

Play as Metaphor and Material Reality in *Guzmán de Alfarache*

Michael Scham
(University of St. Thomas)

The engraving *La nave de la vida picaresca* which adorns the 1605 edition of López de Úbeda's *La pícaro Justina* includes "la Madre Celestina" and Justina on either side of the mast; Guzmán de Alfarache, "pobre y contento," on the bow; Lazarillo de Tormes with his "Toro de Salamanca" rowing alongside in a skiff. Among the emblems are a skeletal figure holding up the mirror of *desengaño*, Father Time imperceptibly steering the ship from the stern ("Ilebolos sin sentir"), and images of cards, dice and *bolos* (ninepins); on the hull, a reclining female figure labelled "Ociosidad." The image serves to affirm López de Úbeda's place within the picaresque genealogy: not only is Celestina mother, but the irrepressible wit and prankster Justina betroths Guzmán, a move that would seem to undercut his closing claims of spiritual enlightenment and social reform. In other words, the frontispiece involves an appropriation of *Guzmán de Alfarache* by *La pícaro Justina*.

And yet the festive-moralistic image does capture essential aspects of Alemán's protagonist. In his prefatory praise of the novel, Alonso de Barros gives a similar visual image: "nos ha retratado tan al vivo un hijo del ocio" (18). Guzmán himself, while claiming a "buen natural," admits his idleness, which he proceeds to condemn in his characteristic homiletic register: "Es la ociosidad campo franco de perdición, arado con que se siembran malos pensamientos, semilla de cizaña, escardadera que entresaca las buenas costumbres, hoz que siega las buenas otras, trillo que trilla las honras, carro que acarrea maldades y silo en que se recogen todos los vicios" (I, ii, 6, 205-6). There are also suggestions of determinism and original sin, as Guzmán recounts his family origins in edenic San Juan de Alfarache, and his father's propensity to play and leisure: card-playing metaphors refer both to the amorous pursuits of the father ("La conversación anduvo y de ella se pidió juego," I, i, 2, 56), as well as to his shady business dealings ("volvió el naípe en rueda," I, i, 2, 47).

If not a hereditary determinism, one might attribute Guzmán's idleness to a degraded social milieu, a point made by the narrating Guzmán after he describes the Monster of Ravenna, and which would seem partially to exonerate his father: "iba mi padre con el hilo de la gente y no fue solo el que pecó" (I, i, 1, 46). The monster itself, a *prodigio*, indicates both the fallen condition of humanity as well as a promise for redemption. As Jannine Montauban has discussed, the image is also emblematic of Alemán's baroque aesthetic, which requires an active reader who brings sufficient knowledge to decipher a complex field of signifiers (240-242). Among the numerous attributes (horn, bat wings, hermaphrodite) symbolizing perversion, there is also inscribed on the creature's belly a cross, signalling that, "si, reprimiendo las torpes carnalidades, abrazasen en su pecho la virtud, les daría Dios paz y ablandaría su ira" (I, i, 1, 46).

The generalized decadence relates to the novel's theological underpinnings, its panoramic depiction of *miseria homini*, and also to its engagement with social reform. The protagonist is thoroughly enmeshed in this matrix of authorial concerns: a member of the idle underclass, addicted to gaming, given to financial speculation rather than productive work, Guzmán is also an Augustinian sinner writing from a vantage point of repentant conversion and grace. The social and the theological aspects of the work have been

emphasized by different scholars, some going as far as to discount Alemán's spiritual concerns, claiming instead a subversive or cynical outlook, a *converso* or Machiavellian rejection of Counter-Reformation Catholicism (e.g., Brancaforte, Darnis). Well known for his "mercantilist" interpretation of the work, Michel Cavillac has shown that the concerns with poverty, working conditions and judicial corruption are by no means incompatible with theological debates. As Cavillac, Anne Cruz and others have pointed out, the issue of poverty and productive work was very much a theological problem; and figures like the Dominican Domingo de Soto and the Catalán canon Miguel de Giginta advocated for reforms of a rationalist, secularising and mercantilist nature. Alemán saw a natural juxtaposition, as Sabine Schlickers put it, of "la eterna *miseria hominis* y la realidad social" (172).

The following pages deal with how thoroughly notions of play figure in the tensions outlined above. Containing numerous scenes depicting specific games and recreations, discussions about leisure and work more generally, and rich figurative language borrowing from ludic concepts and lexicon, *Guzmán de Alfarache* is a major artefact of the period's preoccupations with the role of play in society. And Guzmán's own recreational experiences provide a nuanced illustration of his struggles to exercise free will within a degraded world. While the play references—including his gambling recidivism, the exploitations and injustices visited upon him in various social strata, his amorous pursuits—are primarily oriented toward social intercourse and material reality, we will see that the theological propositions are consistent with these mundane concerns.

