

Mateo Alemán, from Judge to Author: Articulations of Authority from the *informe secreto* (1593) to *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599)

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“[...] fueronle hechas por el dicho / Señor Juez
usitador o-/tras muchas preguntas y / si estaua en
su juyizio na-/ tural y dixo que no.”¹
(*Informe secreto*, fol. 50)

“Convierto las violetas en ponzoña, pongo en la
nieve manchas, maltrato y sobajo con el
pensamiento la fresca rosa.”²
(*Guzmán de Alfarache* II, 40)

In the following chapter, we will trace the development of the authorial persona from Mateo Alemán the author of the *informe secreto* (1593), a report on the living and working conditions of forced labourers in the quicksilver mines of Almadén, to Mateo Alemán, the author of *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599), the first full-fledged picaresque novel. It is, as we will see, a trajectory of finding, creating and exploring new textual spheres for exerting authority in the discourse on the marginal experience. We shall start by tracing the challenges and opportunities posed by the changing roles of authors in the early modern period. This analysis will be informed by Foucault’s concept of the author function. We will then discuss the heterogeneous set of models for authorities that fed into the emerging picaresque genre as a point of departure for a discussion of the articulations of Mateo Alemán’s authorial persona in the *informe* and *Guzmán*. Finally we shall discuss the role of the emerging modern urban reader in the reception of these articulations of the authorial persona in *Guzmán de Alfarache*. Our central argument is that the most important connection between the two texts and their respective notions of authority is the modern readership that determined the first success of *Guzmán*.

Early modernity and the challenge to the author function

The early modern period is marked by a profound shift in the manifestation and representation of authority. It is a time in which the power/knowledge dynamic undergoes a fundamental change. It is “[...] that period of literary history during which the standard modern notions of Author and Text, authority and authenticity, were established [...]” (Brownlee and Stevens, 2). With the rise of print-capitalism and the mass production of standardised texts for an ever-expanding and socially diverse readership, the name on the cover – in our case the name Mateo Alemán – takes on a value of its own. It becomes a signifier for authority, and it becomes an identity to be constructed and identified with. Foucault refers to the signifier of the author and its effect as the ‘author function’ and discerns four key characteristics. Foucault posits that:

[...] 1) the author function is linked to a juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universes of discourses; 2) it does not affect all discourses in the same way at all times and in all types of civilization; 3) it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a discourse to its producer but, rather, by

¹ “He was asked many more questions by the investigating judge, and also whether he was in his right mind, and he replied: <<no>>.” (All translation throughout are mine.)

² “I convert violets into poison, I stain the snow, mistreat and befoul the fresh rose with my thoughts.”

a series of specific and complex operations; (4) it does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subject-positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals. (Foucault, 216)

Choosing this frame, in particular the fourth point (i.e. “[...] the author function: [...] does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves [...]”), will allow us to approach the phenomenon Mateo Alemán in its textual projection and social function. Rather than essentialize or ‘understand’ the man, it allows us to question the projection and communicative function of the sign ‘Mateo Alemán’ in the context of the emerging genre of the picaresque. Thus, the notion of the author function allows us to pose questions about the various articulations of authority in two rather different texts by Mateo Alemán: the *informe secreto* on the one hand, an investigative report written under the orders of the court, and *Guzmán de Alfarache* on the other, written, among others, with the intention of intervening in the debate on (false) poverty, in direct response to such texts as Miguel de Giginta’s *Tratado de remedio de pobres* (1580) and Cristobal Pérez de Herrera’s *Amparo de Pobres* (1598), as well as the work of many other social reformers in late sixteenth century Madrid (Cavillac 1998; Cavillac 2010, Alvar Ezquerria 2003, Mierau 2016b). In this endeavour, the notion of the author function allows us to formulate questions about the relationship between the two texts vis-à-vis each other and their respective readerships, focusing, in particular, on the way the two texts construct the authority of the narrating instance.

