desire connected with devil-inspired expression, while the language she misspeaks is a denial or disinterest of the good language of oath and ceremony (*jurar*). To be sure, this kind of disrespect, swearing bravado, and cavalier attitude against religion were common in spite of the many accusations and investigations conducted by the Inquisition. But by having a slave represent behavior that hegemonic selfhood (Spanish men and women, old Christians of “good” caste) practiced all too commonly, the slave mirrors the hidden side of Spanish selfhood, and *other* and *selfhood* become one even as they are represented by two different, and opposed, characters, the fictional slave and the historical victims of religious persecution. Moreover, Guiomar’s thematic otherness adds to the problem of conversion and mass baptisms of Native Americans and blacks. Her expression, seemingly a break with orthodox, baptismal practices, or a rejection to be inscribed, reinvented, and updated as an accessory *other* part of Western civilization, is simultaneously an inscription into hegemony’s stereotype of the other: like a pagan slave or a false convert, she actively rejects Christianity and lets herself be consumed by sinful sensuality, replicating Luis’s musical gusto. In this sense both assume the typically buffoonish features that blacks were made to play in Golden Age Spanish literature and beyond (Lipski 86).

Christianizing black and Muslim culture: the
Queen of Sheba and the meaning of the eunuch

Sandoval attempts just such reinvention by re-reading the Bible to find the traces of black historical resonances, and by stressing the presence of contemporaneous black presence in European orthodox history, including the queen of Sheba, queen Candaces’ eunuch, Moses’ wife Sephora, and two contemporaneous sixteenth-century Franciscans from Italy, Anthony and Benedict (*Un Tratado*, Book I, Chapter XXXII, 217-29). This incorporation strategy repeats the standard put in practice since the very first years of the so-called spiritual conquest by the original friars or “apostles” that arrived in New Spain, and since Columbus’s first attempts at incorporation of America, the unknown space and peoples that came to be inscribed within “the Indies,” the pre-existing and familiar space that was already part of the European world vision.

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60 The first New Spain friars were identified with the apostles because they, like Christ’s followers in Asia and Europe, also taught the gospel to pagan nations, this time in America. Similarly pagan religious practices had to be re-inscribed within European orthodoxy; thus the Mexica’s November harvest celebration, during which *tamales* were ceremonially cooked and eaten as if they were Tezcatlipoca’s flesh, was considered a devil-inspired
The African or “Aethiopian” discovery attributed to the Portuguese also uncovers spaces and peoples so far removed from Europe and in need of inscription within European historical and geographic space, the hegemonic cluster that organizes the colonial enterprise as an economic and state-driven project characterized by a mythic-imperial desire for Christian salvation and baptismal zeal.

Sandoval’s evangelical practice, then, is part of the economic, imperial, and exploitative project that came to define colonialism since the first European contacts with America. In his narrative, black incorporation into the European biblical myth begins the process of spiritual domination that culminates with the desire, and policy, towards total baptismal re-inscription. This is why Christianization, although a radical attempt at defending the “natural” evils and misfortunes suffered by blacks—together with all men in general—finds its main rationale upon curing the “supernatural” evils of paganism and non-belief that only blacks suffer and that condemns their souls to eternal damnation (Book II, chapters I-III, pp. 231-42). Phrased another way, the colonial project is driven by a larger spiritual lack existing in the colonial space and paradoxically by the larger material lack in the metropolis, an imbalance sometimes rationalized by imperial voices that saw evangelization as payment for the civilizing costly efforts of the European conquest.

Not surprisingly, the interested biblical record places black otherness below the Judeo-mythical center of culture. The Queen of Sheba, to take perhaps the most revealing example, demonstrates not only “colonial” subservience before Solomon, representative king of superior wisdom and state power, but also the feminization of the other, which justifies some of the characteristic features of the colonized: inferior culture, or savagery, and weaker state power. Solomon’s wise song is the civilized poetry of the cultural center that Sheba can only listen to in awe. By comparison, Luis’s musical preferences, instilled by Loaysa, represent other “crazy” songs of Moorish men and women that end up enchanting him, given the blacks’ natural “inclination” toward music. Loaysa sings “romances de moros y moras, a la loquesca” ‘ballads about Moorish men and women, in a crazy fashion’ that captivate the black slave and bring him over to his side: ‘tal es la inclinación que los negros tienen a ser músicos” (108) ‘such is the inclination black men have to be musicians.’ While the queen listens passively and admiringly, Luis takes on an active role in Carrizales’ collapse, and his music plays an essentially subverting role. The Moorish ballad proves that the Spanish empire still has, even after the final expulsion of the Moors in 1609, destabilizing threads within its imperial tissue which the alterity of black slavery—a recent, imperial and colonial development—reveals by bringing forth Spain’s Moorish past and present. This accommodation makes understandable Carrizales’ somewhat bastardization of the Christian communion (Motolinia 127). See also Acosta (327). Enrique Dussel’s The Invention of the Americas (1995) makes the point that Europe’s ideas were self-referential and that Europeans invented Americans, first as Asians and then as “undeveloped inferior peoples” (Lange, in Narayan 229).

The Queen of Sheba’s passive silence disappears in Midrash commentary, where she actually regains her voice by reciting riddles. Yet here, too, Solomon’s male-biased voice wins out (Lassner 11-12 and 161-63). See also Pritchard 146-51. In the nineteenth- and twentieth-century the queen becomes an active symbol of colonial deliverance, a prophetess and a “black queen of liberation” (Beyer 269-78; Pennacchetti 78-104).
smooth transition into the “colonial” space within the metropolitan, orthodox cluster: Luis the slave, a converted Christian but originally perhaps an African Muslim, reoccupies in Spain the Muslim niche left vacant by the expelled Moorish population. Revealingly, he reclaims the Spanish predilection for Moorish ballads, a staple of canonical Golden Age literature that helps, in this instance, to topple Carrizales’ orthodox desire. Because of castration, it is an unfulfillable desire for Leonora and money, for fertility and reincorporation.

The music introduced by Loaysa and the condition of slavery are not the only Moorish otherly components in the gradual annihilation of hegemonic selfhood. Luis, Carrizales’ double, is a sexual and sexless symbol who, in spite of genital lack, works to bring about his master’s downfall. The eunuch, a “keeper or servant of the marriage-bed” (εὐνή, ἔχω), betrays his very name by giving entrance to Loaysa. Hence he becomes fertile through an act of satisfaction and destruction, respectively the music he yearns to learn and Carrizales’ spiritual and material destruction. Guardian of house and marriage bed, he is the hegemonic self’s symbol of impotent scarcity and potential disintegration, his rationale the logic of partiality, what Dinshaw calls “Eunuch Hermeneutics.” If Chaucer’s eunuch Pardoner, according to Dinshaw, “surrounds himself with objects... that he substitutes for his own lacking parts” (28), Luis’s main objective substitution is the music that enchants him. More generally, his blackness and slavery are already eunuch-like conditions. For blacks, irrespective of their genital integrity, are conceived as having an inclination to music and as being natural slaves. The black man is a conceptual eunuch, a partial and symbolically castrated selfhood.

Moreover, Luis’s double nature determines his master’s features, including black color and eunuch characteristics, and the master himself becomes an instance of alterity. His jealousy is partly explained by otherly features that render him incapable of satisfying the domestic and matrimonial ideals of hegemonic order. Carrizales guards his seraglio-like house with a eunuch, and his jealousy echoes that of Turkish men and princes whom popular imagination considered homosexuals, de facto castrated men burning with jealousy. In the anonymous sixteenth century Viaje de Turquía (Voyage to Turkey), one character asks the traveler if Turkish men are jealous, and the traveler replies,

La más çelosa gente son de quanta hay y con gran razón, porque como por la mayor parte todos son buxarrones, ellas buscan su remedio.

They are the most jealous people in the world, and with reason, because since most of them are homosexuals, their women look for satisfaction elsewhere.

In this context the slave comes to play an active role related to his apparently passive and lacking condition; for the lack of phallus, paradoxically, signifies an assertive condition. What matters,

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62 Fuchs points out that Maurophilia affects not only sixteenth-century Spanish literature but culture too, which fetishizes the Moor and constructs a performative “fictive ethnicity” in order to avoid its hybrid manifestations; her example is that of the Spanish monarchs dressing up like Arabs during ceremonial occasions (Greer 93).

63 The fertility of the eunuch is one of his paradoxical traits, for which see Elam’s study of Terence’s Eunuch’s literary progeny.
as Barthes points out, is which figure acts and wields narrative authority, which one “dominates time” and “radiates” power (36). On this point the eunuch as slave, and the master as eunuch, both work to produce an outcome of destruction; the castrated figure acquires power, the capacity to castrate others and to “decree life, death, storm, peace” (Barthes 64). Luis’s castrated condition allows him to introduce chaos, to make apparent what seemed to be secret: the scarcity that essentially characterizes orthodoxy and that determines its potential collapse.

Greco-Roman mythology offers additional clues to an understanding of Luis’s castrated condition and the place he inhabits. Zeus’ castration of his father Chronos, besides revealing a father-son antagonism that may presumably double as a master-slave rivalry, puts an end to the Golden Age of plenty and begins the Age of Silver (Ovid 3-5; Pérez de Moya 122-23), so that the act of castration initiates a worldly kingdom and signals a generational shift, young versus old. Carrizales, old and impotent, is not so much a yet-to-be castrated Chronos figure as one that already has undergone castration, a fact symbolized by the eunuch’s presence, a filial figure that brings about the end of the father’s domestic, idealized realm; for after Chronos’ Golden Age come crisis, chaos and war, even if Zeus ends up the winner. In like manner Cervantes’ eunuch symbolically castrates the master, insures his infertility and precipitates his death, leaving behind a domestic chaos that colonial and metropolitan empire attempts to fill up: Loaysa goes away to die in the Indies, a sort of doppelganger that reiterates Carrizales’ prodigal trajectory of displacement. Even Leonora’s disappearance behind the walls of a convent replicates Carrizales’ infertile domesticity. By contrast, the eunuch and the remaining slaves receive Carrizales’ inheritance, a sign of phallic power that proves the productivity of colonial alterity.

On the other hand the eunuch is a type of Janus, Roman god of doors and beginnings, for he occupies an interstitial space and unleashes, like the god, war and catastrophe (Pérez de Moya 323-26). He controls any exchanges that occur in the in-between space of public and domestic spheres, of Carrizales’ colonial past and his desired metropolitan future. Janus, god of beginnings, also controls fertility and presides over springtime birth and rebirth rituals. The analogy with the black eunuch shows him as triggering a paradoxical fertility of chaos via the destruction of Carrizales’ identity and ideal home. This productivity is narrative and literary, as Elam notes, and in Cervantes’ story the richness of the discursive other is manifested by the slave’s central though perhaps unconscious determination towards defeating or undermining his hegemonic master. Elam’s “eunuch hermeneutics” involves a novel strategy of reading that produces a fresh understanding of canonical texts thanks to the slave’s interstitial repositioning and lacking “phallus,” which allows him, as in the case of a castrated Abelard, to devote himself

64 Barthes refers of course to Mme. de Lanty, the character that holds actual control (and therefore the symbolic phallus carrier) in Balzac’s story, not to the castrato, who though a central figure remains in effect a weak agent; in Cervantes, by contrast, the eunuch, though apparently an accessory character, rises up by his agency and becomes key in the denouement. The presence of the castrato and eunuch produces weak male characters; in Sarrasine, men “do badly where full virility is concerned” (Barthes 35), while the Extremaduran’s age and impotence are signs of phallus-lack.