Ideas on Play and Leisure

Early modern debates on play and leisure consider the positive and negative effects of a great range of activities, from moral-theological, economic, legal, and medical perspectives. The Spanish *tratadistas* themselves discussed the relative virtues of games of chance and skill, board games and physical activities, spectacles and hunting, and their effects on different genders, ages, and social estates. Frequently incorporating the Aristotelian-Thomist ideal of *eutrapelia*, or beneficial play in moderation, these thinkers were particularly interested in defining the proper relationship between leisure and productive work, *ocio* and *negocio*. Humanists such as Erasmus and Vives advocated play during the education and socialization of children. And many writers of imaginative literature, Cervantes and Alemán salient among them, conceived of the literary work itself as a game, with the potential to either edify or corrupt the reader. Later theorists have studied every conceivable aspect of play, from the neurological to the metaphysical. For present purposes, two twentieth-century figures are significant: Johan Huizinga, whose *Homo Ludens* asserts that civilization itself arises through play; and Roger Caillois, refined Huizinga's insights by delineating categories of play, including *agon* (competition), *alea* (chance), mimicry (acting/simulation) and *ilinx* (vertigo).¹

An important early modern writer is the erasmian, economist and chronicler of Felipe III, Pedro de Valencia. His "Discurso contra la ociosidad" (1608) is a paean to productive work, denouncing the disproportion amongst the three estates (the bloated

¹ I have examined these issues at some length in *Lector ludens* (2014 Ch. 1). In an attractively illustrated pamphlet of the same year, Víctor Infantes has illuminated the juncture of books and games in the *Siglo de Oro*.

ecclesiastical orders in particular), criticizing idle students and rentiers alike, advocating female labor, bemoaning the health consequences of idleness, and seeming to allow only such recreations that cultivate skills or yield material benefits—such as the hunt, ball games, and fencing. His tract offers, as Jesús Luis Paradinas Fuentes notes in the introductory essay to his edition, a synthesis of social, economic and theological ideas (xlv-xlvii). Valencia shares with Alemán reformist sensibilities and humanistic formation, and both condemn idleness in similar terms. In a letter to Cristóbal Pérez de Herrera, Alemán proclaims that “la ociosidad provoca lujurias, juegos, blasfemias, hurtos; con ella se ofende Dios y el prójimo se escandaliza; multiplícense las maldades, conciértanse las traiciones, óbrase todo género de pecados” (2014, 28). In the same letter to his friend, Alemán shifts, like Valencia, from theological to social-economic concerns, as he discusses the damages of *ociosidad* to women:

¿No has visto por ahí hasta los rincones llenos y los campos con infinito número de mozuelas perdidas que [...] no quieren ocuparse en ministerios domésticos, coser, labrar, hilar, o ya en otras cosas, las que pudieren, de que resultaría, estando los unos y los otros ocupados, haber más oficiales, más trabajadores y gente de servicio? Y, habiendo abundancia en todo, vendría a bajar el excesivo precio de las cosas. (28)

In *Guzmán de Alfarache*, the commentary on female leisure veers back to a moral register, as idleness in women produces the wrong kind of commerce: “Que del ocio nació el negocio; y es muy conforme a razón que la madre holgazana saque hija cortesana” (II, i, 2, 391-2).

Guzmán’s education and *Lehrjahre* are infused with idleness and play. Leaving his lowly employment as “mozo de ventero,” he goes to Madrid, where his picaresque formation is likened to a progressive course of studies: “en este tiempo me enseñé a jugar la taba, el palmo y al hoyuelo. De allí subí a medianos: aprendí el quince y la treinta una, quínolas y primera. Brevemente salí con mis estudios y pasé a mayores, volviéndolos boca arriba con topa y hago” (I, i, 2, 171). The compendium of games is the pícaro’s curriculum, from tossing dice and coins, to card games of varying degrees of complexity. It is by this means that Guzmán claims to refine his intellect: “íbaseme sotilizando el ingenio por horas; di nuevos filos al entendimiento”. All of this comprises a degradation of the ideal of play in childhood education, set forth by Erasmus in his *Colloquies*, Vives in his *Dialogues*, and Rodrigo Caro in *Días geniales o lúdricos*. For these humanists, play provides an ordered realm of affective and physical engagement, and teaches children respect for rules and deference to onlookers and arbiters. As Caro approvingly observed of the Romans, “Los latinos a la escuela donde aprenden los muchachos llamaron ludus, y al maestro, *ludi magister*, para significar que habían de aprender jugando y jugar aprendiendo” (I, 143). For Guzmán, play becomes a compulsive pursuit of material gain and dominance (not unrelated to his characteristic zeal for revenge), and he applies himself most assiduously not to socialization or self-reflection, but to learning how to cheat.

It is notable that *Guzmán de Alfarache* contains very little of what Caillois termed *alea*, games of chance—so prevalent and debated during the period. When Guzmán does reflect upon *Fortuna* (e.g. I, ii, 7), it is not to explore the unsettling arbitrariness of the universe, but rather to emphasize his cyclical return to vice, the recidivism that came to be

known as the work's "Sisyphus rhythm" (Brancaforte). The humanists advocated games that balanced *alea* and agency: "que no sea el juego de tal calidad que dependa todo de la suerte, sino que la experiencia y el saber corrijan los malos azares de la fortuna" (Vives, 149). Guzmán, in his obsession with defeating his opponents by whatever means necessary, focuses on *agon* and *mimesis*—competition and representation, or role-play. Often games were permitted by contemporary commentators because they contributed to the cultivation of the *ingenio*, including the social grace of *sprezzatura*, exemplified in Castiglione's courtier. Guzmán, on the other hand, revels in using his intellect to outsmart his adversaries, by skillful adherence to the rules or, more frequently, by virtuosic deceit.