Both texts aim at different, at times overlapping types of authority: the authority of the investigator, whose report may have consequence for both the labourers and their guards, the authority of the *arbitrista* aspiring to intervene in the treatment of urban poor, the authority of the writer of fictional prose, who aims for respect and critical acclaim for his artistic capability. These differing and competing forms of authority derive from different sources and models inside and outside the literary realm.

Greenblatt succinctly analysed the renaissance figure of the author as a malleable, fashionable artefact which provided a model for many an upstart. It held the promise of social advancement through the creation of texts for which the criteria of quality themselves were open to be shaped by the very authors who wrote them – a rather enticing loophole in the constraints of a rigid class society. The image of the author of fiction as an artefact and, moreover, as a product to be commercialised and instrumentalized for personal benefit and advancement attracted many an outsider looking in. Enter Mateo Alemán, son of a jail surgeon, almost graduate of Alcalá, government official, occasional writer, emigré to New Spain, adulterer, always on the brink of bankruptcy, exercising a dubious claim to nobility, hiding traces of Jewish convert ancestry. In the light of Alemán’s self-fashioning, Alemán’s biography is much rather representative of the potential for self-identification for social outsiders offered by the changing status of the author function, than it is exceptional. Alemán’s biography shares many a characteristic with those of such contemporaries as Cervantes and Shakespeare, savvy upstarts who managed to attain authority as literary authors whilst failing in most other domains. It is quite instructive to notice the parallels in the trial and error path to literary innovation followed by all three.³

For Alemán, and by proxy the genre he helped establish, authority is far from a given. It is a challenge. All throughout his diverse career he struggled to attain authority, as an investigative judge, as business man, as an author of prose fiction (Bleiberg 1980; Cros 1971; Grady). By the time *Guzmán de Alfarache* hits the stores in 1599 and becomes an almost overnight success, Alemán has little credit as an author, little literary authority that could reflect

³ View Duncan Jones; Honan; Schoenbaum for the main authoritative biographies of Shakespeare. View Canavaggio, Alvar Ezquerria, Astrana Marín for key biographies on Cervantes.

on his work. This is not Lope de Vega, the already well-established playwright, taking a loose stab at the genre of the *novela bizantina* when he pens *El peregrino en su patria*, published in 1604. Nor is the picaresque recognized as an authoritative genre in any way that would allow Alemán to derive authority from the extent to which he adheres to, or works with, a set of parameters for proven success, as perhaps Cervantes attempted to do with his mildly successful pastoral novel *La Galatea* in 1585 – one of Cervantes's early attempts at gaining literary success by emulating existing models. To be sure, in 1554 *Lazarillo de Tormes* had set the bar and proven that the basic formula of having a marginal character reflect on a series of episodes in his life from the vantage point of hindsight, could lead to commercial success. But as many, and few as vocally as Francisco Rico, have argued, it is *Guzmán de Alfarache* that establishes the genre of the picaresque not vice versa. Moreover, although *Guzmán* is indebted to *Lazarillo*, the latter is but one of many influences on the text.

Alemán's trajectory from a low-level public servant to an innovative author whose heritage in the shaping of literary genre far outlived the communication value of his name, articulates various and changing notions of authority. It shows that the emerging boundaries of genre reflect on the influences texts can exert in different domains. It also provokes us to think about the relationship between such texts as the *informe* and *Guzmán de Alfarache*, and leads us to posit that the most important connection between the two texts and their respective notions of authority is their shared readership.

The diverse sources of authority for the picaresque

It has long been established, that the picaresque genre's authority is derived from a diverse blend of previous manifestations of authority: extraliterary models, on the one hand, and preceding literary genres, on the other.