65 For a discussion of the ambiguity of the Chronos myth, its shifting between utopia (Golden Age) and dystopia (the reversal during festival), see Versnel (145).
totally, though unwittingly or unwillingly, to the critique of literature or philosophy, and in the
case of Carrizales’ slave, to the undermining critique of hegemonic order. Once castrated,
Abelard becomes “the perfect reader”, free “for the work of the true philosopher” (Elam 29),
while Luis destroys his master’s world and, paradoxically, inherits his possessions. Destruction
and inheritance double as an act that illustrates a new type of reading and interpretation of
colonialism.

Understood as a new and productive reading strategy, the eunuch’s fertility is an attempt
to incorporate the castrated slave figure—a colonial rhetorical exchange—and to represent
through him hegemony’s debilitated condition. For although the black slave is a clear marker of
ethnic and cultural alterity (as black, old, Muslim, oriental, exotic, music-loving, and castrated),
he stands for hegemony’s others: its fissured and hidden sides. Hence castration is less an
anthropological and more a psychological feature of Carrizales’ slave persona. Nonetheless the
historical weight of the black slave as colonial other does fashion the shape and face of
otherness, allowing for a nuanced version more in keeping with contemporaneous crises.
Psychologically Carrizales’ jealousy is a fear of the phallus which drives him to extreme
precautions to safeguard his house. It expresses not so much a castration complex as a condition
of castration arrived at after a life-time of profligacy and prodigality. His prodigality a symbolic
period of phallic energy now long past, and aware of other phallic threats elsewhere, he fears
what he has lost. His push towards Iberian re-inscription—new wife, new house, desire for
metropolitan honor—is an attempt to write himself into the “textuality” of imperial and
metropolitan hegemony. Vis-à-vis Carrizales, hegemonic textuality appears as an Other that
rejects him almost as much as it rejects his double, the slave. Phrased another way, this rejection
is the impossibly strict and unachievable desire of belonging, a nostalgic (“the pain of the
return”) perspective that contaminates with “otherly” content the very space and selfhoods of the
metropolis.

Carrizales’ self-destruction: death of the “author” for the sake of others

The agency of alterity plays a fundamental role in understanding colonial discursive
identity, and the goal of this chapter has been twofold. First, to show how black “otherly”
presence might function in early modern Spanish literary and historical texts, and how it
influences the creation and transformation of orthodox discourse as well as its symbolic death, or
fusion, into the peripheral others that inhabit narrative spaces outside and inside the metropolitan
center. Secondly, to look at orthodox discourse not only as a whole entity fundamentally
modified by colonial voices, but as a multi-clustered structure that finds itself through alterity
and then unfolds its own potential for change, frees its multifaceted expression and at the same
time—given the circumstantial, desired, or fantasized sense of crisis that envelops it—confesses
its inability to exist independently from its other instances. The ensuing self-destruction is a
result of an inadequacy characterized by worn-out conservative ideals. Summing up, then,
orthodoxy is a product of alterity, colonial or otherwise, instead of pure essentiality, in which case it would be doomed to irrelevance until it acknowledged and embraced the vying clusters that sustain it.

Non-essentiality in turn leads to the related problems of identity and identity formation, and narratively speaking, to that of authorship. Carrizales’ identity remains throughout in question, which is one of the reasons behind his anxiety. As he is forced to find in the other(s) what he is but hides, or what he lacks, or conversely, as the others come to be doubles of his unfolded personality or desires, alterity comes to define his own subjectivity in a somewhat similar fashion as Lacan’s mirror metaphor or Hegel’s interdependence and recognition between slave and master. Carrizales’ identity is a reflected and fragmented desire incarnated by alter egos that become characters and exist already as potential instances of alterity in the time and space before “colonialism” even becomes a historical fact. In other words, hegemonic selfhood discovers the features of the other in historical data and matches them up with its own lacking, fragmentary desire, which is psychological rather than historical. Seeing and discovering the other is an unconscious act of self-reflection and self-discovery, and the historical account becomes a crystallization of hegemony’s alterity, disguised and hidden under the masks of blacks, Native Americans, women, and similar instances of displaced others.

The resulting hegemonic discourse—data detailing these instances and following, more than a historical or “grammatical” order, an ideological and ethos-driven one—is given shape based upon the existence of otherness and is itself, as written language, essentially an instance of alterity. For according to Lacan, entering into language and becoming self-conscious involves the split of the subject between what he really is (outside language) and what he consciously, through language, becomes (Miller 123). In Derrida’s view, similarly, language is an alien structure or “organized field of speech” that entails an individual whose origin “is always already elided” and where “the speaking subject vainly seeks a place that is always missing” (178). Considered so, Carrizales self-shaping adventures determine a deeper otherness within him and beyond mere historical adjuncts like the slave, the social parasite, or the young wife. He is born into a linguistic and cultural otherness placed on the wrong side of such surface concepts as empire, honor, riches, or language.

Regarding authorship, the orthodox subject depicts the other, the author’s mirror likeness, in a move that affects fictive (Carrizales) as well as narrative voice (Cervantes and Sandoval). Lacan’s otherness involves not simply a split between subject and object, which would assume an essential and independent existence for both, but rather the blurring of subject-object boundaries and their nearly impossible definition by the otherness of language. Carrizales’ voice, and just as importantly his lack of voice or silence, allows other voices to intervene, define, and change him. These interventions and definitions are linguistic incarnations of his otherness. Hence resonances of the self’s repression, expressed literally, show language to be not only the medium but the very embodiment of otherness. The protagonist expresses this point

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66 I refer here to “internal colonial difference” (Mignolo, in Greer 320), which would encompass characters like Loysa, Leonora, and, as it turns out, the protagonist himself. Mignolo quotes Aimé Césaire, who refers to Jews as internal colonial others within Europe before and during the Second World War.
as a trap of his own making. He compares himself to a silkworm’s chrysalis, his house a cocoon where he remained passive and dormant simply awaiting the others’ actions that will completely kill him in order to harvest the silk he created but did not use. The apparent message is that authorship involves self-destruction for the benefit of others. It is an act of public and private incorporation and of invention of textuality: the creation of threads of domesticity and an early modern “death of the author” for the benefit of commercial forces identified with inferior others but also with colonial hegemony as the superior alterity. Qua author, Cervantes creates a dual prose made up of orthodox discourse and the others’ voices. The characters of this novella and of the novel form generally are reflections, heretofore hidden, of hegemony’s reverse side manifested as unstable “castrations,” productive lacks, and hybrid cultural-linguistic exchanges.

As an embodiment of hegemonic discourse, Carrizales shows Western discursive ideology to be loose, porous, and filled with gaps. The jealous man is the literary figure of defective discourse, one that lacks essentiality in spite of its avowed desire for it. Imperial and metropolitan cultural values fail to complete his desired and impossibly-centered entity; on the contrary, those values debilitate the subject and push him outside, into the other spaces where he embraces, and becomes, alterity itself via repressed alter egos characterized by lack and displacement. If we view his jealousy as the type of anxiety Derrida attributes to the self’s “being implicated in the game” (178), Carrizales’ behavior would be opposed to hegemonic law and structure. His actions would belong in the game or play that is the space of the other, a porous conceptuality and an unstable psychology. In this space the structure of subjectivity is undermined and in fact destroyed by the game of alterity. It is a qualified death because destruction, like the eunuch’s productivity, makes possible early modern expression (the instability and angst of the baroque, for example) by allowing the subject’s self-discovery and revealing the work of alterity as the subject’s own hidden but foundational and “playful” side.

But if Cervantes’ celoso can play this fundamentally unstable role in the formation of hegemonic subjectivity, he can also act as an ideological and romantic anti-hero as suggested by Casaldueño: his deathbed generosity may be interpreted as a gesture of imperial and ideal (and ideological) hegemony. If his jealousy, a form of neurotic behavior expressive of an underlying problem, is “a way of trying to cope with it” (Eagleton, in Žižek 210), the ideological dimension reveals early modern literature as the space of resolutions that solve imperial selfhood’s social and individual contradictions. Carrizales’ noble sacrifice and generous gesture, as well as his rejection of the honor code a la Lope de Vega or Calderón, redeems a subjectivity otherwise

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67 The wife’s actions are premonitions of his death and prove her other status: upon applying him a sleep-inducing ointment, Leonora leaves him as if “embalmed for the sepulcher” and then says to the duenna, “Carrizales’ sleep is deeper than a dead man’s sleep” (121).

68 The figure of the productive eunuch, certainly not unique to Elam, is a historical truism. See Mitamura for the eunuchs’ active role in Chinese government. Kuefler details the value of the eunuch’s image for pagans and early Christians, and Tougher covers Bizantium (2008) as well as the origin and historical role of eunuchs (2002: 143-59). Narratively speaking, irony and antithetical representations are fissures or gaps characteristic of ancient literature, as Alter points out regarding the Bible (17-18) and Spitzer about Don Quixote (in Bloom 9-35).
characterized by prodigal and reckless expenditure, imperial exploitation, and authoritarian patriarchy. Carrizales’ redemption in death suggests also the salvation of imperial hegemony even as it is being denounced for its lacks and pretensions of totality. The literary figure of the jealous Spaniard solves some of the contradictions of empire, or at least suggests strategies to solving them by pointing at some of its problems: displacement, excessive expenditures, loose morals, money-driven marriages and desire for social stature.

On the other hand the slave seemingly remains outside the sphere of sexual desire, looking less threatening to hegemonic selfhood’s sexual claims. But in actuality his sexual investment is symbolically delineated, though masked and sanitized, by, among other things, his marginal position, musical tastes, and foreign language. The slave does not fully adopt hegemonic ideology, which renders him more effective as a symbol of rebellion, for he is never fully committed to the empire’s alien rationale, and less effective, or tamer to hegemonic control, since his sexual participation remains far from the women’s reach as well as impossible due to his castrated condition, unless through proxy (Loaysa). This non-direct participation of the slave, and his marginality vis-à-vis hegemonic order, makes Cervantes’ slave a more radical figure than Othello, who has abandoned marginality and fully embraced hegemonic hierarchy. The differences between the two jealous figures are stark and fundamentally different, yet some possible analogies are illustrative of the slave-master problematic in terms of the social and psychological structure of self-formation. On the one hand Othello, a composite of slave and master, challenges head-on racial and hegemonic boundaries left untouched in Cervantes’ story, yet his tragedy reveals the limits of such overstepping pretensions. And while Cervantes’ slave manages, almost unnoticed, to undermine hegemonic domesticity, even from his sanitized marginality, Othello’s death leaves such hegemonic space stand, seemingly by throwing the knot of causation upon psychological and individual fault rather than public and imperial gaps.
Chapter 4

Francisco de Quevedo’s *Heráclito Cristiano*: Self-Conversion and Colonial Metaphysics

I attempted in the previous sections to find in literature the economic and exchange-related material and circumstantial connections that come to shape selfhood and identity. The analysis of *Lazarillo de Tormes* sought to prove the link between religious experience and the material economy to demonstrate the church’s dependency not just upon economic forces and pre-capitalistic profit motivations, but upon rhetorical strategies that make hegemonic narratives into an extension of the exchange economy that surrounds the lacking selfhood represented by the protagonist. Similarly *La Vida es Sueño* begins with defective selfhoods, as Segismundo and Rosaura must negotiate spatial reinsertions and organic reconstitutions through material and rhetorical exchanges that, in the end, also come to shape their identities. One of the rhetorical exchanges in Calderón’s play adopts the form of an intertextuality, specifically a *pretextuality* that harks back to medieval examples grounded upon the “material” notion of hunger and the related theme of the master-and-slave dynamic between an ignorant (“not knowing”) medieval master and his wise servant. This dynamic of the mutual inscription undergoes a renewal, in the Cervantes tale of the jealous man, via the capitalistic and colonial circumstance that this modern prodigal son has to face. He has to escape it; then he has to reinsert himself in order to survive as a functioning but deeply troubled self. Carrizales’s project of a viable selfhood appears unachievable unless through the added space and agency of colonial alterity. Only here can he envision fulfillment and the metropolitan reconstitution of hegemonic narratives, even if their ultimate or potential downfall also dooms the protagonist himself.