Serving as a cook's assistant in Madrid, the young Guzmán's emergence as a full-fledged pícaro corresponds to gambling proficiency: "Yo quedé doctor consumado en el oficio y en breves días me refiné de jugador, y aun de manos, que fue lo peor. Terrible vicio es el juego" (I, ii, 5, 194). The zeugma moves from literal gambling, which drains his income, to the figurative play of thievery—the prestidigitation of *juegos de manos*. Later, in Italy, while lamenting the lack of justice for the poor, this image of degenerate *ludus* describes legal proceedings: "Allí me hicieron la justicia juego y juego de manos" (II, ii, 2, 486). José Deleito y Piñuela has written of "justicia apicarada" as a prevalent theme in contemporary narratives and tractates (146-150), further suggesting that Guzmán's *modus ludendi* is less an aberration than the rule.

A key term relating to deception and tricks, the prevalent *juego de manos*, is *tropolía*. Mary Gaylord, Barbara Fuchs and others have examined the word in light of the "verdadera eutropelia" extolled by Fray Juan Bautista in the *Aprobación* of Cervantes' *Novelas ejemplares*.² The term is ambiguous and versatile: it can refer to harmless games, or to the beneficial *eutropelia* of recreation; it can also signify mendacity, a false representation facilitating fraud. Back during his stint as *pícaro de cocina*, it is such a confidence game that Guzmán extends to the most basic human relationships: "Fui poco a poco ganando crédito, agradando a los unos, contentando a los otros y sirviendo a todos; porque tiene necesidad de complacer el que quiere que todos le hagan placer. Ganar amigos es dar dinero a logro y sembrar en regadío" (I, i, 5, 198). As noted, the ludic orientation of Guzmán—and that of the society around him—is predicted on *agon* and *mimesis*, a tactical bearing in which people take on frequently deceptive roles and see each other as adversaries in a zero-sum game. It is significant that, in his very account of making friends, Guzmán employs the language of usury and economic manipulation. It is all inimical to what the period's reformers, Alemán amongst them, were advocating: plain dealing and productive work.

For Guzmán, games contribute to a larger pattern, a perpetual squandering of opportunity, an inability to make virtuous use of money, love, friends, or play: "Esto me hizo mucho daño y el haberme enseñado a jugar en la vida pasada, porque lo que ahora me sobraba [...] todo lo vendía para el juego. De tal manera puedo decir que el bien me hizo mal; que cuanto a los buenos les es de aumento, porque lo saben aprovechar, a los malos es dañoso, porque dejándolo perder se pierden más con él" (I, ii, 5, 193). The notion that play may be detrimental or beneficial depending on the quality of the participant was not

² See also Wardropper: "Con el cambio de vocal la eutropelia ya es algo más que la moderación en el juego; ha recuperado de su étimo griego su sentido literal de lo que gira bien, la agilidad y la destreza manual, sobre todo en los engaños sin perjuicio que, siguiendo el mismo modelo griego, los franceses llaman *des tours*" (161).

uncommon, leading some *tratadistas*, such as the Jesuit Pedro de Guzmán, to characterize certain games as *indiferentes* (196). Cards were sometimes designated as such although, consistent with Guzmán de Alfarache's regret that he is unable to partake of them in moderation, many contemporary moralists concluded the accompanying risks were too great, and recommended prohibition (Scham 78-100).

Pierre Darnis has argued that Alemán constructed a *silenic* discourse, that the unappealing exterior of degradation and *desengaño* yields to an inner optimism. If, in the early passage cited above, the "good" does Guzmán ill, through experience he learns to make positive use of the bad. He develops *astucia* and learns to exercise the duplicity that is necessary to flourish in the fallen world: "Defendiendo explícitamente la metafórica urbanidad del atalaya, Alemán dignifica implícitamente el ingenio, la sospecha, el acecho, la disimulación y la simulación, reuniéndolos en una compleja farmacopea del mal, en pro del bien" (Darnis, 50). For Darnis, the ludic metaphors throughout the novel, consistent with Machiavellian power play, belie the exalted orientation of the homiletic content. Promoting an alternative, secular form of self-help, they make of *tropelía* and mimesis cunning virtues in a deceitful world.

When Guzmán opts for the priesthood, we see an example of how the play metaphors give a "significación disidente a su homilía" (Darnis, 39):

Tomé resolución en hacerme de la Iglesia, no más de porque con ello quedaba remediado, la comida segura y libre de mis acreedores, que llegados los diez años, habían de apretar conmigo. Con esto les daba un gentil tapaboca, cerrábales el emboque y dejábalos muy feos. (II, ii, 4, 662)

As the explanatory note in Luis Gómez Canseco's edition explains, "emboque" is the ring through which the ball is sent. The image of the *mesa de trucos*, set forth in Cervantes' *Novelas ejemplares* as a beneficial public recreation, emerges here as an emblem of strategic trickery. It is also worth pointing out that Guzmán, in his choice of new vocation, illustrates one of the social ills emphasized by Pedro de Valencia: the disproportionate ecclesiastical population, which lives off the work of others.