Outside of the literary sphere, models for the authority of the picaresque narrative were found in the judge and the policeman. In the past two decades great advances have been made in the study of extraliterary models for the (picaresque) novel. González Echevarría, Folger, Byrne and Shuger (among others) have demonstrated the extent to which these new genres were infused with legal terminology and a subject matter drawn from an increasingly litigating proto-bourgeois society. In the case of the picaresque the standards for the veracity of confession and the dialogue with the investigator/confessor require little elaboration. This opens up questions about how much of this content was determined by a readership of scribes and government officials whose professional reading was also more legal and bureaucratic in nature and who were much less versed in, and thus perhaps less concerned with, the classical literary canon. In the case of Alemán, his pre-literary writing career as investigative judge had familiarized him with bureaucratic writing and its readership and imposed on him several institutionalized forms of legal writing, case in point the *informe secreto*.

The *informe* is the result of an investigation into the conditions of forced labourers in the quicksilver mines of Almadén. These mines had been operating for centuries, but had regained significance due to the discovery of large silver reserves in South America (mostly Potosí in present-day Bolivia), which required mercury for production. The mines were in the hands of the Fugger banking empire, under direct command of Marcus Fugger, under a lease that gave the proprietors almost full autonomy on the mine territory. The lease also included access to forced labour by convicted criminals, who instead of being sent to the galleys, would have to spend the duration of their sentences working in the quicksilver mines. This was a hazardous occupation, that few survived without severe physical and mental damage (Bleiberg 1980; Kellenbenz).

Due to a steady stream of complaints and reports from the vicinity of Almadén, the court sent investigative judge Mateo Alemán accompanied by a scribe and several officers

to investigate the conditions and write up a report. Already during Alemán's stay in Almadén, it became clear that the crown actually had no jurisdiction in the mines, and upon return to Madrid, Alemán's report disappeared in the archive, only to be rediscovered in the early 1960's by the poet/historian German Bleiberg, to whom we owe the meticulous transcription of the *informe*. Surprisingly, and in spite of its repeated publication, the *informe* has received relatively little scholarly attention. For the purpose of the present analysis, this text, more than provide further proof of Alemán's hands-on experience with the criminal underground, is an important source for Alemán's first attempts at self-creation as a textual figure of authority. As we shall see below, the text constructs Alemán as a defender of prisoner rights by means of various self references.

The preceding literary models of *Guzmán de Alfarache* are diverse, and have been subject to elaborate study.⁴ We can trace the roots of the picaresque as far back as the Menippean tradition and Apuleius' second-century narrative prose *Golden Ass*. (Rico) It is here that we find sources for the satiric tone, the carnivalesque and the grotesque imagery. Remember, for example, the scene in which *Guzmán* is thrown up and down on a blanket in chapter I of part three of the first book, ("Comenzaron a levantarme en el aire, manteándose como a perro por carnestolendas." *Guzmán*, I, III), a scene reenacted, now starring Sancho, in *Don Quixote*, I, chapter xvii). Furthermore, much of the interpolated story content is taken from the Italian *novellae*, first and foremost the work of Masuccio Salernitano (Muñiz Muñiz). In more recent texts, in particular the 1499 *Celestina*, we find the inspiration for marginal protagonists, increasingly center stage, increasingly profound in their characterization. Authority here is connected mostly to the moral lesson, the poetic justice – no need to bring to mind the final fall from the tower by Melibea. But, in *Celestina* we also find another appeal for authority, this time an appeal to the reader's sense of recognition in the depictions of urban space and the criminal underworld. Further on, we shall see that the meticulous representations of urban space in *Guzmán* can be interpreted as a means of building authority in reference to a shared knowledge of the city. Moreover, by adopting the narrative voice of the first-person account, *Guzmán* acquires some of the authority such classics as St. Augustine's *Confessions* (ca. 400 AD).

A first juxtaposition of the two texts shows that both the judge/author Alemán and the picaresque genre find themselves in the transitional, perhaps liminal, zone between classical notions of authority (think of the prologue to *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán*, both exercises in classical *captatio benevolentiae*) and modern notions of authority as held by readers knee-deep in an increasingly mercantile/bourgeois/legalistic context of which the *informe* is a representative exponent. The question raised here is how much of the reference to literary models actually appealed to Alemán's first readers. Are not the prologue to *Don Quixote* and Lope's *Arte nuevo*, who both lament their contemporary readers' lack of knowledge of the then canonical literary models, testimony to an emerging category of culture consumers with little to no knowledge of the classics?