As I have suggested, the common notion of sin grounds the logic of these narratives. Not only does the outward materiality of the individual hinge upon this concept, but so does inner, or psychological, identity. The basic etymology of sin, that of missing a target or veering off a prescribed path, is also one of the organizing threads in Francisco de Quevedo’s *Heráclito Cristiano* (1613), a collection of 28 religious and philosophical poems. In addition to this spatial meaning, tied in turn to the poetic and traditional image of the road of Christian life that goes back at least to Dante and Petrarch (the speaker takes the wrong road, goes astray, and is lost), the concept of sin is imbued with the meaning of value, an original debt that man owes to God, similar to Mariana’s biblical example where faith depends intimately upon the good sample of coin deposited in the temple. Although these two semantic threads of sin, as errancy and as debt, are evident in Quevedo’s poetry, the first one seems to respond to tradition while the second one undergoes an updating by way of allusions to the historical reality of colonial and imperial forces that echo the personal pain and decadence of the speaking voice. Decadence, personal and social, is apparent in the poet’s grotesque imagery of death, which recreates the Spanish and European representation of it as spectacle and as pedagogical and epistemic example.

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69 As Morros points out, Garcilaso’s “Cuando me paro a contemplar mi ‘stado’ ‘When I stop to look upon my condition’ has echoes of, among others, Petrarch and Ovid (Garcilaso de la Vega 82). See also Lapesa 74-76, 99-102, and Brownlee 141-42.
In this context, an economic analysis of literature seeks to integrate the following two lines of inquiry. First, the traditional and etymological notion of sin and the back-and-forth poetic turn from the private to the public realm of empire and social decadence; in other words, the mutual influence between inner and outer circumstance and how this exchange comes to define the sinner’s conversion. And secondly, the grotesque imagery of death, for example of decomposing bodies, used as a didactic, social critique leading to access of knowledge or wisdom. In order to illustrate this plastic aspect of poetry I will touch briefly upon one of Juan de Valdés Leal’s paintings.\textsuperscript{70}

Metaphysical Conversion and Colonialism

The man who goes amiss and becomes lost is the sinner who fails to obey prescribed rules. Although an imperfect entity, the Christian subject can still choose right and guarantee that he becomes what he ought to be. His bad choice, on the contrary, is driven by appetite and amounts to a privation or lack, which is the philosophical definition of evil according to scholastic thinking after Augustine. As he summarizes and reviews much of the Christian and medieval speculation on the subject, the philosopher Francisco Suárez (1548-1617) states in his \textit{Disputationes Metaphysicae} (1597): “evil is not a thing or positive form, nor is it too a mere negation, [but] rather, it is the privation of a perfection in being [that the thing] ought to have” (164). If we accept even a limited equivalence between sinning and embracing evil, the sinner would become the personification of privation; his lack then would define him as incomplete because he is not what he ought to be. Privation also explains his angst, which results from the contradiction between what Quevedo variously calls, on the one hand, his (young) “age,” “appetite, passion, or nature” and, on the other, his “true feeling and repentance… knowledge and conscience” (“Al Lector” “To the Reader”).

The elements of sin (disobedience, going amiss and loss) are crystallized in the motif of the road missed or not taken and the related theme of being outside the fold or distant from the reach of God. This is evident in the following lines:

“Dudosos pies por ciega noche llevo” (Salmo I)
‘I lead my doubtful feet along blind night’

“¡Cuán fuera voy, Señor, de tu rebaño, / llevado del antojo y gusto mío” (Salmo II)
‘Lord, how far off I wander from your grey, carried by my whim and my desire’

“Como sé cuán distante / de Ti, Señor, me tienen mis delitos” (Salmo V)
‘Since I know, Lord, how my crimes have kept me so distant from you’

“Cuando me vuelvo atrás a ver los años / que han nevado la edad florida mía” (Salmo IX)
‘When I look back on the years that snowed upon my blossoming age’

“Nunca tierra alcanzara; antes, violenta, / mi nave errara” (Salmo XX)
‘I wish I had never reached land but, on the contrary, my violent ship wandered off’.

\textsuperscript{70} Mercedes Cobos, \textit{Las Indias Occidentales en la Poesía Sevillana}, and Hornick, “Eschatology in Fine Art” (in Walls).
We can draw from these lines additional images reflecting other contemporary themes that organized much of the literary and artistic output of the period, specifically senses of doubt, estrangement, wrongdoing, and fleeting time, the image of the ship of life, and the overall sense of movement towards repentance and conversion. While these poetic commonplaces move well within the canonical tradition, taken together they stake the ground where the poetic voice finds, and identifies, some of the specifics of the general lack that characterizes it, especially given the interaction between this traditional imagery and the commercial or imperial depictions that come simultaneously into play.

One such instance occurs in Salmo XX where the speaking subject shows, understands, and learns about his inner, psychological turmoil thanks to the wars, ocean travel and shipwrecks suffered by Spain. The example of these national and bloody tragedies not only allows the subject to understand about his own subjective condition, but impels him even to desire a continuation of these disasters as a way to learn about himself, growing wiser in the process. Spain abandoned peace and decided upon ocean wars: “Desconoció su paz el mar de España” ‘The sea of Spain ceased to know peace’, a historical fact that defies and disobeys a Castilian tradition of land-bound wars and ambitions, which incidentally ignores pre-conquest advances in the Canaries and Northern Africa: “la ley de arena que defiende el suelo / recelo inobediencia de tal saña” ‘the law of the sand that defends the soil was annoyed at such radical disobedience’. These wars “hurt” even the mountains, covered the days with a “black veil” and mixed ice with blood. Confronted with the imperial ravages of ocean wars and shipwrecks, the poetic-I learns about his social circumstance and his inner world, too, coming finally to repentance and prayer, and yet wishing simultaneously for a perpetual continuation of these pedagogical disasters:

¡Qué me enseñó de votos la tormenta! / Y ¡qué de santos mi memoria debe / al naufragio y al mar! ¡Qué de oraciones! // Nunca tierra alcanzara; antes, violenta, / mi nave errara, pues el puerto, breve, / me trujo olvido a tantas devociones.

How many vows the tempest taught me! And how many saints my memory owes to shipwrecks and to the ocean! How many prayers! I wish I had never reached land but, on the contrary, my violent ship had kept on wandering, because the tiny harbor made me forget such great devotions.

While thus wishing for disaster to continue, the poetic voice typically embraces the motif of the road not taken, the ruin of empire, and, speaking about the private subject, the misrule of “nature” or “appetite,” which is to say the lack that defines him as an imperial self whose psychology becomes meshed with the shipwreck of the Spanish empire. Even a poetic commonplace like this one suggests an incisive critique of the public space, a mishandled empire rushing to ruin, which is transferred by analogy to the subject’s private world, similarly in decay because of the rule of appetite that defeats the higher law of orthodoxy. Appetite comes to

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71 Tyler focuses mainly upon Quevedo’s reliance on David’s *Psalms* and Heraclitus’ “temporal flow”, images of fire and lightning, the meaning of sin and knowledge of God (79-81). Arellano emphasizes Quevedo’s interest on Paul’s “new man,” from *Ephesians* 4:22 and *Colossians* 3:9 (22), a conversion-related theme. For Petrarchan themes in Quevedo’s *Canta sola a Lisi*, and some connections with *Heraclito*, see Navarrete (205-40).
characterize the public space of empire, not unlike Luis de Góngora’s “greed” in *Soledades I* (lines 393-412), and both appetite and greed explain the colonial push for discovery. Greed now leads as a new pilot after displacing the mythological figures of Tifis and Palinurus. Myth, a fictive and traditional story frozen by the canon, undergoes a substitution by the conceptual phenomenon of greed, which then acquires historical heft as it explains and represent current recorded history. This rhetorical re-adaptation is noted by Higinio Capote:

> [A]ll of Horace’s formulas [those of navigation, mining, gold, and greed] referring to East Asian countries that produced great riches, are then updated, modernized, and applied to the Indies. (in Cobos 92)

In the face of this adaptation to the American experience, the currency of canonical classicism loses out.

Although Quevedo’s metaphysical poems present a seemingly subdued, less open connection to empire than the poetry of Ludovico Ariosto and Luis de Góngora, his poetry becomes in the end just as scathing. Ariosto’s Orlando critiques the valor of knights who no longer have to engage in close, hand-to-hand combat, relying instead on new weapons of war such as firearms and powder that give them an unfair advantage and diminish their courage.

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67 Quevedo’s poetry may be considered text created within a context of crisis and decadence, a common strategy of interpretation. The contextual focus I wish to emphasize, however, is that of colonialism instead of “desengaño” (Spitzer) or “desgarrón afectivo” (Alonso). Criticizing these two approaches as well as the textual formalism that does not consider external influences or contexts, Profeti (11, 19) adopts Roland Barthes’ quote that “writing illuminates... the body.” Quevedo communicates the meaning of the body to the reader through allusion or direct address (187). Dunn, referring to *Guzmán de Alfarache*, also emphasizes “context rather than text” (in Schwartz 125).

72 The result is not immediately apparent, but new poetic trends like Gongorism may perhaps be explained partly as reactions against the excesses of the canon and fictive mythology to the detriment of the historicity of America and Spain. Cobos goes on to find American resonances in the poetry of, among others, Diego de Hojeda, Luis Martín de la Plaza, Francisco de Rioja, Luis Carrillo y Sotomayor, Fernando de Herrera, Francisco de Medrano, and Quevedo (82-96), as well as in Hernando de Soria Galvarro’s *Silva de la nao Victoria* (1628), a poem that celebrates Magellan’s voyage, and Fernando Mejía de Guzmán’s satire “La zarzaparrilla” (c. 1590), dedicated to the plant that cures venereal disease. In one of Villamediana’s satirical sonnets, “Aunque de godos ínclitos desciendas” ‘Even if you descend from noble Goths’, archetypal gentlemen are criticized for their lack of “virtue” and empty boastfulness. Here the clash between, on the one hand, canonical and classical (Gothic origin, “Roman eagles”), and on the other, colonial desire (“Mexican plumes” and “African flags”) is neatly summarized (Villamediana 438).
Orlando Furioso IX, 88-91. Góngora, too, has his old peasant in Soledades denounce imperial greed and desire for gold as the causes of national disasters and the corruption of values and mores, which are tied directly with economic materiality. Quevedo elsewhere offers a similarly historical view, detailing the capitalistic route of monetary accumulation in “Poderoso Caballero es Don Dinero” ‘A powerful gentleman is Sir Money’, but Salmo XX and Heráclito Cristiano in general suggest the limits even of peaceful empire as an isolated, land-bound security, “el puerto” ‘the harbor’. The image of the safe, peaceful harbor is deceiving, for such peace results from the destruction caused by shipwrecks and tempests, which, by increasing religious devotion, prepare the subject for his repentance and conversion. The upshot is a renewal of the individual and the nation.

