

Guzmán de Alfarache and the Question of Form

Edward H. Friedman
(Vanderbilt University)

“... me hacían por horas mil mortificaciones ...” (2: 3, 9)

If there is a word that aptly could describe the tenor and the comprehensive structure of Mateo Alemán’s *Guzmán de Alfarache*, that word might be *defensiveness*. The description applies to the author and to the narrator/protagonist. The invented life, the life story, and the self-portrayal of Guzmán de Alfarache have much to do with rationalization and with placing the blame for failure on social strictures, hierarchies, and injustices that are linked to blood, and specifically to blood purity. Before Guzmán begins his narrative, Alemán derides the forces that conspire against him. The author is in a difficult situation, given that he wishes to distance himself from the *pícaro* by hiding his own suspect roots. Through patterns that have become associated with picaresque paradigms, Alemán has found a narrative trajectory on which to build the pseudo-autobiography, but the direction of the itinerary is fraught with curves. Voices and attitudes may connect and even collide, despite the author’s apparent goal of separation. As in the case of the Avellaneda *Quijote* a decade later, a spurious sequel complicates matters. The particular discourse fabricated by Mateo Alemán—the putting of words (and, of course, points of view) into the mouth of his narrator—is complex and certainly open to interpretation, but often subtlety is supplanted by a venting of anger that draws the author into the outlook and sensibility of the protagonist. Bias and inequity are bonding agents and functions of the form and ideology of the text.

The prefatory materials illustrate distinct attitudes and frames of mind: respectful words to Don Francisco de Rojas, negative words to “vulgar” potential critics, and hopeful words to the “discreet reader.” As a writer in this unique historical time and place, Alemán is dependent on approval from the upper echelon—the king and his representatives—to his literary supporters, rivals, and adversaries. The image of walking on a tightrope is a fitting analogy, especially when one’s New Christian status may be exposed. Nonetheless, Alemán has messages to submit to a public that can be unsympathetic and cruel, a public replicated in the broad and generally uncaring cast of characters in *Guzmán de Alfarache*. Written centuries before Freudian psychoanalysis, Alemán’s narrative recourses reveal a dual protagonism and a dialectics—between the author and the narrator/protagonist—that illuminate the creative act and the literary depiction of the human psyche. The baring of souls has profound and ironic resonances.¹

Wayne Booth’s much-discussed concept of *the implied author* is relevant in this context. Booth addresses the markers of the author as an abstract entity within a work. A narrator, notably a first-person narrator, would seem to have control of the discourse, but one may observe the presence of a type of voice-over, a counter-discourse, in which the narrator is puppet to the author’s ventriloquist. A recognition of this interplay introduces the intervention of an implied author, a construct rather than a figure within the text. In turn, an *implied reader* is needed to grasp and to acknowledge the signs of the implied author.² With regard to *Guzmán de Alfarache*, the already intricate discursive correlation is made more challenging, throughout the text but particularly in

¹ Carroll B. Johnson (1978) offers a Freudian reading.

² Booth’s concept of the *implied author* has been discussed and debated by narrative theorists, among them Chatman, Genette, Lanser, and Rimmon-Kenan. See Friedman (1987) for an application of the concept to picaresque narratives and their variations.

the second part, when Alemán seems to waver between the implicit and the explicit, that is, when the authorial persona becomes almost palpable, concrete, and thus an indispensable factor in the language and in the plot. As in *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), the “life,” along with the trials and tribulations of the subject and with an inevitable sense of fatalism, governs the linear structure of *Guzmán de Alfarache*, and story and discourse prove to be inexorably bound. The teller and the tale are, like the dancer and the dance, inseparable. In *Guzmán de Alfarache*, however, Alemán tends to accentuate, probably unconsciously, that the discourse encompasses two stories and two varieties of outsiders, fictional and nonfictional. Alemán is Guzmán’s foe and his defender, his nemesis and his apologist. And this does not count a key third element: the false continuation of 1602, with an added author and protagonist. On the basis of the narratological convolutions—not to mention the overall density of the text—Alemán’s reader will be no more idle than Cervantes’s.