Picaresque Otium and Negotium: Alemán and Cervantes

Underlining the economic orientation of the picaresque, Peter Dunn observed how the *pícaro* emulates aristocratic values, especially with regard to work and leisure:

The segmentation of time into units of value permits the traditional elitist opposition *otium/negotium* to escape from the favored precincts and to become generalized and, in so doing, to assume new forms and meanings. Leisure is no longer the privilege of rank but may be bought with money, and it is all the samewhether the money be earned or stolen. (301)

Part of the appeal of the rogue's life, celebrated in the poem "La vida del pícaro" is that leisure may also be enjoyed in the absence of money: "Tu, pícaro, de gradas haces sillas, / y, sin respeto de la justa media, a tu placer te asientas y arodillas." We recall the *Pícara Justina* frontispiece representation of Guzmán, "pobre y contento," and the

“menosprecio de corte” flavor of certain passages early in Guzmán’s career (e.g., I, iii, 3). But much of the satirical dimension of picaresque idleness lies in its parallel, pointed up by Dunn, with the upper estates. As Mercedes Blanco puts it, “[c]omo el del aristócrata, el ocio de Guzmán es estructural” (139).

Guzmán consistently displays an antipathy to productive work. Narrating his youthful struggles with indolence, and a purported desire to work, Guzmán employs the register of contemporary moralists: “Y te prometo que lo [=el trabajo] amaba entonces, porque tenía de los vicios experiencia y sabía cuánto es uno más hombre que los otros cuanto era más trabajador, y por el contrario el ocio. Mas no pude ya otra cosa” (I, ii, 7, 217). But perhaps it is the account of his dubious friend, Sayavedra, that most clearly illustrates the travesty of *negotium* that comprises the picaresque vocation. En route to Milan, Guzmán asks his companion to explain why he had robbed him (“la causa que le había movido”). Sayavedra’s response places his narration squarely within the incipient picaresque tradition:

Señor, ya no puedo, aunque quisiese, dejar de hacer alarde público de mi vida, tanto por la merced recibida con tanta liberalidad en todo lo pasado, como por ser tan notoria, y que con quien se ha de vivir ha de ser el trato llano, sin tener algo encubierto [...] Y cumpliendo con tantas obligaciones, vuesa merced sabrá que yo soy valenciano, hijo de... (II, ii, 4, 508).

The allusion is to *Lazarillo de Tormes*, in which the narration results from a request to explain a particular “caso,” beginning with a similar formal address: “Pues sepa vuestra merced ante todas cosas que a mí llaman Lázaro de Tormes, hijo de...” The covenant of plain dealing—el trato llano—between friends also resonates with the biographical exchange and pledge of openness at the outset of Cervantes’ *Rinconete y Cortadillo* (“confesemos llanamente...”). Like Diego Cortado, Sayavedra boasts of his skills with scissors, both the figurative “tijeras” of a thief’s supple fingers, and the literal ones with which he makes off with various fabrics. He also displays the requisite proficiency with card-games and their associated tricks.

Moreover, Sayavedra’s claim of honorable parentage, and the way in which he and his brother invent new names when embarking on their picaresque adventures (“fuemos de acuerdo en mudar de nombre”), bring to mind *La ilustre fregona*. It is at the level of motivation that a comparison with Cervantes’ story proves most interesting. Sayavedra and his brother set off,

...ya fuese porque de niños quedamos consentidos, ya porque, dejándonos llevar de los impulsos de nuestro apetito, sin hacerles la debida resistencia, consentimos en esta tentación [...] Tanta es o fue la fuerza de nuestra estrella y tanto el de la mala inclinación a no esquivarnos de ella que, pospuesto el honor, con más deseo de ver tierras que de sustentarle, salimos a nuestras aventuras [...] De esta manera salimos en un día juntos peregrinando [...] Anduve por todo él [Nápoles], gastando de lo que no tenía, hecho muy gentil pícaro... (II, ii, 4, 508-9).

Cervantes’ Carriazo experiences a similar if more straightforward inducement: “llevado de una inclinación picaresca, sin forzarle a ello ningún mal tratamiento que sus

padres le hiciesen, sólo por su gusto y antojo, se desgarró...” (1989 II, 139). The distinction seems deceptively clear. While Cervantes’ protagonists characteristically are imbued with a playful levity (“llevado de una inclinación [...], sin forzarle”), Alemán’s characters, also following an impulse, are theologically freighted (“tentación,” “flaqueza,” “nuestra estrella,” “la mala inclinación”). As with Guzmán’s attraction to the “vida libre” of the pícaro, Sayavedra’s adventure is framed from the outset as the abject sinner’s insufficient struggle to exercise a virtuous will.