The move towards conversion and renewal may be seen in Salmo XXVIII, which presents the distractions of love as the beginning of the poet’s repentance and shame, as attested by the following lines: “Amor me tuvo alegre el pensamiento” ‘Love kept my understanding happy’; “Ya del error pasado me arrepiento” ‘Now I repent the past error’; “Corrido estoy de los pasados años” ‘I am ashamed of the years past’. Past error leads the speaking voice to a new realization that concludes with, or entails, the acceptance of his guilt (culpa). It is a condition of “paz” ‘peace’ found only after having pursued “engaños” ‘deceit’, the latter recapitulating the utility of the lost road motif, here identified with youth and love. Phrased another way, because of sin, applied in this case only to the individual, the subject realizes his mistake and guilt and stands ready to accept the punishment of orthodoxy, along with an eventual reinsertion into the rightful road or lawful space. Repentance leads to conversion, and this is the higher knowledge that closes the sonnet: “pues conozco mi culpa y no la excuso” ‘for I know my guilt and do not excuse it’.

Conversion is generally acknowledged as a problematic notion because of its attachment to the partiality of hegemony and ideology, but this very characteristic produces a more nuanced hegemonic identity (Griffiths 1-6; Murray, in Griffiths 43-48). For the uniform Christian never was a coherent whole, a fact proven at least partially by Spanish laws against mixed “races” and against conversos with non-pure ancestry. The purity demanded by the laws of “limpieza de sangre” ‘cleanliness of blood’, lays bare Spain’s racial and cultural mixture as well as her religious fissures, which determines, if not an actual or open fragmentation, at least evidentiary proof of Spain’s cultural imbalance. Beyond and before Spain, the definition of a Christian begins as a hybrid concept, conceived paradoxically as ideally pure. As hybrid identities, the Christian and converso merge, the former standing up as the hegemonic voice that defines the other as a shunned, subdued alterity lacking voice and narrative power.

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74 Orlando throws a vanquished enemy’s spoils, weapons and powder, to “the deep of Tartarus,” where they were manufactured by Beelzebub’s hand”, an action that reveals how these new weapons are undermining Castiglione’s ideal knight (Hale 21-24). The disconnect between the ideology of knighthood and actual war misconduct and profiteering also applies to Spain, for which see Childers’ study of the Alpujarras war vis-à-vis Don Quixote (11-19). Murrin’s History and Warfare in Renaissance Epic (1995) studies this phenomenon for all of Europe (Santosuosso). See Quevedo’s Silva against “the inventor of the cannon fire”: “En cárcel de metal, joh atrevimiento!” ‘In a metal prison, such daring!’ (1981:127-30).
Viewed like this, the hegemonic Christian voice that in Salmo VIII confesses his spiritual sin, his “barbarian” desire, his “ugly” tastes, and the muddled “abyss” where he lives in his narcissistic self-love, is a selfhood cognizant of his imperfection, standing ready to change into the ideal Christian of whom he “dreams”. In other words, recognition and repentance of sin are acknowledgments of spiritual lacks that define the good Christian as a barbarian who, at least, moves towards conversion, the abandonment of his barbarity. This salmo reads partly as follows:

Dejadme un rato, barbaros contentos, / que al sol de la verdad tenéis por sombra / los arrepentimientos; / que la memoria misma se me asombra / de que pudiesen tanto mis deseos, / que unos gustos tan feos / hiciesen parecer hermosos tanto […] / contentaos con la parte de los años que deben vuestros lazos a mi vida; / que yo la quiero dar por bien perdida, / ya que abracé los santos desengaños / que enturbiaron las aguas del abismo / donde me enamoraba de mí mismo.

Leave me in peace for a while, O barbarous delights that keep in the shade the sun of truth and repentance, for even my memory is in awe that my desire could dare so much, and that such ugly tastes should seem to be so beautiful… Be satisfied with the part of my [younger] years that your ties owe to my life, for I will consider life as well spent and lost; because I embraced the saintly disabuse that muddled the waters of the abyss where I was falling in love with myself.

To be sure, the idea of the barbarian within the Christian is traditional rhetorical fare. Yet as such, it is a formal part of discourse and does determine and shape actual, discursive, narrative hegemonies. Moreover, the image of the barbarian controlled by his ugly desires, living in the abyss of sin and far from the light of truth is one that may—and was—applied to baptized European Christians as well as the “real” barbarians conquered and subjugated during the colonial wars and appropriations. For example, the Jesuit Pedro de Rivadeneira, in his Vida del Padre Diego Laínez, speaks of the evangelization of the island of Sardinia starting in 1559 as if it were a colonial space inhabited by barbarian sinners. After the arrival of the Jesuits, he claims, the island was morally reconstituted, “usury contracts, sacrileges, public common-law and illicit marriages, witchcraft, superstitions and other large sins were banned” (145). Similarly in America another Jesuit, José de Acosta, calls the conquering Spaniards sinners whose actions of avarice and violence were considered key impediments for the teaching of the gospel (1995: 39). He goes on to suggest that these Spanish barbarian traits rivaled or surpassed those that Native Americans were accused of having (1995: 35-38).

Thus the conclusion of Quevedo’s poem repeats two concomitant concepts of conversion. First, the sinner has to recognize the abyss of self-love where he is drowning. Though sinful and wrong, self-love may be understood as a phase of individual identity, for this energy gives him self-shaping capabilities. In the parallel colonial narrative, the conquering Spaniard or Indiano, representatives of the metropolitan subject, are driven by lower material forces encapsulated in “appetite” and crystallized in the capitalistic, imperial, and colonial endeavors under the banners of what Acosta calls “avarice, dishonesty, and violence.” Secondly, the sinner recognizes his delusion, or “santos desengaños” ‘saintly disabuse’, and renounces such sinful behavior. But this latter move does not correspond to a historically-inspired first action, for the Indiano does not
convert or repent. He remains a historical creature subject to colonial and capitalistic forces. Yet Quevedo’s poetic voice does undergo a theoretical conversion, in part because he is a historical abstraction who, although referring tangentially to a colonial rationale, seeks a purely metaphysical resolution through an attachment to commonplace and historically neutral Heraclitean motifs like the passage of time and the flow or constant change of the world (Héraclite 50-53, 98-113).

The speaking voice reiterates in Salmo XII “¿Quién dijera a Cartago…?” ‘Who could tell Carthage?’ the analogical relationship between the historical decadence of empire and its end-result upon the self’s psyche, his “noble desengaño” ‘noble disabuse’ and gratitude for the lessons taught by death: “viendo acabado tanto reino fuerte, / agradezco a la muerte / … todas las horas que en el mundo vivo” ‘Seeing so many kingdoms ended, I am grateful to death for all the hours I live in this world’. Quevedo’s ubi sunt technique here feels strongly traditional and less innovative because it lacks any resonances to contemporary history. But this is not the case for Salmo XI where metaphysical or religious desire, explained in terms of the materiality of the Indies’ goods and treasures (“bienes” and “tesoros”), makes it yet another poem about conversion, the wish to return to an original “naked” state before dying, and to a world where “goods” cease to be material and become spiritual. The resulting tension from wanting to define metaphysical worries in terms of historical phenomena weighs against the essentiality of the former; those worries become colonial definitions that drift away from the medieval topoi of riches and treasures as in Petrarch’s De Remediis. Salmo XI reads partially as follows,

Nací desnudo… // Volver como nací quiero a la tierra… // Y sepan todos que por bienes sigo / los que no han de poder morir conmigo; / pues mi mayor tesoro / es no envidiar la púrpura ni el oro… // De nada hace tesoros, Indias hace / quien, como yo, con nada está contento, / y con frágil sustento / la hambre ayuna y flaca satisface…

I was born naked… I want to return to the earth as I was born… And let everyone know the goods I follow are those that will not die with me; for my biggest treasure is not to envy the purple and gold… He who, like me, is content with nothing, makes treasures, makes Indies out of nothing, and with fragile sustenance satisfies his fasting and scarce hunger…

The Indies anchor Quevedo’s metaphysical worry in the materiality of history. Similarly gold loses its medieval topicality to acquire a new capitalistic and colonial shade. The denunciation of gold and treasure ceases to be the denunciation of medieval “avarice.” Acosta’s avarice has clearly become colonial, determined by historical circumstance, just as Quevedo’s metaphysical poetry undergoes this gradational change in one single line, “De nada hace tesoros, Indias hace” ‘out of nothing he makes treasures, he makes Indies’, as if the topoi had reached its limit, or ceased to convey actual meaning, unless the poet brings in new colonial, definitional forces. These forces weaken the metaphysical content, and history becomes part of poetic, metaphysical desire. At the same time that Quevedo’s poetry denounces the facts of history and empire (the
Indies as a source of European accumulation), it embraces the colonies as a metaphysical idea in order to measure and quantify the degree of the self’s inner desire, his satisfying lack.\footnote{The new colonial world causes an epistemological shift based upon new economic phenomena. This shift may be expressed with open and pedestrian vulgarity in an effort to appropriate secular material “for doctrinal purposes.” Alonso de Ledesma’s Christ becomes a “perulero” who lands upon a hermitage called Santa María, and his death is depicted “though the allegory of an ‘indiano’: “Aquel perulero rico, / que para nuestro remedio / desembarcó en las Indias / en Santa María del Puerto” ‘That rich Peruvian Spaniard who, for the sake of our remedy, disembarked in the Indies, in the Port of Santa María’ (Walters 159). Quevedo’s poetry, while maintaining traditional expression, incorporates the shift more intimately, thus bringing the American content into the essentiality of European hegemonic ideas. Mignolo argues that European hegemony produces an “erasure” of American cultures (2002: Acosta 470); my aim here is to show how that colonial erasure can possibly become part of hegemonic ideology.}

The usefulness of sin and the visualization of death as pedagogical tools are standard theological rationales that help Quevedo’s lacking poetic-I make sense of a decaying world he cannot control and of a selfhood born unto the imperfection of original sin. In Salmo XIV the ugliness of reason leads to repentance, and self-vision becomes the path to conversion: “es que está [la razón] ya tan fea, / que se ha de arrepentir cuando se vea” ‘for [reason] is so ugly already that it will repent when it sees itself’. Self-vision is akin to the vision of sin, the selfhood’s lack or imperfection, which despite its negative implications leads to conversion and salvation. The knowledge of sin appears necessary, perhaps inevitable given sin’s innate quality, and so it is a phase in the subject’s total self-knowledge, which includes his psyche and his world, his inner and outer circumstance. The ugliness of sin, and its punishment by God, leads the self onto the epistemological, higher status of conversion: “que si Dios me castiga, que Él me esfuerza” ‘for in punishing me, God gives me strength’ (Salmo XIII). The latter part of this psalm concludes with the intimate relationship between conversion and sin:

Sólo me da cuidado / ver que esta conversión tan conocida / ha de venir a ser agradecida, / más que a mi voluntad, a mi pecado, / pues ella no es tan buena / que desprecie por mala tanta pena: / y aunque él es vil, y de dolor tan lleno / que al infierno le igualo, / sólo tiene de bueno / el dar conocimiento de que es malo.

It only worries me to see that this known conversion will come to be thanks to my sin and not my will, for my will is not so good as to reject as evil so much pain, and although sin is vile and so full with pain that I equate it with hell, it only has one good aspect: it provides the knowledge that it is evil.