Guzmán de Alfarache stands chronologically between *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Don Quijote*, in a moment of transition from narrative idealism (sentimental, pastoral, and chivalric romance) to an incipient realism, influenced to a degree by the Italian *novella* and by Spanish works such as Fernando de Rojas’s *Celestina*, written in dialogue form. *Lazarillo de Tormes* exhibits extraordinary sophistication in what could be termed a small package, and it provides a model for the deep structure of the picaresque tradition. A beauty—and a major achievement—of *Lazarillo de Tormes* is that the grown-up protagonist of Tratado VII is the product of the events and reactions contained in the preceding chapters. In this precocious example of social determinism, the anonymous author reverses the stance and the relation of the narrator to the reading public. In the early modern deconstruction, the social margins displace the conventional center. The implied author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* seems to target both the nonentity who strives for upward mobility and the institutional force of a society, itself corrupt, that corrupts him. What Lázaro says as narrator is undermined by incriminating layers of irony. A requested explanation becomes less self-protective than damaging, as if the narrator unintentionally aimed the arguments against himself. The deceptively simple and straightforward progression of the narrative may conceal a calculated movement toward maturity and, with it, a process of character formation. The self-portrait may be misnamed, since the nominal writer is complemented by an extratextual Other, who inhabits the narrative in a speculative, and spectral, manner. The advancement of the plot records growth and lessons learned, from the series of masters and from frustrated ambitions. Lázaro documents his training period and his ups and downs, mainly downs, and the implied author shows that the impact of experience affects future decisions and choices that the narrator may ignore.

When one considers the fundamental themes and discursive techniques of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, the items on the list may refer more conclusively to the implied author than to the narrator, who is charged with responding to the appeal, from the vaguely identified *Vuestra Merced*, for information concerning an unspecified “case.” The case may be a scandal of sorts, amplified by gossipmongers, which derives from the contact between Lázaro’s wife and his mentor, the Archpriest of San Salvador. The circumstances of the seventh chapter synthesize what has occurred previously. The child Lazarillo speaks when it would have behooved him to remain silent. He is innocent and naïve—figuratively blind—when he serves an astute blind man. He struggles with a parsimonious squire merely to survive, and the tricks that he plays on a sighted master are only temporarily effective. Most significantly, perhaps, Lazarillo mocks the honor-obsessed squire for his total devotion to a code of conduct that has transformed the nobleman into a proud and impractical pauper. When the narrator relays the story of his tenure with the *Mercedarian* friar, he appears to understand the benefit of maintaining silence when the sharing of details could be

dangerous, yet he forgets the lesson in the end. From his service to the crafty pardoner, whose deceptions he scrutinizes as a witness, Lazarillo realizes the gullibility of his fellow men and women. His various clerical masters demonstrate that a façade of goodness does not necessarily go hand in hand with pure faith and spirituality. Hypocrisy may reign over those who should be exemplars. As Lazarillo merges with Lázaro, the young man no longer has to battle to survive. For four years, he earns money as a water seller sponsored by a chaplain. He is able to buy used clothing and a sword (described in the way that he has written of the squire's accoutrements), and this source of personal triumph prompts him to leave the position. Lázaro establishes himself in the city of Toledo, where he can boast of having attained an "oficio real," a sort of civil-service job, as a town crier with wine as his focal object. For his creature comforts, he is beholden to the archpriest, who has aided him professionally and who soon thereafter arranges a union in matrimony. The archpriest knows the bride and attests to her character. Everything seems to bode well.

The semiotics of Lázaro de Tormes's success abounds in irony. The "prosperity" that Lázaro claims to have enjoyed may have been compromised, paradoxically, by his rise in social standing. When he was a child, Lázaro had to face the threat of starvation. In the concluding section of his narrative, he has a home, an occupation, and a spouse. In Toledo, he is far removed from his origins in Salamanca, emotionally as well as geographically. He may not quite be middle class, but he has a middle-class mentality. Despite his ridicule of the squire's monomaniacal allegiance to the honor code in *Tratado III*, Lázaro is clearly disturbed by the rumors spread by his neighbors. He attempts to suppress the talk, but his entreaties likely exacerbate the problem by calling attention to the reputation—and to the ins and outs—of the lady in question. The purchase of clothing and the sword in *Tratado VI* foreshadow the emulation of the squire. Lázaro seems to have bought into a social practice that he hitherto had deplored. He is not content with a sheltered and secure existence. He wants to be esteemed, valued, and honorable, and his change of heart may lead to his downfall. In early modern Spanish society, the social climber must be thwarted, and the *pícaro* who adopts the customs of his superiors becomes a laughingstock in his chosen environment and in the narration of his story. The author stresses the circularity of the narrative. When Lazarillo's mother takes refuge in Salamanca in the first chapter—"para arrimarse a los buenos"—her state of affairs goes from bad to worse. Lázaro evokes the same adage when he joins the good people of Toledo, but fate may not be on his side. Images recur: the wine of the opening and closing chapters is probably the most conspicuous example. Less than admirable clergymen are featured players. High expectations repeatedly result in disillusionment. The adult Lázaro—helpless in an atmosphere of callousness, malice, and prejudice—seeks to flee the pain through a consoling silence and metaphorical blindness. Although he seems free to select the episodes of his life and the rhetorical strategies from which to recount them, an implied author—not unlike the norms and dictates of society—operates against him in an imbalanced competition for the last word.