As mentioned, however, the distinction is deceptive. Carriazo and Avendaño fulfill their carefree youthful adventure against the backdrop of the elder Carriazo’s sexual crime, the issue of which turns out to be the son’s love interest in the picaresque underworld—the beautiful kitchen-maid for whom the *novela* is named. In other words, original sin, trans-generational weakness of the flesh, and questionable atonement are also fundamental to Cervantes’ story. Alemán and Cervantes are perhaps different more in tone and emphasis than in the substance of their concerns.³ And their engagement with play illustrates some of the similarities. On his way to the upper echelons of the picaresque (“que pudiera leer cátedra en la facultad al famoso de Alfarache”), Carriazo also fulfills the requisite curriculum: “aprendió a jugar a la taba en Madrid, y al rentoy en las Ventillas de Toledo, y presa y pinta en pie de las barbancas de Sevilla” (1989 II, 140).

After his picaresque metamorphosis, Sayavedra’s brother follows a path of misfortune, from Madrid to Andalucía to the *Indias* (“donde también le fue mal”). Sayavedra’s arrival in Naples, “donde siempre tuve deseo de residir” (II, ii, 4, 509), is similar to the arrival of two other Cervantine *pícaros* in Sevilla, “donde ellos tenían gran deseo de verse” (1989 I, 199). Sayavedra become initiated to the *germanía hampesca* (“fui muy gentil caleta, buzo, cuatrero, maleador y mareador, pala, poleo, escolta, estafa y zorro,” [II, ii, 4, 510]) which figures so prominently in Cervantes’ *Rinconete y Cortadillo*; and he displays particular ability, like Cortadillo, with the afore-mentioned *tijeras*. As in Monipodio’s underworld in Sevilla, the picaresque community Sayavedra joins comprises a thorough travesty of honor and productive work. His “trabajo” consists of staking out houses, sometimes under the guise of beggar, so that he may rob them during the night, and seeking out large concentrations of people (“a las comedias, a ver justiciados” [II, ii, 4, 511]), where thievery is easier. Like the pious criminals of Monipodio, he relies on the favor of “Dios todopoderoso” (II, ii, 4, 513). One day, having failed to steal anything, he is particularly concerned about fulfilling his community obligations:

Pues volver a casa manivació, sin haber llevado provisión por delante y que por ventura los compañeros tuviesen ya labrada la miel, me llamaran zágano, que se la quería comer a manos lavadas. Teníamoslo por caso de menos valer, ir a mesa puesta sin llevar por delante la costa hecha. (II, ii, 4, 513)

The exaggerated sense of honor (“caso de menos valer”) and the severe standards of professional obligation both point to what is lacking: they are neither nobles, nor productive laborers. Pedro de Valencia used the same entomological image while discussing the disproportionate idle classes:

³ Castro and Blanco Aguinaga established the opposition. For those who have qualified the polarity, see especially Dunn.

Críanse en las colmenas unos abejones mayores que las abejas i que an menester más para comer, que los llaman en latín *fuscus* i en castellano çánganos; éstos no hazen más que comer, i assí las abejas, a ciertos tiempos, deve ser por orden de su Rei, los matan i los echan fuera de la colmena. Assí que en esta república tienen los ociosos pena de muerte. (162)

Alemán forms part of a humanist tradition that was attempting to define the proper relationships between leisure and labor. Like Valencia, he had a reformist bent, as evidenced by the repeated illustrations in *Guzmán de Alfarache* of the excesses of *ocio* and the avoidance of productive work, from both the upper and lower social strata.

As we have been observing, Cervantes also partakes of this tradition, particularly in the social orientation of stories like *Rinconete y Cortadillo* and *La ilustre fregona*, in which the picaresque communities reflect and are complicit with “honorable” society, and the recreational proclivities of the nobles become intertwined with those of the lower classes. *Don Quijote* contains commentary on the structure of picaresque *vidas*, with an oblique reference to *Guzmán de Alfarache*, in the form of the galley slave Ginés de Pasamonte, whose autobiography is so good that “mal año para Lazarillo de Tormes y para todos cuantos de aquel género se han escrito o escribieren” (I, 22). *El coloquio de los perros* is Cervantes’ fullest engagement with the picaresque in its narrative, social and theological dimensions. Though Alemán’s work is nowhere mentioned in this *novela* (as it is in *La ilustre fregona*), *El coloquio de los perros*, with a duplication of narrators, one critiquing and keeping on track the digressing principal voice, and the witch Cañizares contributing to an anguished reflection on humankind’s inclination to evil, is a sort of deconstruction of *Guzmán de Alfarache* (see Forcione, 178-181). While Guzmán ends his account at sea, hoping for re-integration in society as a reformed citizen in his promised third volume, Cipión and Berganza have resolved little at narrative’s end, with unsatisfactory clues regarding their own identities and unsettling insights into human nature. In the frame tale, however, Cervantes provides a more hopeful image as the two friends, Peralta and Campuzano, who are also narrator and narratee, go for a stroll in the Espolón, a recreation which reinforces the image of salutary recreation in the collection’s prologue. One would be hard pressed to find such scenes of communion in *Guzmán de Alfarache*, despite Alemán’s humanism. As we saw, friendship itself appears as a means rather than an end in the novel. Correspondingly, there are very few positive instances of play. Those that do exist, however, are instructive by contrast.