The logic of sin involves its necessity, the recognition of its existence as the path leading to self-liberation, or salvation through conversion. This recognition or knowledge of evil, good in so far as it is epistemological, depends significantly upon the senses, specifically sight. The resulting confluence of evil, sight, and death turns out to be a characteristic of Quevedo’s religious poetry and one aspect linking literature with contemporary plastic imagery. Poems like this one, focused upon metaphysical worries, promote self-knowledge by resorting to the imagery summoned up by death and such sin-related imperfections as ugliness, hell, crime (delito), and pain.
The shifting between inner and outer worries recurs in *Heráclito Cristiano*, for example in Salmo XVII, one of Quevedo’s most famous sonnets. Here again the vision of decay, ruins, and old age lead the reader to the vision and memory of death. Simultaneously the vision of his circumstance—the natural landscape as well as the historical and metaphorical “walls” of his “fatherland”—directs him to a type of self-knowledge only attained after the visualization of death. The sight of the outside world moves gradually from the far and removed spaces of the fatherland, to the countryside, creeks, and forest, on to his house and personal property (his walking stick and old sword), and finally to the recollection of death, so that the connection between outside and inside is laid out unambiguously, and the decadence of Spain directly reflects that of the individual:

Miré los muros de la patria mía, / si un tiempo fuertes, ya desmoronados, / de la carrera de la edad cansados, / por quien caduca ya su valentía. / Salíme al campo, / vi que el sol bebía / los arroyos del yelo desatados, / y del monte quejosos los ganados, / que con sombras hurtó su luz el día. / Entré en mi casa; / vi que, amancillada, / de anciana habitation era despojos; / mi báculo, más corvo y menos fuerte; / vencida de la edad sentí mi espada. / Y no hallé cosa en que poner los ojos / que no fuese recuerdo de la muerte.

I saw the walls of my fatherland, if once strong, now crumbling, tired of the race of time, which had prostrated their courage. I went out on the countryside and I saw the sun drinking the creeks that the ice had let loose and the grumbling cattle in the forest, whose shadows robbed the light of day. I went in my house. I saw that it was tarnished, the ruins of an old room; my walking stick was more crooked and less strong; I felt my sword vanquished by age. And I could not find anything on which to rest my eyes other than the memory of death.  

Self-knowledge happens thanks to a psychological visualization of death, or its related images of decay, crumbling ruins, old age, and weakness. The decadence of the nation infects the natural landscape seen by the speaking voice. It is a vision of shadows and sunsets, an indication that the high time of day, when light is plentiful, is drawing to a close. The dissolution of the fatherland then transfers to the domestic space, described in turn as old and tarnished ruins (“anciana,” “amancillada,” “despojos”), and to the gentleman’s sword, a symbol of weakened military might, of an individual’s failed army career or reduced gentlemanly clout. Finally the metaphorical and symbolic chain of decay comes to rest upon the eyes, origin and medium of the poem, and upon the self’s incapacity to rest them anywhere except upon the memory of death, the extreme image of decay and ruin.

In fact Quevedo’s poetry is one of extremes. It has been noted that it reaches for lower registers and “monstrous dimensions” (Navarrete 213-14), a lack of decorum that Alonso calls a “desgarrón afectivo” ‘an affective ripping or tearing-out’ (495-595). Joseph Antonio González de Salas, Quevedo’s friend, writes that his poetry contains at times “voices and phrases that

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According to Crosby possible sources for this sonnet include Seneca’s letter XII to Lucilius and Ovid’s *Tristia* I.xi.23 (Quevedo 2003:115). Blecua dismisses too easily the “terrible apocalyptic vision of a crumbling empire” (290) and Price highlights the procedure “from the general to the particular” (323).
might be judged of less decorum” (Alonso 548), which means that his poetic word choice feels earth-bound, non-elitist, or even, to use Alonso’s term, ‘non-poetic’ “voces extrapoéticas”77. For although the imagery of death may be considered canonical, and therefore part of decorum, Quevedo’s macabre vision does acquire a monstrous and “ripping” profile, a characteristic poetic spectacle that shares in the plastic sensibilities of post-Trent and seventeenth-century Spain.

The Tomb and the Worm: Decay as Path to Social and Personal Knowledge

The shock of the senses, as the spectacle of the bloody games during classical times bears out, has long been known and used for religious and pedagogical purposes. But during the late Roman Empire the learning logic of the circus had been weakened, and games, their funereal origin seemingly forgotten, had become primarily a means for political control of the masses, as summarized by Juvenal’s phrase in his tenth satire, panem et circenses. From that point forward a new epistemic appreciation of this spectacle of death went, not so paradoxically, to some Christian detractors who adopted it for their own eschatological and crisis-driven narratives. These new critics thought that brutal shows confirmed the imminent decay of pagan society; the games announced a coming social demise and were but a pale representation of the veritable and ultimate display of blood and world annihilation of the Last Judgment. Next to this latter spectacle of destruction-as-truth, or true knowledge, the circus appeared as a puny sideshow78.

In other words Christianity’s epistemological eschatology embraces this spectacle, extending it to unutterable, divine lengths, since dogmatic beliefs like the Last Judgment partake in God’s ineffability and otherworldliness. The spectacle of the sufferings of the condemned in hell and the destruction of a sinful world is meant to compensate, and give knowledge to, the heavenly blessed as well as the sinners still on earth. This vision, both exemplary and pedagogical, teaches the saved souls to appreciate what they avoided, namely eternal damnation, gives them pause to be appreciative of God’s favor, and fills them with joy. It, too, justifies their faith (the good are rewarded and the bad punished) and provides them with a sense of ineffable

77 Alonso’s example involves a love poem where the speaker is compared to a pack animal tied to a yoke and biting on the bit (549): “Cuando de que me vi libre me acuerdo” ‘When I recall that I gained my freedom’. Similarly Marcilly, paraphrasing Alonso, describes Quevedo’s metaphysical time-related quandaries as an “inner ripping” ‘desgarradura interior’; Quevedo’s interest is “the man made of flesh and bones; and in this painful concretization, to live is to know that one has been [a series of] lost lives in discontinuous time” (in Sobejano 79-80).

78 These introductory ideas paraphrase one of Nietzsche’s insights from On the Genealogy of Morals, as will be shown next. See A. Futrell, The Roman Games, for their origins, political use, costs (1-29) and early Christian criticisms (165-72); Köhne and Ewigleben, Gladiators and Caesars (8-30). For the politics and economics of “bread” see Weeber, Panem et Circenses (156-65). During the Renaissance, eschatological issues, or the “four last things”: death, judgment, heaven, and hell, “were most often painted and sculpted” (Hornick, in Walls 629-30). See Martínez Gil, Muerte y Sociedad, especially “El Ceremonial de la Muerte Barroca” (315-59).
pleasure\textsuperscript{79}. Following this idea, even the crisis of paganism that closes with the fall of Rome is nothing compared to the fall of the entire world, the spectacle of which will satisfy Christians and provide them with an epistemic value to confirm the truth of their faith and the false knowledge of infidels and naysayers. The knowledge provided by violent spectacle, spurred by the believer’s joy and euphoria, moves along orthodoxies or moralities whose justification is higher and self-generating: God’s validation opposes the seemingly lower pagan rationale based upon the political expediency of bread and circus.\textsuperscript{80}

To be sure, some of these Christian ideas are found in religious poetry from every historical period, but their general meaning is tempered by each poet’s particular interests. As noted before, the spectacle of death holds circumstantial, or historical, roots as well as epistemic and exemplary goals.\textsuperscript{81} That is, it responds to a specific rationale grounded on historical and social causes as well as to an overt or implied goal of teaching through example. This extreme glimpse replicates death’s distortions in an overreaching that, by going further than any other technique, offers the reader (as seer or spectator) a higher position from which to judge the world—etymologically the “epistemic” or leading position. Episteme also has the interested, political meaning emphasized by Foucault: roughly a functional practice that, while supporting a given social order, becomes true and actual knowledge through that very support (Rouse, in Gutting 95-122; McHoul and Grace 42-45; Dant 127-30). Knowing and supporting a social order converge, as if belief and true knowledge were but facets of the same process. These two

\textsuperscript{79} Tertullian: “Yes, and there are other sights [spectacula]: that last day of judgment... when the world hoary with age, and all its many products, shall be consumed in one great flame [uno igne haurentur]. O the breadth of that spectacle! What there excites my admiration, my derision? Which sight gives me joy?” Thomas Aquinas: “In order that the bliss of the saints may be more delightful ... and that they may render more copious thanks to God... it is given to them to see perfectly the punishment of the damned [ut poenam impiorum perfecte intueantur] (Both quotations in Nietzsche 485-86; Tertullian’s translation slightly modified). Similarly Quevedo extols calamity and death as pedagogical tools to acquire knowledge, as in the silva “¡Oh tú, del cielo para mí venida... calamidad... de mí serás cantada / por el conocimiento que te debo!” ‘O you, calamity, having come to me from heaven... I will sing to you for the knowledge that I owe you!’ In the sonnet “Si son nuestros cosarios nuestros puertos”, God is addressed like this, “Por cobradores tuyos nos envíás / hoy la borrasca, ayer el luterano, / y ejecutores son horas y días” ‘Today the storm and yesterday the Lutheran you send to us as collectors, and the hours and days are the executors’.

\textsuperscript{80} The games ought to be banned because, according to Tertullian, they responded to human worries rather than divine precepts, the true faith, or God. The “hatred” and “vengeful spirit” that informs the treatise are both biblically-based and biased, for other Christian writers show more tolerance (Tertullien, Les Spectacles 31, 54-62). For a post-colonial reading of Tertullian as an African, see Wilhite.

\textsuperscript{81} Collins, Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, Vol I, vii-xi. Apocalyptic vision is also attested in pre-Jewish sources (3-38). The painter Francisco Pacheco supported the “deployment of art for Christian purposes”. He describes “the viewers’ senses as being ‘violated’ by strikingly painted images” with the goal to separate men from vice and “lead them to ‘the true cult of God Our Lord’” (Robbins 83, 85). According to Stackhouse, “Christian eschatology invites a theology of history in which a new heaven” and a new earth can be imagined “ethically” (in Walls ??).
meanings, the epistemic-exemplary and historical-political, are also at work in Quevedo’s metaphysical poetry.

In effect an emphatic death-vision rationale weaves through Heráclito Cristiano, a collection meant to teach a repentant and crying sinner about the truth of his weak psyche, the ravages of lower bodily appetite, and the metaphysical truth of the world to come via the tempus fugit motif and the Christianized Heraclitean unity of opposites that hinge, in turn, upon the topic “death-is-life.” The resulting pessimistic vision opens the door to doubt and despair, two additional themes that seemingly contradict the sinner’s confession of faith yet typify contemporary Christian literary expression. Additionally, social critique, which Tertullian directed against the corruption of Roman mores, is not entirely absent from Quevedo, who denounces worldly splendor and courtly pursuits by resorting to the image of the Indies (Salmo XI) in addition to traditional death-related motifs such as vanitas or desengaño, for example in Salmo VIII, “Dejadme un rato, bárbaros contentos”.

As Christian and eschatological writers, both Tertullian and Quevedo find in Christian spectacle a lesson to be learned, for the visual imagery of death and destruction leads to truths about cosmic and psychological orders in the context of real or perceived social and personal crises. Ignatius Loyola provides one contemporary example of this pedagogy in his fifth Spiritual Exercise, “Meditación del infierno” “Meditation on hell”, which advises the sinner to think of hell and the suffering of the condemned in order to stave off sin:

ver con la vista de la imaginación la longura… del infierno… pedir interno sentimiento de la pena… [de] los dañados… [para que] el temor de las penas me ayude a no venir en pecado… oír con las orejas llantos, alaridos, voces, blasfemias contra Cristo nuestro Señor… oler con el olfato humo, piedra azufre, sentina y cosas putridas. (quoted by Robbins 87-88)

To see with the sight of imagination the length of hell. To ask for an inner sense of the pain of the condemned [so that] the fear of that pain helps me no to come to sin. To hear with the ears the plaints, shrieks, cries, blasphemies against Christ our Lord. To smell with the sense of smell the smoke, sulphur, filth, and putrid things.