By combining input from these different sources of authority, Alemán succeeds in forging an identity as an author, and establish *Guzmán de Alfarache* as an authoritative text. Although Cervantes would later on overshadow Alemán in fame, Alemán's contemporaries did see him as a genius, calling him "el español divino" (*Guzmán* II, 25). And the genre he shaped has had a permanent influence on the landscape of literary genres. Alemán is, in Foucault's sense, one of those founders of discursivity, who are: "[...] unique in that they are not just authors of their own works. They have produced something else: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts." (Foucault, 217), i.e. the picaresque genre, and, with

⁴ Cros (1967) provides an elaborate and still authoritative overview of the literary sources of *Guzmán de Alfarache*.

it, much of the key characteristics of the novel. However, this status is not static, as the author function: "[...] does not affect all discourses in the same way at all times and in all types of civilization" (Foucault, 216).

Although at the outset Alemán's and *Guzmán*'s authority are mutually constitutive, the authority and heritage of *Guzmán* and the genre it spawned far outlived that of the name of author. In 2016 the name Mateo Alemán has all but slipped under the radar. Unlike Cervantes, whose name proliferates as one of Spanish-language cultural heritage's strongest brands, few have heard of Mateo Alemán, while most still consume his cultural heritage on a daily basis. For anyone familiar with the picaresque genre, present-day best-selling fictional representations of life on the margins such as HBO's *Breaking Bad* or Netflix's *Orange is the New Black* combine social criticism with entertaining stereotypes and commonplaces allowing for just the right touch of metafiction to also appeal to a cult audience, proving that the genre founded and established by Alemán, Cervantes and kin has lost little relevance and continues to appeal to a wide and diverse audience. In fact the smooth intermedial transition the genre made from print to on-demand internet television illustrates that the relevance of the generic content supersedes medium, and that although much of its initial success was contingent on print-capitalism, its fate and future are by no means tied to print media.

Given the heterogeneous set of sources for the author function in the picaresque and the crossover of the representation of the marginal from one textual sphere to another – from one that is perceived as factual and one that is perceived as fictional – we will discuss several dimensions of the mutually constitutive process of authorization between author and text and readership that shapes the author function signified by the name Mateo Alemán. We shall start with the authorial persona, continue with the readership, then discuss the urban space as a reference frame for authorisation in the dialogue with the readership and conclude with the effect of the transition from the legal sphere to the literary sphere on Alemán's authority in the discourse on urban delinquency.

The authorial persona in the *informe* and *Guzmán*

In the words of the poet German Bleiberg, who unearthed and published the report in the 1960's, the *informe secreto* transcends the mere biographical information on Alemán's interaction with marginals:

No se trata solo de que el futuro novelista haya podido escuchar, de viva voz, la historia de los galeotes, sino que, a través de los folios de los tres legajos del Archivo Histórico Nacional, ha podido revivir (como ahora podemos hacerlo nosotros) los avatares porque han pasado esos galeotes, en un repertorio documental que supera con creces la dramática ficción de cualquier novela picaresca. (Bleiberg, 366)⁵

With the *informe* the marginal enters the textual sphere establishing a co-text that would function alongside the fictional representation of the marginal in the picaresque, first among which was *Guzmán de Alfarache*.⁶ In both texts, Mateo Alemán appears to present himself as a mediator between the institutions intended to control the life of marginals, on the one hand, and the legitimate interests of the marginal, on the other.

⁵ "It is not just that the future novelist had had the opportunity to listen to the tales of the galley slaves, but rather that, using the folios of the three legates in the Archivo Histórico Nacional, he was able to revisit (as we can now) the trials that these galley slaves had undergone, in a documented repertoire that supersedes in many ways the dramatic fiction of any picaresque novel."

⁶ View Mierau 2016 for a discussion of the use of sources such as the *informe* for the microhistorical contextualization of picaresque narratives.