Exemplary Play in “Guzmán de Alfarache”

The interpolated Moorish romance of Ozmín y Daraja (I, i, 8), set in the heroic past of the *Reyes Católicos*, provides a moral and aesthetic counterpoint to the main novel. Numerous ludic metaphors describe the courtship and rivalries for the beautiful Moor, Daraja, but the primary play is the noble *agon*—arranged, it is worth pointing out, to alleviate Daraja’s sorrow: “Viéndola don Luis en tal extremo de melancolía y don Rodrigo, su hijo, ambos por alegrarla ordenaron unas fiestas de toros y juego de cañas” (I, I, 8, 133).⁴

⁴ Boccaccio, whom Alemán may have had in mind with his gory revenge narrative of Dorido y Clorinia (I, iii, 10), had also presented recreation for the benefit of love-sick ladies (see *Decameron*, Prologue).

The chivalric recreation of *cañas* is notable for how it showcases martial skills within a highly structured ritual:

Partiéronse los puestos, y seis a seis, a la costumbre de la tierra, se trabó un buen concertado juego, que, habiendo pasado en él como un cuarto de hora, entraron de por medio algunos otros caballeros a despartirlos, comenzando con otros caballos una ordenada escaramuza, los del uno y otro puesto, tan puntual que parecía danza muy concertada, de que todos en mirarla estaban suspensos y contentos. (I, i, 8, 136-7)

The choreographic description of agonistic concord, of an “ordered skirmish” (“ordenada escaramuza”), vividly expresses the ludic ideal of violent forces contained within a temporally and spatially structured realm of rules. The scene, in which horses and riders cohere to the extent that they appear “un solo cuerpo,” suggests what A. Bartlett Giamatti described as the ultimate achievement of sport: “Freedom is that state where energy and order merge and all complexity is purified into a simple coherence, a fitness of parts and purpose and passions that cannot be surpassed and whose goal could only be itself” (104). Of course, the festival lacks the full *autotelos* of Giamatti’s account. It is meant to hone and display the martial prowess of nobles, and the entire spectacle serves as a stage for the disguised lover, Ozmín, to demonstrate his innate worth:

“Descubría por sus obras un resplandor de persona principal y noble” (140). The scene, however, is central to a narrative that depicts precisely what is lacking in Guzmán’s world: sincere friendship and true love, virtue tested in action—and a degree of freedom, achieved through supreme coherence of energy and order.

Eutrapelia does find expression in the main narrative, although it occurs on the *diegetic* rather than on the *mimetic* level, it is named but not shown. The narrating Guzmán, expounding in the *speculum principis* tradition, occasionally alludes to it:

Entretenimientos han [=los Reyes] de tener; mas ténganse tales que sean para entretenerse y no para perderse. (I, ii, 5, 202)

No quiero con esto decir que carezcan los príncipes de pasatiempos. Conveniente cosa es que tengan entretenimientos; empero que den cada cosa su lugar. Todo su tiempo y premio. (II, i, 2, 381)

Both conventional formulations of beneficial, moderate recreation are undermined in the scenes where they find expression. The latter comes as Guzmán is about to become the *gracioso-chocarrero* of the French ambassador, in whose house the bounds of decorum are clearly transgressed; the former, working as the cook’s assistant, during which time he refines his thieving abilities and becomes an insolvent gambling addict.

As the humanist writings emphasized, the spectators as well as the participants in games bore the responsibilities of the *eutrapelos* to exercise restraint and moderation: “Recuerda que los que miran son como los jueces del juego, y cede a su dictamen sin dar señales de que no te parece bien. De esta suerte el juego es recreo, y también grata y generosa educación de un mancebo hidalgo” (Vives, 150). Guzmán attempts to watch a card game for mere entertainment, but soon finds himself rooting for one of the players,

affectively engaged in the prospects for gain and loss. In this, he again sets himself forth as Everyman: “Si gustas de ver jugar, mira dispasionadamente, si puedes; mas no podrás, que eres como yo y harás lo mismo” (II, ii, 3, 498). So difficult is it for him to remain neutral while watching a game, and so unsavory the consequences of his identification with one contestant over another, that narrating Guzmán reverts to a commonplace moralization of the deck, which represents kings and knights but not “mercaderes, oficiales, letrados ni religiosos” (499), for whom card games are inappropriate. However, his subsequent elaboration on the risks of play provides a psychological insight that would call into question the permissibility of such play even for kings, soldiers and nobles:

Que no llamo yo jugar a quien lo tomase por juego una vez o seis o diez en el año, de cosa que no diese cuidado ni pusiese codicia, mas de por solo gusto. No embargante que tengo por imposible sentarse uno a jugar sin codicia de ganar, aunque sea un alfiler y lo juegue con su mujer o su hijo; que, cuando no se juega interés de dinero, juégase a lo menos opinión del entendimiento y saber, y así nadie quiere que otro lo venza. (II, ii, 3, 499)

Such an observation might also give pause to those well-meaning *tratadistas* who deemed such games *indiferentes*. The attempt to advocate *eutrapelia* is stymied by an inherent human vanity that surpasses the desire for material gain. As noted, the novel exhibits no real interest in games of chance (*alea*) or, for that matter, in *ilinx* (“vertigo”). Guzmán delivers a thorough indictment of *agon* even as he reveals it to be the fundamental play type of his world, whose inhabitants are locked in struggle, deploying deception to gain wealth and status, and to exact revenge.