Nor does it appear to be a coincidence that the Christian who contemplates death as he looks in the mirror eventually lands over the visual representation of a key Christian nucleus, the passion of Christ, which, containing the additional mechanism of the persecuted scapegoat, adds to the graphic representation of social violence in the midst of crisis as a way to cleanse the body politic as well as the bodies of each member of the collectivity (Girard 112-14). The common prayer states appropriately that the Lamb of God washes away the sins of the world: the bloody spectacle of the crucifixion is meant to cure social and psychological ills as much as provide Quevedo’s sinner with knowledge about himself and his place in the world, upon which basis he may conceivably build his conversion. Salmo XXIII and especially XXIV present the crucifixion just as such sense- and pathos-driven learning strategy.

Salmo XXIII, “¿Alégrate, Señor, el ruido ronco…?” “Does the muttering noise, Lord, make you happy?”, is a study in contrast, a series of paradoxical and economic exchanges that
compares Jesus’ popularity one day to his martyrdom the next, with the acquiescence of those who once cheered him on. The speaking voice, warning the godhead of his future sacrifice, teaches sinners via this spectacle—and, in a rhetorical move, even God himself—about their human frailty and betrayal. Symbolic and economic exchanges only accentuate the contrast of the crucifixion, a mixture of carnival and death, sadness and happiness, giving and taking. One day Jesus is presented with palms just so that, on Friday, he can be given the “naked trunk” of the cross. These palms, a “suspicious cheer”, are later to be exchanged for weapons: “pues de aquí a poco, para darte muerte, / te irán con armas a buscar entre ellos” ‘for soon hereafter, to give you death, they will come looking for you with weapons’. The poem ends with an anti-Semitic characterization and the antithetical and economical exchange symbolized by the lottery over Jesus’ belongings: “Y porque la malicia más se arguya / de nación a su propio Rey tirana, / hoy te ofrecen sus capas, y mañana / suertes verás echar sobre la tuya” ‘And so that the malice of the nation which is a tyrant to its own king may be argued, today they give you their capes, and tomorrow you will see them cast lots over yours’.

Salmo XXIV, a longer and traditional reflection on the spectacle of the passion and death of Christ, is meant to instill sinners with humility as they desperately seek solace from their guilty conscience. The poetic voice, looking for “favor” and “breath”, only sees “al Señor que adoro / teñido en sangre… en noche obscura yace sepultado” ‘the Lord I adore tainted with blood and lying buried in dark night’. The bloody vision, connected to the darkness of night and tomb, leads the sinner on his way to redemption via the mystery of the passion: one sacrificial victim’s blood washes away “human guilt” thereby buying back the deaths, or sinful lives, of the group:

Ya manchaba el vellón la blanca lana / con su sangre el Cordero sin mancilla, / y ya sacrificaba / la vida al Padre, poderoso y sancto; / y por la culpa humana, / el sumo trono de su cetro humilla… // ya gustando los tragos de la muerte, / la ponzoña le quita que tenía, / y, bebiendo él primero, / al unicornio imita, que, sediento, / bebe de aquella suerte… // comprando tantas muertes una vida…

Already the unblemished Lamb was staining with his blood the white wool and sacrificing his life to the saintly and mighty Father, and for the sake of human guilt he humbles the high throne of his scepter… and now tasting the draughts of death, he takes away the poison that it had, and he drinks first, imitating the unicorn who, thirsty, drinks in like manner… thus buying with one life so many deaths…

This religious vision, common in metaphysical poetry, devotional literature, and the plastic arts seeks to access the spiritual and otherworldly realms at a moment when individuals face imminent decay or personal crises. The sense of crisis, a rift of conceived order, highlights the self’s transitory status, which opens the door to despair, and the imagery of the passion only confirms the attainability of wisdom through the reflection on death. At the same time, visual symbols like the cross, the blood and suffering of Christ, the tomb, and the worms acquire more relevance as exemplary and pedagogical tools for the benefit of sinners in need of conversion.

Luis de Granada, for example, in his Guía de Pecadores ‘Guide for Sinners’ (1556), devotes consecutive chapters upon the “Consideration of Death” and “The Final Judgment” with the stated goal to educate the sinner about his conduct on earth and the consequences in the life
to come. He writes, “Acuérdate de tus postrimerías y nunca jamás pecarás” (26) ‘Remember your death and you will never sin’, and then goes on to describe with colorful, linguistic plasticity the sinner’s deathbed:

Te has de ver en una cama, con una vela en la mano, esperando el golpe de la muerte… Allí se te representará luego el apartamiento de todas las cosas, el agonía de la muerte, el término de la vida, el horror de la sepultura, la suerte del cuerpo que vendrá a ser manjar de gusanos, y mucho más la del ánima, que entonces está dentro del cuerpo, y de ay a dos horas no sabes dónde estará (19).

You will see yourself upon a bed with a candle in your hand, waiting for the stroke of death… It will be shown to you there the isolation of all things, the agony of death, the end of life, the horror of the sepulcher, the fate of the body, which will become the food of worms, and the fate of the soul, then inside the body but two hours thereafter you will not know where it will be.

The images of the tomb and the worm serve to propel this very lesson in Salmo XXII. The biblical wish to be a “new man” (hombre nuevo), the beginning frame and the concept that organizes and concludes Quevedo’s metaphysical compilation, is here again apparent. The poetic voice confesses the self’s sins and asks for grace and cleanliness as he heads towards conversion (communion as conversion as explained by Gonzáles de Salas’ epigraph), signaled by his wish to become a divine “monument”. For otherwise the body of Christ would be contaminated by the self’s “brute appetites”, resulting in a metaphorical burial of God in the sinner’s body, which, made of dirt, is both tomb and lodging for worms. Further complicating the metaphor, the sinner’s conscience becomes the worm that, destroying his appetites, cleanses and transforms him into a pure marble monument, a new man resuscitated from sin and now fit to receive the body of Christ:

Pues hoy pretendo ser tu monumento, / porque me resucites del pecado, / habítame de gracia, renovado / el hombre antiguo en ciego perdimiento. / Si no, retratarás tu nacimiento / en la nieve de un ánimo obstinado / y en corazón pesebre, acompañado / de brutos apetitos que en mí siento. / Hoy te entierras en mí, siervo villano, / sepulcro, a tanto güésped, vil y estrecho, / indigno de tu cuerpo soberano. / Tierra te cubre en mí, de tierra hecho; / la conciencia me sirve de gusano; / mármol para cubrirte da mi pecho.

Since today I intend to be your monument, lodge your grace in me so that you may resuscitate me from sin, a renewed man from the man before, blind and lost. Otherwise you will paint your birth upon the snow of an obstinate will and over a manger-heart accompanied by the brute appetites that I feel. Today you bury yourself within me, a villainous serf, sepulcher to so many vile and paltry guests, unworthy of your sovereign body. Dirt covers you because of me, made of dirt; conscience serves me as a worm; my chest provides you with the marble to cover you.

The image of the body as sepulcher responds to Heraclitean worries about the passage of time as much as to Christian considerations of death, as in Salmo IX: “y en naciendo comienza la
jornada / desde la tierna cuna / a la tumba enlutada… Pues si la vida es tal, si es de esta suerte, / llamarla vida agravio es de la muerte” “and upon being born, the journey from tender cradle to mourning tomb begins… So if life is such, if it is so, to call it life is an insult to death.”82 As sepulcher and dirt, it follows that the body is a potential lodging for worms, which symbolize sinful appetites and transitory life, the inability of the self (transitory melting snow, bestial heart) to use reason in order to understand, reach, and safeguard eternal knowledge. The manger that defines the heart follows an orthodox interpretation: though beastly like sin, the manger is the very birthplace of Jesus, whose presence turns it into a shrine. Like the manger, a sinner’s heart can be saved, cleansed and changed into a shrine or monument of white marble by the divine presence he is willing to let in.

Besides the visualization of the body as sepulcher, Quevedo’s epistemological death involves the metaphors of the conscience as worm and the worm of conscience, which according to Crosby are alternate readings of the same line: “la consciencia me presta su gusano” and “la consciencia me sirve de gusano” ‘conscience lends me its worm’ and ‘conscience serves me as a worm’. As Crosby points out, conscience and knowledge are opposed to appetite, passion, nature and time-constrained worries (Quevedo 2003: 99). So the symbol of the worm acquires paradoxically a higher quality, for it allows man’s self-knowledge through the appreciation of the eschatological moment. The metaphors fuse spiritual and sensual spheres by equating conscience with the worm of death, admitting that the spirituality of conscience can best be understood in terms of the symbolic worm. This line, moreover, defines conscience as a self-cannibalistic body: a self-eating worm, or a spiritual entity that contains within itself the very materiality it rejects. As a metaphorical worm (‘conscience serves me as worm’) and as the seat of reason, conscience acts logically to undermine and destroy the integrity of selfhood, even if such destruction may bring about the salvation of the sinner. In other words salvation may be gained through the eschatological worm, and the capacity to think and reason becomes the very cause that destroys, and saves by destroying, selfhood. Elsewhere Quevedo summarizes this process in an epitaph ‘to a sinner’:

Gusanos de la tierra / comen el cuerpo que este mármol cierra; mas los de la consciencia en esta calma, / hartos del cuerpo, comen ya del alma. (Quevedo 1981:185)

The worms of the earth eat the body which this marble guards, but the worms of conscience in this calm, fed up with the body, eat already of the soul.

The relationship between notional dissolution and macabre imagery is true for literature as well as painting, and Juan de Mañara’s moralizing essay, Discurso de la Verdad, as the

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82 Similar examples occur elsewhere in Quevedo’s works. See La Cuna y la Sepultura: “la cuna empieza a ser sepultura, y la sepultura, cuna a la postrera vida” (66) ‘the cradle becomes sepulcher, and the sepulcher the cradle of the life hereafter’. The theme of death is a constant of love poetry as well. Garcilaso’s sonnet VI reads partly, “… que con la muerte al lado / busco de mi vivir consejo nuevo” ‘with death beside me I try to find a new path for my life,’ which repeats Petrarch, Canzoniere CCLXIV, “che co la morte a lato / cerco del viver mio novo consiglio” (Garcilaso de la Vega 90). The similarities between Quevedo’s metaphysical Heráclito Cristiano and his later Lisi love poems include such themes as thirst, death, and decay (Navarrete 233).
alleged inspiration for Juán de Valdés Leal’s painting, *Finis Glorae Mundi*, proves the connection. Painting and literature-as-painting (ekphrasis) adopt at this time decidedly macabre and spectacular descriptions designed to teach and define the characteristics of the subject and his/her milieu. The self-regard expressed in the written page or canvas reflects the picture of death as if lurking behind the self’s subtle, perishable skin. Mañara’s ekphrasis, an exemplary visualization of dead, rotten corpses covered with worms, is designed to access fundamental truths about the secular and spiritual worlds:

Si tuviéramos delante de los ojos la verdad, esta es, no hay otra: la mortaja que hemos de llevar había de ser vista todos los días por lo menos, con la consideración que si te acordaras que has de ser cubierto de tierra y pisado de todos, con facilidad olvidarías los honores y estados de este siglo; y si consideras los viles gusanos que han de comer ese cuerpo, y cuán feo y abominable ha de estar en la sepultura; y cómo esos ojos, que están leyendo estas letras, han de ser comidos de la tierra, y las sedas y galas que hoy tuviste se convertirán en una mortaja podrida, los ámbares en hedor, tu hermosura y gentileza en gusanos, tu familia y grandeza en la mayor soledad que es imaginable. Mira una bóveda; entra en ella con la consideración y ponte a mirar tus padres o tu mujer (si la has perdido), los amigos que conocías: ¡Mira qué silencio! No se oye ruido; sólo el roer de las carcomas y gusanos tan solamente se percibe. ¿Y el estruendo de pajes y lacayos dónde está? Acá se queda todo; repara las alhajas del palacio de los muertos, algunas telarañas son. ¿Y la mitra y la corona? También acá la dejaron. Repara, hermano mío, que esto sin duda has de pasar. (Mañara 13-14)

If we had the truth in front of our eyes, this would be it and no other: the shroud we’re destined to wear ought to be seen at least every day, considering that if you recalled that you’ll be covered with dirt and trod upon by others, you would easily forget the honors and social status of this world. And consider the vile worms that will eat your body, and how ugly and abominable you will be in your tomb, and how those eyes that are now reading these letters will be eaten by the earth, and those hands gnawed and dry, and the silks and dresses you have today will turn into a rotten shroud, and the ambers into stench, your beauty and gentility into worms, your family and nobility into the utter and worst solitude imaginable. Look at the vault; enter it with deliberation and look at your parents or your wife (if you have lost them), the friends you knew: Notice the quiet! Not a sound is

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Du Gué Trapi suggests this link but also mentions Saint Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises* and the legend of The Three Living and the Three Dead, according to which one of the latter said to the three living: “What you are, we were; what we are, you will become” (54-57). In fact this thematic imagery was widespread. One of the engravings in Juan de Horozco’s *Emblemas Morales* (1589) shows a candle, a sand clock, a skull and a sepulcher with the inscription *Quotidie morimur*, ‘We die every day’ (Gállego 92). Under the muse Melpomene, González de Salas collected Quevedo’s epitaphs, funereal compositions widely cultivated by all poets for their “didactic rhetoric” (Bergmann 134-39). For death imagery in England, see Bleznick, *Quevedo*, Hoover, *John Donne and Francisco de Quevedo*, and Dollimore (in De Grazia 371-78).
heard; only the gnawing of the wood-borers and worms is perceived. Where is
now the noise of pages and lackeys? Everything remains here. Look at the jewels
in this palace of the dead: they’re nothing but cobwebs. What of the miter and the
crown? They, too, have been left behind. Ponder, my brother, no doubt you will
pass through this.

Not only does this imagery lead to truth: the spectacle of death itself is the truth the sinner must
learn and understand. True knowledge depends upon future visualizations of the dissolution of
the individual and his social circumstance. Eschatological spectacle does not by definition
belong in the present, which is conceived as a critical phase leading to the ultimate truth, the
visualization of the eschaton that ought to inform, shape, and describe the sinning, imperfect,
lacking individual and his environment.

Quevedo’s *silva*, ‘On looking at the bones of a King’, “Estas que veis aquí pobres y
escuras” ‘These poor and obscure [ruins] you see here’, presents notable similarities of tone and
content, which makes Mañara’s a derivative text indicative of this gloomy
mood in Spanish
culture. Images of scattered bones as ruins and dust, the royal scepter lying in the crypt and the
empty skull as a palace for worms reverberates in Mañara’s descriptions. Quevedo’s
prescription for how to find the meaning of truth upon this visualization of death also
foreshadows Mañara and Valdés Leal. The *silva* reads partly,

[…] estos güesos, sin orden derramados, / que en polvo hazañas de la muerte
escriben, / ellos fueron un tiempo venerados / […] Tuvo cetro temido / la mano,
que aun no muestra haberlo sido; / sentidos y potencias habitaron / la cavidad que
ves sola y desierta; / su seso altos negocios fatigaron; / ¡y verla agora abierta, /
palacio, cuando mucho, ciego y vano / para la ociosidad de vil gusano! / Y si tan
bajo huésped no tuviere, / horror tendrá que dar al que la viere. / ¡Oh Muerte,
cuánto mengua en tu medida / la gloria mentirosa de la vida! / […] Muere en ti
todo cuanto se recibe, / y solamente en ti la verdad vive. (1981:123-24)

These bones scattered without order, writing upon the dust the feats of death,
were venerated once… This hand held a frightful scepter no longer showing what
it was. Senses and potencies lodged in the cavity that you now see lonely and
deserted; important businesses fatigued his brain. And to see it now open, at most
a blind and vane palace for the leisure of vile worms! If it did not have such foul
dwellers, it would still inspire horror in whoever saw it. O Death, how your rule
diminishes the untrue glory of life! … Everything that is received dies in you,
and only truth lives in you.

The visually descriptive spectacle of the vault symbolizes the end of human life, an unavoidable
exit even for a king, the highest representative of human life and glory. Later on, the poem
addresses all “mortal men” and denounces, in a mixture of orthodox and economic criticism, the
vane pursuits of sin and greed for gold. And then the final, fundamental lesson is conveyed:
truth can only be gained in death, in the spectacle of it, or in the symbols, like the worm, that
represent it.
In Valdés Leal’s painting *Finis Gloriae Mundi* ‘The End of the Glory of the World’, one of two of his *Hieroglyphs of Our Last Days*, this macabre imagery reaches a highly effectual character (Du Gué Trapier 53-59, Gállego 168-71). On the lower half of the painting two corrupt corpses and one skeleton show three stages of decomposition inside a crypt, symbolizing the social decadence of society and its material structure, which are represented by the upper classes of clergy and nobility: a bishop eaten up by worms, attired with characteristic insignia and clothing, and a grandee covered with the military order of Calatrava. The third figure of the naked skeleton enveloped in darkness suggests the nondescript nothingness that concludes the ultimate crisis of the end of times and the closing of social and human existence. The upper half contains the interpretive, ideological rationale, the hieroglyph or ‘sacred image’: the hand of Christ holds a scale with symbols of sin on one side and of penitence on the other, respectively the imperfections or sins to be avoided and the means to do so.

The didactic purpose and the visual medium to convey it seem clear, but the painting stands out for its connections with textual descriptions. As Fisher notes, *Heráclito Cristiano* is a sound-sensitive textual collection geared to a reader and hearer with the goal to teach a moral (78, 81), a Renaissance *topos* doubly true in this instance because of the religious content of the collection. But besides addressing a reader/hearer the texts of Quevedo and Mañara speak to a pseudo seer/spectator by deploying descriptive death visuals. The aim is to gain self-knowledge and the knowledge of divinity through sensual shock, which is part of a Christian rationale driven by sin. The poetic depictions, while confirming the theoretical sisterhood between painting and poetry, advance the thematic shock of death, which tends to replace the more calmed and classical wonder expressed, for example, by Garcilaso’s shepherds upon “seeing”, and then reading, a poetic ekphrasis. At the close of *Eclogue II* Salicio says, “¡Quién viese la escritura, / ya que no puede verse la pintura!” ‘May someone see the written story since he cannot see the painting!’ (Garcilaso de la Vega 305). These lines express the commonplaces of the superiority of writing over painting, their sisterhood, and the calmed mood of the pastoral, which is thematically closer to heroic and ideal depictions rather than to eschatological representations.

Furthermore, the relation between the sister arts of painting and poetry bears a not so distant analogical connection with the fad of emblems significantly promoted by the 1531 publication of Andrea Alciati’s *Emblematum liber ‘Book of Emblems*’, with ample influence in Spain (Gállego 44-46). The paradigm of the emblem was designed to teach a moral lesson by fixing upon memory an image and then connect it with a lemma and poetic explanation (de Armas 10, 12). In like manner Valdés Leal’s painting and Quevedo’s eschatological and descriptive sonnets and psalms are emblematic and didactic. Quevedo’s poem “Al Pincel” ‘To the painting brush’ repeats some of the *topoi* in the then accepted theory of the “sister arts”: the brush competes with nature and can “mend” it; the figures of a painting defeat time, death, space, and absence. But by depicting the passion of Christ the brush can also teach “high philosophy” and the “pure mysteries” of religion through “obscure hieroglyphs” (Quevedo 1981: 242-46). The didactic goal, inspired either by the theme of the passion and eschatology, is maintained, followed by an entailing furtherance of the sinner’s hope and “true faith”, ‘la fe verdadera’, which is expected to cure his lacking psyche, to fulfill his divine debt. In this manner the thirst for knowledge connects with pedagogy and the “privileging of the visual” favored by the “early-modern” and modern periods (Bergmann, in de Armas 158).
The significance of macabre imagery permeates seventeenth-century discourse to such an extent that even González de Salas’s routine introduction to Quevedo’s poetry in 1648, after the poet’s death, resorts to that stratagem in revealing ways. The motifs of the ruin, sin, and decay move from the poetic space to the spiritual and social spaces of sin and malice. González de Salas’s prefatory remarks close by recognizing a significant loss: only one twentieth of Quevedo’s lyrical output was saved, collected from the “ruins”, “spoils”, and “alms” of the poet’s “best ashes”, cleaned by the publisher of any “demerits” that might spoil his reputation. He also defends himself, and his friend’s work, from the others’ “malice”, caused by their evil and sinful nature and the weight of their guilty conscience:

el Pecado ageno pudiera ser maliciara en nosotros… Oie el malo, que se abamina la Maldad; i como allí el se vè tan vivamente figurado, añade a su Maldad su Malicia; i el castigo que le da su Consciencia, a la innocencia le imputa. (Quevedo 1648:3r)

Someone else’s sin could practice malice upon us… The evil man hears that evil is abominated, and since he sees himself very lively represented therein, he adds malice to his evil, and imputes to innocence the punishment delivered by his conscience.

The others’ malice attempts to blame innocence (represented by Quevedo and his friendly editor) for their own guilt just because the innocence of poetry denounces and “abominates evil”. In other words, upon seeing themselves depicted in published poetry, evil men tend to place the blame upon the work’s innocent efforts. The poet’s death and his works are metaphorically equated with objects reflective of decay, which in turn produces the very innocence that castigates sin. So here, too, death imagery turns into a didactics leading to the higher truth of religious conversion, of personal and social changes dependent upon eschatological metaphors.