The *informe secreto* is crucial for an understanding the development of Alemán's author function as it develops in the interplay between his authorial persona and the texts he produces. With the *informe secreto* Alemán attempts to create a textual persona claiming authority over marginal subjects. It is important not to confound the act of investigating with the intent of creating a textual representation. There is a strong element of creation in the text, that indicates that to Alemán the created image is a goal unto itself. That is to say, the aim of the report is not exclusively to create a faithful rendition of the situation at hand; the aim of the report is to create an image that would favour the improvement of the situation of the forced labourers, and, at the same time, question the veracity/authority of the statements of the Fuggers' representatives. In order to pursue this end, Alemán has to establish an authority that is distinct from the authority of the mine owner, and that of the marginal. It is a mediating authority, and to thus justify his own presence and actions.

In the *informe* we can detect a decided sympathy for the forced labourers. As he interviews the labourers, Alemán, *el juez visitador*, insists and checks statements, bringing in medics, for example, to verify the incapacity of the prisoner Franciso Tellez whose health is damaged to the point of memory loss.⁷ In the first part of the document, one forced labourer after another discusses the damaging effect of the quicksilver, the long hard working days and the cruelty of the watchmen. When Alemán interviews the staff, i.e. the watchmen and foremen on the Fugger's payroll, these give an overly positive rendition of the conditions in the mine. Alonso Sobrino and Alonso Martin, among others, proclaim that the forced labourers only worked limited hours, and that in fact after the forced part of their work is done, they hire on for paid overtime, and that none of their injuries could be related to the quicksilver, thus intending to corroborate the statement of Leonardo del Salto the *alcalde* (mayor/main warden) of the mine who also stated that none of the injuries suffered by the prisoners were related to the quicksilver.⁸ Statements by others – villagers, hired hands – undermine the Fugger employees, showing that the administrators were very much aware of the damaging effect of the quicksilver and that they had been experimenting with the extent to which the forced labourers could be exposed to the damaging effect, without losing their capacity to function, i.e. weighing the profits and losses caused by the exposure. In the report, the most positive statements by the employees closest to the Fuggers come at the very end, with the first three quarters of the document dominated by very negative and detailed presentations of the conditions in the mine: the bulk and most varied set of the voices in the document support the forced labourers version of events. All throughout the text, Alemán characterizes himself through initiative (the judge requires the mine medic to come in for a statement, before pursuing the interview of a several damaged prisoner, he decides to disregard protests from the representatives of Fuggers in the mine). He is a man characterized through actions, an actor who uses the textual representation of his actions to establish himself as the figure of authority. This is the practice of the many government officials who submit *consultas de gracias* asking for raises or advancement, based on a list of actions that characterise them as adequate beneficiaries. The archives are full of such *consultas*, which, in addition to providing information on everyday life, provide insight into the discursive strategies of the writing bureaucrat.

With the investigation, Alemán takes the fight to the Fuggers, against any sort of financial rationale, in an attempt to instrumentalize this authority to change a social practice. Alemán's authority in the *informe* is far from established. Although it is quite clear that the interviewed are subject to his power, the relationship with the representatives of the Fuggers is more complex, and the perceived power Alemán has over the Fuggers in the eyes of the forced

⁷ See in particular folios 49 - 52, which present the case of Francisco Tellez, gitano.

⁸ See folios 158 - 179.

labourers is rather problematic in light of the actual lack of authority Alemán truly has in the situation. This discrepancy between Alemán's actual jurisdiction, on the one hand, and the power he projects in his report, on the other, reveals the constructed, in a sense, fictional nature of Alemán the investigative judge. In the situation of the interview and in the subsequent report he projects an authority he does not have outside of the contained microcosm of Almadén, where he and his watchmen are in position to temporarily assume a power that has no backing by law or government. This temporary power, and Alemán's use of it, constitutes an interesting parallel with the galley slaves episode in *Don Quixote*.