A final example of play’s promise and ultimate degradation, and what it means for the novel’s examination of individual will and society, can be taken from Guzmán’s experience with the cardinal in Rome (I, iii, 7-9). The cardinal’s household seems to exercise *caridad*, as well as the humanist precept of ludic education:

Nuestro ejercicio era cada día dos horas a la mañana y dos a la tarde oír a un preceptor que nos enseñaba [...] Lo más, después de servir a nuestro amo, que era harto poco, leíamos libros, contábamos novelas, jugábamos juegos. (I, iii, 9, 318)

One of the principal games is cards, and even the cardinal plays—in violation of the above-mentioned moralization by the narrating Guzmán (“no [...] mercaderes, oficiales, letrados ni religiosos”). Practical jokes are also enjoyed, purportedly within safe bounds: “de las burlas, por ser sin perjuicio, gustaba monseñor” (I, iii, 8, 307). Predictably, the limits are transgressed, giving rise to insults, rivalries and vengeance. The recreations of the cardinal’s house lead to further reflection on *eutrapelia*: “El juego fue inventado para recreación del ánimo, dándole alivio del cansancio y cuidados de la vida, y lo que de esta raya pasa es maldad, infamia y hurto; pues pocas veces se hace que no se le junten estos atributos” (I, iii, 9, 320). Not even the apparently benign precincts of the cardinal’s residence prove capable of containing play’s destructive energy.

The ludic centerpiece of the episode is the contest over whether Guzmán can steal the cardinal’s sweets (“conservas”) without the latter noticing. Twice the cardinal establishes the rules of the contest, with the following conditions:

Ahora, pues [...] si en estos ocho días fuere tu habilidad tanta que me hurtes algo de ellos, te daré lo que hurtares y otro tanto; pero, si no lo haces, te has de obligar a una pena. (I, iii, 8, 312)

Doyte licencia que comas hasta que te hartes una vez, con tal condición que me las vuelvas a entregar sin que se les conozca falta; y si se le conociere, me lo has de pagar. (I, iii, 9, 317)

The contest between Guzmán's powers of deception and the cardinal's detection would seem to conform to contemporary judgements in favor of games based on "habilidad e ingenio" rather than chance, or to Huizinga's ideas on the civilizing functions of contest. But rather than cultivating useful skills or sociability, the cardinal's purpose is—as he notes to himself—the attenuation of destructive forces: "Si a este desamparo, algún gran mal podrá sucederle por sus malas costumbres. Las cosas que en mi casa hace son travesuras de niñez y de lo que no me pone en falta. Menor daño es que a mí se atreva un poco, que, con la necesidad, a otros en mucho" (I, iii, 8, 314). Instead of grooming a productive and sociable subject, the *ludus* functions as a sort of escape valve, a way to divert Guzmán's devious inclinations away from society, and to prevent him from harming himself.

The cardinal's reflections, however, are simplistic. As Guzmán observes, the danger lies not exclusively with aberrant behavior ("malas costumbres"); the very conditions of a contest elicit excess, as Guzmán noted ("cuando no se juega interés de dinero, juégase a lo menos opinión del entendimiento y saber, y así nadie quiere que otro lo venza"). His unruly play also does not represent, as the cardinal would have it, youthful indiscretions ("travesuras de niñez"). Guzmán has attained a level of maturity: "Cuando me vi mancebo, que pudiera bien ceñir espada, holgara de algún acrecentamiento de donde pudiera cobrar esperanzas para valer adelante" (I, iii, 9, 319). But rather than become a productive and reputable citizen, he gambles away his clothes. Moreover, despite the reading and lessons, there is a sense that the cardinal's household, with its candy, practical jokes and games, represents a state of arrested development. According Francisco Márquez Villanueva, who places the episode in the context of the *menosprecio de corte* tradition, Erasmian views of papal Rome, and contemporary writings on begging and charity, the cardinal indulges a latent homosexuality amongst his young servants—and the frivolity of his ludic community is part of Alemán's critique.

Whether or not Alemán intends a pointed attack on dissolute clergy, one can say, as with the episodes with the Duke and Duchess in *Don Quijote* (II, 30-57), that a suspicious amount of time and energy are devoted to play rather than to the higher duties such estates are presumed to perform. But Alemán's satirical net is capacious. Like Goya's indignant representations of injustice, predation and folly at every social strata two centuries later, *Guzmán de Alfarache* contains a world in which virtually nobody can be trusted, and all are complicit in one way or another: beggars are duplicitous, servants steal, judges and clerks are bribed, nobles idle. In the spirit of an *arbitrista*, Guzmán proposes the social benefits of each town employing an instructor in card tricks: "como en la república se permiten casas de pecados por excusar otros mayores, había de haber en cada pueblo principal maestros de estas bellaquerías" (I, iii, 9, 320). Based on Guzmán's own

experience with sophisticated cheating schemes, the idea accords with what Huizinga identified as a particular cultural stage of play: “the act of fraudulently outwitting somebody else has itself become a subject for competition, a new play-theme, as it were” (52). But as we saw with the cardinal’s contests, such *agon* can produce a further incitement for the particular vice.