Nevertheless macabre imagery cannot be attached to one specific historical period, for it is rooted in ancient history and, significantly, in the so-called Middle Ages (Trigg 95-118, Aurell 13, Chiffoleau 3-6). Chiffoleau begins his survey of “men, death, and religion” in the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century South of France with the inscription on a Cardinal’s tomb that contains the biblical dust-to-dust theme, the related theme of world-as-theater, and the images of the “fetid body” as the “food for worms”, the very same ideas Quevedo and Mañara will use two hundred years later (Mañara 13-14, 16; Morrás Ruiz-Falcó, in Aurell 168-69). If the Middle Ages and the Baroque share this imagery, they too present a similar sense of crisis and overturning of values, even if the specific material conditions may not be comparable except generally as like societies undergoing critical and chaotic change. According to Chiffoleau, “depression” and “economical fracture” cause an equivalent rupture in thoughts and beliefs, a “crisis of values, of systems of representation and symbolic practices” (5). In seventeenth-century Spain this crisis in the systems of representation was distinguished, among other
features, by literary excess, hyperbole, and obscurity, as Pedro Díaz de Rivas sums up in the
defense of his contemporary Luis de Góngora (Joiner Gates 35-36). In this context Quevedo’s
death imagery appears both traditional and excessive, or hyperbolic. As tradition, it merely
replicates a long history in Spain and Europe, one of excess and graphic overstatement
appropriate to conditions of crisis and rupture, of decay and decomposition (Martínez Gil 315-
32). In turn decay and sin are specific twins of lack, the driving force of excess in an
environment where social and personal crisis seem to have an intimate connection. One other
feature of Quevedo’s crisis poetry is that it is self-driven and active, opposed to the generic
passivity of the sick man in the artes moriendi (Martínez Gil, in Aurell 240-43). Quevedo’s self
suffers from spiritual lack, the traditional temptations of sin that envelop the man about to die.
But this poetic self, consumed though he may be by deep doubt, remains strong and focused
upon improvement, a compelling drive towards conversion and salvation which will redeem not
only him but society at large.
One underlying assumption throughout this essay is that literary expression is a curve of lack. Starting out from a materially lower position, or one perceived to be so, it ascends interruptedly through negotiating exchanges and concludes in a solution that may claim a higher status. The end-result shows, however, some of the limitations of its starting point. The initial lower position reproduces a scarcity characterized by a multiplicity of interconnected themes such as knowledge, power, hunger, sin, or honor, and this thematic deficit both explains characters and leaves them with voids or gaps in their makeup and circumstance. Although in this context integrity is synonymous with pure identity, identity remains nonexistent or forever in the offing, a mere potentiality of literary discourse. It is enough, however, that literature becomes a net of exchanges and negotiations even if it does not produce—as it cannot, given its textual boundaries—an adequate solution to fill up the lacking gaps in the characters’ identity or socio-political circumstance. The adequacy of this matrix of exchanges consists in its exposure of gaps, which raises the relevancy of literature by making it agree more with material circumstances.

The characters’ deficiencies exist in the middle of a crisis which feeds their angst and at the same time receives their feedback, a mutual process of interpretive construction. The thematic exchanges that result from writers’ and readers’ attempts to understand literary characters and the medium they inhabit complicate the relationship between the world as experienced outside literature and the world as seen through literary expression. The world appears as fictive and literary as the poet’s or narrator’s creation. What is created is covered up by a time- and text-generated integument. This is not to deny the value of historical accounts, but only to recognize that the perception of past events remains an interpretation of writers and readers who see them through a prism of inner and outer crises. This temporal and textual logic postpones, along the lines of a Lacanian rationale, the full understanding of the world, or even confesses to the impossibility of grasping it, because characters are logically trapped in the net and law of the letter and its symbolic ramifications: the complex network of power structures that define a given social order.  

My goal in highlighting the connection between the writer and his/her circumstance is to stress the close relationship between material circumstance, or socio-economic history, and individuation, or psychological economy. Hunger, monetary woes, and geographic dislocation fall under circumstantial fact, whereas concepts having to do with lack or privation, such as honor, power, or sin, correspond to psychological and metaphysical worries. If we thus connect and partly integrate the historical with the literary, we obtain a better grounding for the analysis of literary character, closer to the crises that engender it. Nor would this integration be a mechanical and materialistic creation, or a falsehood, since we do not begin by making the historical account into an essence, conceiving it as if it were the real truth. What results, rather, is a character more in tune with the author’s perceptions of history as opposed to other interpretive strategies that ignore or make light of those perceptions.

The discourse of sin in early modern Spain is a systemic regime of control working across social class and pure-blooded caste, gender, and bureaucratic division. Sin is not merely a

85 For the Lacanian concept of lack, see Stavrakakis (3-10), Gallop (145-54), and Cruz (95-98).
doctrinal, canonical, or legalistic statement. It belongs to the type of “serious speech acts” to which Dreyfus and Rabinow refer when explaining Foucault’s theory of discourse. These are discursive, systemic, institutionalized, disciplining acts that claim to be true and whose demand for truth has “serious social consequences” (48). The institutionalized discipline of sin diverts discursive power not only towards an outside institution but also inside, towards the individual sinner, who can gain self-knowledge and consequently the potential capability for re-incorporation and re-institutionalization. Quevedo’s sinner remains a self-absorbed and self-focused character, by all appearances more interested in spiritual than worldly gain, but his literary and discursive themes are grounded upon the materiality of history and of dogmatic, orthodox institutionality. In this sense the admission of sin may lead to a very real move upwards in the social and economic scale, as demonstrated by Lazarillo’s treatise, a confession of sorts that works within the realm of the letter: what before excludes him as undesirable company and keeps him from thriving is what subsequently allows him reinsertion into the social order. The “serious speech act” of sin leads to Quevedo’s inner self-improvement as well as Lazaro’s material success, but all literary exchanges facilitated by sin, whether inside or outside the subject, work simultaneously and come to privilege the interested goals of authorship and genre.

Sin and the related notions of honor and caste purity appear as historical manifestations of lack that initiates, makes up, and propels literary character. Character may be thought of as driven by linguistic or literary lack, the point of departure for any narrative or poetic adventure. Seen through this lens, literature provides the space where lack and dislocation act upon character, forcing it towards self-assessment and reassessment through jostling movements designed to alleviate any perceived displacements. But for Lacan the literary medium contains the trap of lack and allows the expression of a “jouissance of meaning” (Soler 63). Although an oppressive and “symbolic” institution, language is also the positive space where the inexpressible Lacanian concept of the “real” manifests itself in an attempt to reveal the unconscious. As Quevedo’s struggles with sin come to shape poetic character, the metaphysical desire of the lyrical voice unfolds into the impossibility of fully-satisfying expression, akin to the impossibility of the sinner’s salvation and the ineffable “real.” For salvation implies a connection with the other-world, with death and the end of the world, which in Lacanian terms is a link with the unknown void of the unconscious. As Žižek points out, desire in Lacan is mediated by nothingness, which is “the true object-cause of desire” (1999: 126). Desire unfolds as a complex paradox with thematic and linguistic components. Thematically the feeling of loss demands fulfillment, but satisfaction proves ineffectual even when or if it is achieved. It remains an open potentiality because object-cause is a dyad that works simultaneously in a paradoxical, endless dynamic. Glejzer explains Lacan’s linguistic paradox as the tautology of language also present in Scholasticism, where God is “the ultimate referent and agent to all signifying systems: scriptural or worldly” (37). In Lacan’s work the unconscious replaces God as referent and agent. The agencies of God and the unconscious “impinge on language.” They are both ultimate referents and, through their interpretation, creators of characters’ agency. And since language is itself the means to investigate subjectivity as well as the “grounding” of that subjectivity, the circle closes and leaves lack as the unending expression of the relationship between the subject and his world (Miller 123).
The confluence of decline and psychology of lack is part of a totalizing world view where historicity and transhistoricity shape each other. First, decline appears to be a strictly historical condition, creating also a historical psychology of lack, what appears to be a specifically modern condition. This is a true process that allows for the corrective of history in the literary field. Upon closer examination, however, and for the purposes of literary analysis, we may conceive of decline as the only historical condition, interacting with a psychological-transhistorical condition expressed in literature by cultural and ideological concepts like sin or honor. More radically, we can even conceive of both decline and lack as transhistorical, in which case those ideological markers would merely be historical incarnations undergoing constant qualification. In Lazarillo the qualification slants towards personal interest and materiality while keeping an appearance of propriety. The excess represented by empire corresponds to homogrown scarcity. Or empire may have begun its downward movement, dragging individuals with it. In the case of Rosaura and Segismundo the qualification seems neutral, for although attached to the tried-and-true honor code and to spiritual goals, La vida es sueño begins, as was shown, upon the solid materiality of hunger and loss of riches. Calderón attempts to cover up this medieval and material egotism by replacing it with a Platonic love of wisdom, but the corporeal basis remains. Hunger and imprisonment are metaphors of origin that continue to plague and define character.

What does this mean for Calderón’s play, inspired as it is by Juan Manuel’s medieval story? In Juan Manuel’s text the operative words “mengua” ‘loss or diminution’ and “cuita” ‘psychic or physical pain, need’ are incarnations of lack, or human desire. In terms of the agency of the letter, that is, of the power that literary language holds by itself and of the power of the one who utters and controls it, Juan Manuel’s text suggests an origin upon the lack that begins with the materiality of the hungry body and involves later on a lack of knowledge. This agency of the letter is controlled in the exemplum by Patronio’s subordinate voice as “consegero” ‘counselor’ to Count Lucanor, a nobleman. The wise, counseling servant holds the power of narrative, which is the vehicle of wisdom and hence survival of the natural (food/goods) as well as the social body (honor). The shrewd advisor, and even the captive slave, are metaphors of lack. Each facilitates the master’s wisdom and survival by curing his “mengua” of defective knowledge or understanding. The very first example of Conde Lucanor organizes this rationale by presenting a king advised by a favorite or “privado,” who is in turn counseled by a captive slave described as a “wise man” and “very great philosopher” (Juan Manuel 57). The captive saves the day. His wisdom preserves the favorite’s corporeal integrity and privileged position, revealingly, via the abasement of the body. Although only masked and feigned, this degradation replicates that of the captive’s lacking body, his poverty and ragged clothes. In fact captivity and poverty are metaphors of the subject’s lack: Lucanor’s counselor Patronio, the king’s favorite, and the favorite’s captive philosopher are incarnations of the fictitious count Lucanor or the historical infante Juan Manuel (Daniel Devoto, cited by Diz 408-09).

The move in this example suggests a regress towards the lowest, most destitute condition of captivity or servitude, a corporeal lack, as a void that paradoxically holds ultimate wisdom. Language itself unfolds as deception, literally a series of masks or fictions meant to save and keep the integrity of character and convey wisdom: to cure the characters’ “mengua” (Diz 404-06, De Looze 121). All characters in this exemplum deceive, put on a mask, and pretend at the same time to be telling the truth. Deception does hold in Calderón’s play, though in such a way

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86 For this exemplum see Diz, Grabowska, and Sturm.
as to focus on genre-specific methodology and the commonplace stratagem of the world-as-theater. But the different characters are instantiations of the subject’s lack: Rosaura, the rebel soldier, and Segismundo himself. Whether a fallen woman denouncing patriarchy (*père-version* or *norm-mâle* to use Lacan’s wordplay, according to Soler 73), a soldier wishing for a chaotic destruction of the body politic, or a wild man whose ignorance of letters and restrictive animal body determine his path to wisdom, desire-lack plays an essential role and offers an important interpretive clue as to the origin, formation, and evolution of both narrative and character.

In the Cervantes tale the prodigal son’s sin, his lack, takes up the motif of the wrong road historicizing it by means of the antihero’s European and American wanderings. Besides this familiar motif, the theme of the slave (and, beyond the scope of this paper, that of the wife’s feminine other) compounds the social and psychological aspects of hegemonic sin displayed by the protagonist. In significant contrast with Juan Manuel’s tale, where the wise servant possesses a higher space close to his master’s ear as if acknowledging his distant status and non-threat to the master, the situation and character of Carrizales’s slave has shifted to markedly lower categorizations. Far from wise or philosophical, the slave speaks little or mis-speaks the language. Instead of providing knowledge to the master and thus advance his survival, he counsels those others who work towards his master’s destruction. And, far from the master’s intimate space, he is confined to a prison-like portal and objectified into a non-speaking lock. Nonetheless his influence, unabated and inversely proportional to his silence and obscure quarters, works its way to the surface through the others’ agency until it consumes Carrizales—the obverse mask of the self no longer capable of hiding his own sins.
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