In a way, the *informe* is a text about Alemán, the investigative judge. But it is also a failure in constructing his authority/identity as a judge/champion of the underdog. Quite in contrast to the figure of authority he constructs in the text, the extratextual power relations – i.e. the Fugger's special jurisdiction in the mines of Almadén – cause the text to disappear in the palace archives. A strong case can be argued – as I have attempted elsewhere (Mierau 2016) – for identifying the figure of Don Quixote interviewing the galley slaves, with Mateo Alemán the investigative judge interviewing forced laborers in the quicksilver mines of Almadén, the place where he first represented the marginal experience in writing, first expressed himself as writing subject. This is the point where the motif of the 'interviewing of the galley slave' transits into the realm of fiction, and, with it, the project of interviewing marginals succeeds in finding an audience by the way of Alemán's galley slaves and Cervantes's representation of the act of interviewing marginal in chapter XXII of the Quijote.

Recently Ehrlicher has shown how much Alemán and Cervantes were indebted to each other, for inspiration, for competition and providing each other's text with authority. (Ehrlicher 154) One need only think of the Pasamonte scene, which refers to *Lazarillo* and, although not explicitly but certainly quite obviously to *Guzmán de Alfarache*, thus reactualizing the existence of these texts as models in the literary realm, conversely *Don Quixote* could benefit from a reading public open to and prepared for innovative texts as proven by *Guzmán*.

The textualization of the marginal experience in *Guzmán* could thus be seen as an explicit attempt at agency in a field/debate in which the *informe* failed. It is, in a sense, an attempt to find new textual spheres for exerting authority in a range of debates in which his attempts at claiming authority had hitherto been overruled. In *Guzmán* there is a constant subtext that presupposes a legitimate poverty in need of remedy which has to be distinguished from false poverty. Moreover, the elaborate investigation of the criminal mind serves to understand society's role in having shaped it, and, by extension, the implicit instruction for parents and educators in avoiding the raising of more criminal minds like Guzmanillo's.

In *Guzmán*, the authorial persona is firstly, and perhaps most obviously, manifest in paratexts such as the praises by fellow authors or colleagues in government office. Authority is thus established by delegating judgement to others than the supposedly speaking author, a process not unlike the legal practice of relying on testimony by third parties, rather than relying on the plaintiffs or the suspect's own statements. Therefore, it becomes important that praise is based both on Alemán's literary and his extraliterary curriculum. Not only does the Álvarez Luis de Valdés praise Alemán's literary feats: "[...] en toda Italia, Francia, Flandes y Alemania, de que puedo deponer de oídas y vista juntamente, y que jamás, oí mentar su nombre sin grandioso epítecto, hasta llamarle muchos el español divino." (*Guzmán* II, 25) He also takes care to discuss Alemán's prior career as government official:

Y como sabemos dejó de su voluntad la Casa Real, donde sirvió casi veinte años, los mejores de su edad, oficio de Contador de resultas de su Majestad el rey Felipe II, que está en gloria, y en otros muchos muy graves negocios y visitas que se le cometieron, de que siempre dio toda buena satisfacción, procediendo con tanta rectitud, que llegó a

quedar de manera pobre que, no pudiendo continuar sus servicios con tanta necesidad, se retrujo a menos ostentación y obligaciones. (*Guzmán II*, 25).⁹

Insisting on the integrity, or *rectitud*, that resulted in Alemán's poverty after two decades of government service, also establishes an authority as free of corruption. Alemán is characterized as a participant in the debate on the urban poor unswayed by the ulterior motives of the benefiting parties in the poverty business, of which there are many. The records of the city administration of Madrid, the so-called *Libros de Gobierno*, show that then – as now – money could be made with the poor: there were construction contracts for poor houses, there were watchmen contracts for controlling the poor, there were forced labour programmes etc. (Alvar Ezquerro 2003, Santolaria Sierra) In among this multitude of interests, disconnecting the authority of the narrative voice from these interests serves the rhetorical strength of that voice. Away from this literary self-fashioning, Alemán, of course, was not at all as disconnected from business interests in the capital as this characterisation would have his readers believe (in fact he and Pérez de Herrera had had substantial business dealings), most of all he probably simply was not very good at speculation.