“Mimesis” and the Game of Reading

It hardly needs to be emphasized that Guzmán’s virtuosity at deception in card games should put the reader on guard with respect to the larger *mimesis* of his narrative performance. Here the connection between play and the literary work is most pronounced. Before recounting his employment as *chocarrero* for the French ambassador (II, i, 3), Guzmán holds forth on the universality of deception, and describes different types: “Toda cosa engaña y todos engañamos en una de cuatro maneras” (396). And it is the third manner of deception that brings storytelling into the ludic realm:

La tercera manera de engaños es cuando son sin perjuicio, que ni engañan a otro con ellos ni lo quedan los que quieren o tratan de engañar. Lo cual es en dos maneras, o con obras o palabras: palabras, contando cuentos, refiriendo novelas, fábulas y otras cosas de entretenimiento; y obras, como son las del juego de manos y otros primores y tropelías que se hacen sin algún daño ni perjuicio de tercero. (397-8)

Literature, stories, and games are classified as “deceptions which do not deceive anyone.” Such recreation is distinguished from the other types of illusion in that its function is to entertain, or even instruct, while the latter is employed in swindling. As we observed above, however, both the “juego de manos” and “tropelías” had sinister potential, they were not always “sin perjuicio.”

An example of positive deception can be found when, amidst his musings on age, Guzmán tells the tale of Jupiter negotiating life spans with humans and animals: “Al propósito te quiero contar un cuento, largo de consideración, aunque de discurso breve, fingido para este propósito” (II, i, 3, 400). Gracián cites the entire fable in his *Agudeza y arte de ingenio*, in a chapter in which Alemán, along with authors such as Apuleius, Lucian and Rojas, is praised as a master of allegorical wit. Such *agudeza*, according to Gracián, is particularly well suited to the dual function of entertaining while imparting moral examples: “Propónese pasar entre los brutos, árboles y otras cosas inanimadas, por ficción, lo que entre los racionales por realidad. Consiste también el fundamento de su artificio en la semejanza o paridad, pero después el primor está en la entretenida ficción con sus empeños y suspensiones, dándoles la extraordinaria salida” (206). It would seem that such deception is quite different from the pernicious types described above. Yet Gracián repeatedly emphasizes its moral obligation (“siempre ha de atender el arte al fruto de la moralidad, que es el fin de lo dulce y entretenido, al blanco de un desengaño,” II, 200). He realizes how tenuous the line between types of deception is, and that a purely aesthetic justification easily leads to mischief.

While a basic difference between a reader of a book and the victim of a *burla* lies in the fact that the former is conscious of participating in a fictional world and the latter is

not, a Platonist would point out that the distinction is precarious since both cases involve the representation, in a somehow convincing way, of that which is not true. As B. W. Ife has discussed, the reader, or spectator, may fluctuate between “aesthetic” and “rational” belief, between accepting the premise of the story as fiction, and as having a factual correspondence to real life (Ife Ch. 3). *Guzmán de Alfarache* presents an excellent example of the way in which picaresque literature thematizes this tension. The *pícaro*, as narrator and as thief, understands the power of a plausible representation. Stories and games may share, as Guzmán argues above, the potential to provide diverting recreation. But the *pícaro*’s propensity to card-sharping, as well as his demonstrated ability to fool others through elaborate schemes and self-fashioning, should alert us to the prospect that our witty narrator may be duping us as well. He may be feigning repentance and reform to justify past and future swindling.

Another possibility is that Alemán, like the “maestro de bellaquerías,” has instructed us, via the ludic space of his novel, on how to navigate the treacherous field of mundane experience. Francisco Ramírez Santacruz has noted how Alemán’s ubiquitous wit, his *agudeza verbal*, conditions the reader’s intellect—or at least requires a reader with sufficient knowledge and conceptual agility to “participar voluntariamente en el juego” (125). An extension of this sense of play in *Guzmán de Alfarache* may lead to Darnis’ contention that, for the *lector discreto*, the novel contains a Machiavellian deployment of the bad (deception) for good (social advancement). But as Cavillac demonstrated, the comprehensive socio-economic engagement of the novel is not necessarily at odds with its theological register. A major *engaño* revealed in the work is the false *crédito* undermining the merchant class, and the misrepresentations of the idle clergy and nobility. Through Augustinian self-reflection and recuperation of free will, the *pícaro* as Everyman, like Spain itself, may find salvation through economic redemption (Cavillac 102-13; 137-55). The productive work of living by the sweat of one’s own brow is an extension of spiritual integrity.

As Aquinas asserted in his resuscitation of Aristotle’s *eutrapelia*,

The activity of playing looked at specifically in itself is not ordained to a further end, yet the pleasure we take therein serves as recreation and rest for the soul, and accordingly when this be well-tempered, application to play is lawful. Hence Cicero says, *It is indeed useful to turn to sport and fun, but as it is to turn to sleep and other solaces, that is, when we have discharged our obligations in grave and serious matters.* (2a2ae. 168, 2)

The character Guzmán is unable to partake of well-tempered play, and his failures and misuses are instructive. *Guzmán de Alfarache* consists of an affective and intellectual education for the reader, who might learn, during the several hours of leisure required to actualize Alemán’s game, how properly to calibrate the relationship between *otium*, *negotium* and *templum*.

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