However, this careful literary fashioning of Alemán's uncorrupt, detached idealist vantage point – even if mostly fictitious – is immediately undermined by the complexity of the narration, a distinctive parallel between the *informe* and *Guzmán*. At this point we could hypothesise that the the variety of roles Mateo Alemán plays in different professional and artistic circles is reflected in the complex constellation of narrative instances in *Guzmán*. Mateo Alemán is a rather elusive phenomenon, mostly characterised through his conflicts or interactions with others. In the *informe* we find Mateo in conflict with the Fuggers (Mierau 2016), in the *Guzmán* we see Alemán taking on Pérez de Herrera and Giginta (Mierau 2016b), within the *Guzmán* we find Mateo Alemán characterised as a the loyal civil servant depending on and constructing authority, taking on the other Alemán, the literary author who undermines any sort of all-encompassing authority through the prototypical self-undermining unreliable narration.

At the aggregate level, the authorial persona that arises from the synthesis of the polyphony of the voices of the various Alemáns exists at the grace of the/a reader's capacity to perceive artifice in the narrative constellation, in the distance between *Guzmán* and *Guzmanillo*, but also in the retrospect, and the manifold exemplary digressions in the *Guzmán*, as we find it in the many internal cross-references in the *informe*. It is here, that we find the active complicity of a modern reader prepared to see a projection of the authorial persona as articulated in the narrative complexity of the text, as contemporaries saw Cervantes' authorial persona manifest in the metaleptic constellation of narrative instances in *Quixote*.

The urban reader and the construction of authority

As a final point we must therefore turn towards the reader, as a key agent in the construction and proliferation of Alemán's authority. At first glance, the relation between readers of the *informe secreto* and *Guzmán de Alfarache* respectively could not be more different. Close to no-one read the *informe*, almost everyone read *Guzmán* – an instant bestseller in its time. However, in a sense, the readers of *Guzmán de Alfarache* were readers of the texts such as the *informe* first, and it is this type of text – we argue – that informs these new readers' notion of authority when approaching *Guzmán de Alfarache*. Much of Alemán's

⁹ “And, as we know, he left the Royal Administration, which he served for almost twenty years, the best of his life, at his own accord. There he had held the function of tax accountant for his majesty Philip II, praise unto him, and also dedicated himself to the many other important ventures and investigations he was assigned, which he always executed to utmost satisfaction, with such integrity that he ended up in such poverty that, not being able to continue his services on account of such need, he retired to less ostentation and obligations.”

construction of authority is directed at a new reader. The first success of the work is determined in Madrid, the capital. Therefore, the first success-determining readership of *Guzmán* is urban, bureaucratic and proto-bourgeois. It pays to discuss the reading and writing practices of the Madrid book buying public, which is fundamentally different to the book buying public of other cities, and, moreover, as it is based in the new imperial capital manifests cultural innovations that subsequently radiate outwards into the empire.

Madrid, chosen as the location of the capital in 1561, is a city of bureaucrats and government officials, all of whom are literate and practiced in consuming and producing large amounts of functional text on a daily basis. They are the scribes who pen the court minutes, the protocols, the *consultas de gracia*, the business contracts, the official correspondence. (Bouza, Ruiz Pérez) They recognize the act of capturing the practice of everyday life in text and know the distance between the phenomenon of urban poverty and its representation in text. Their writing practice is not necessarily informed by classic schooling; much rather, it is informed by the street corner and its particular articulation of authority. The everyday experience of the city thus becomes as a reference frame for judging literature that competes with, and possibly, increasingly displaces the precepts of classical notions of literary quality. Thus the eye of the clerk, the scribe and the judge displaces *El Pinciano* as the determining agent when it comes to the quality (and thus authority) of literature. Moreover, Madrid was the first modern city without an established literary tradition. Due to this lack of tradition, the first generation of literary representations of Madrid lacks the pressure to reproduce an established repertoire of commonplaces about the city and its inhabitants, as would be the case in the case of Rome (*roma putana*), or Sevilla. Madrid then, is the locus of a distinctly modern urban reader, who, due to the central location of the *villa y corte*, is also a prototype for an expanding generation of modern readers. This urban modern reader, I argue responds to three, specifically urban types of authority construction: firstly, the bureaucrat or administrator's, secondly, the marginal's and, thirdly, the bourgeois'. These three reader-based articulations of authority have little relation with traditional literary authority, or 'auctoritas', and the intertextuality of *Guzmán*, yet they serve perfectly to understand the appeal and success of Alemán's authorial persona.

The bureaucrat or government official conceives of authority as the capacity to dictate and adhere to rules and regulations. This we can perceive in the above example of the *informe* which captures the representation of the marginal in the preconceived questions of the investigator's protocol. We see it too, in *Guzmán* in the confessional rapport between narrator and implied reader. The modern reader, overly familiar with these protocols – be it as a producer or consumer – recognizes the mode, evaluates the text based on the author's capacity to recreate it. The marginal's authority is based on knowledge of the city from the perspective of the delinquent, always tactically responding to the strategic approach to the control of urban space by the authorities (Mierau 2016b). It is the knowledge of official authority, and the capacity to survive, operate even, in spite of it. In a sense, it is an anti-thetical response to the authority of the bureaucrat. One must not underestimate the proportion of early modern urban readers who had been on the receiving end of the judicial body: thus informed readers who read about police chases (remember *Guzmán* escaping from Madrid with the merchant's money) and incarceration with the critical view of the delinquent. The extent to which the modern urban reader is also a delinquent reader, is I venture to argue, an interesting path for further research. The bourgeois' notion of authority is fluid, self-fashioned, commercialised. (Sánchez, Ruan) It departs from an open approach to economy, i.e. it presupposes the new, the unknown. The new and unknown product, idea, solution. We see it in the innovative – if oftentimes far-fetched – ideas of the *arbitristas*, the urban planners, and, as part and parcel of this development, the innovations in art, in literature. This is manifest in Mateo Alemán's mediation between the forced labourers and the Fuggers; and it returns in the mature *Guzmán's*

mediation for his younger self. The (proto-)bourgeois readers, who innovate daily, developing new products, intervening for clients, designing neighbourhoods, will recognize their mentality in the construction of the text, using this, again, as a criterion for literary quality, and thus authority, much rather than the *Confessions* of St Augustine or the *Golden Ass* which are much less likely to form part of their active cultural horizon.

Conclusion: the price of authority

In the previous excursion, we followed Alemán's self-representation in the *informe*, based on a rhetorics of mediating authority embedded in the legalistic bureaucratic discourse of the royal administration, and then discussed the presence of a similar rhetorics in *Guzmán*. We proceeded to a brief discussion of the emerging modern readers of Madrid in order to understand the favourable reception of *Guzmán* in its immediate context. The more we studied the articulation of authority in the *informe* and *Guzmán*, the more we found that the types of authority to which Alemán could lay claim were manifold, and, at times conflicting, as creativity in fiction existed in a tense relationship with verisimilitude or supposedly true accounts, and aforementioned emerging modern reader-oriented, urban-space based notions of literary authority. Appealing to these modern notions, Alemán manages to capture a substantial audience with his plight, however authority in the very literary sphere he has helped carve out, helped create, means that his message is now read within the authority-undermining frame of the picaresque. This manner of deriving authority from extraliterary social actors is unstable as it is affected by the picaresque's inherent instability, its unreliable narration, in the words of Wayne Booth. It implies deriving authority from the very figures it unmasks. That is to say: the voice of the judge, applied to authorise the text is used to present a text featuring corrupt judges. Thus moving from the bureaucratic sphere to the new literary sphere, one that appeals to a modern urban-space oriented readership, comes at price, with authority as the currency, losing the authority of the investigative judge in favour of a new conception of literary success.

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