An explanation of the case demands a defense. Appreciating this, Lázaro opts to put forth a validation of his path in life by underscoring a humble background, an inauspicious start, and an ascent that gains in importance when viewed from a relative perspective. Lázaro asks his narratee to recognize that he has improved his lot. He has escaped from abandonment, ill-treatment, and poverty to assume what he would like to project as a reputable role in the Toledan community. Yet integration into the social order is not easy. While the harsh and solitary life of the past could be hard to bear, the regulations and protocols of the social mainstream can be daunting and possibly more menacing than neglect or apathy. The principal ironies of *Lazarillo de Tormes*—among

many—may be the delineation of the double (and contradictory) targets of the satire and the downside of the move upward. The critique of the outsider cannot elide the authorities that exclude him, whereas inclusion into society hardly guarantees peace and tranquility. Lazarillo is too low in the scheme of things to avail himself of the luxury of moral principles. The contest between virtue and vice must cede to the monumental effort to persevere. When Lázaro surmounts one set of obstacles, his confidence swells. Boasting of his newfound respectability, he tries to paint himself as a solid citizen, but he may not be able to convince himself. He becomes unglued by the mean-spirited judgments of those around him, those upon whom he relies for confirmation of his station in society. It would be poetically just for Lázaro to take pleasure in defying the tenets of social propriety or to act indifferently toward the restraints and sanctions imposed by the ministers of authority. Instead, he becomes enmeshed in a dispute involving honor, and he cannot be passive or cavalier. He is incensed by allegations against his wife. Domesticity is not blissful. Lázaro, alas, succumbs to what Alfred Doolittle in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* would label “middle-class morality.”³

Part of the design of *Lazarillo de Tormes* has to do with the use of motifs and formulas from idealist fiction. For example, the genealogy of the hero is a staple of chivalric romance. Lázaro's account of his birth and family history re-creates the device, but in a distorted (and ironic) way. The very fact that the narrator emerges from the lower depths of society shifts the narrator-reader dynamics and thereby the message systems of the narrative. *Lazarillo de Tormes* alters the scope and the reception of language in context. The reader cannot avoid the crucial weight of the point of view and the constructedness of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, because each component has to be multiplied by at least two. The perspective of Lázaro brings in that of Lazarillo; on occasion, the adult—he of selective memory—yields to his younger self, to the moment of experience. And both versions of the title character are forestalled, for better or worse, by the overriding angle of vision of an implied author. By the same token, the Renaissance self-fashioning by Lázaro de Tormes—a combination of remembrance and ulterior motives—is circumscribed by the ventriloquism effect generated by an authorial ironist.⁴ The reader likely will be aware of the levels of discourse, a blending of form and content. It could be argued that *Lazarillo de Tormes* emphasizes the means by which the narrator crafts the story for his own purposes, and how that story lends itself to “revisionist” readings. Content is typically privileged over form, but here the discourse—and, as would follow, discourse analysis—may be the nucleus of the story. This facet of the narrative, essentially a rhetoric and a poetics, is a primary innovation of *Lazarillo de Tormes* and of what would develop into the picaresque genre. A “life” is remade through words, and the words display a performative quality and signs of disjunction between “historical” (or “real”) incidents and their incorporation into the narrative plot. The teller of the story is subject and object, and the framework and frames of reference constantly are being modified. The intricacies of the narration proper accompany a chain of events in the chronicle of the progress—or, some might say, lack of progress—of the protagonist. The leading figures of chivalric, pastoral, and sentimental romance may be richly drawn, but they do not grow in the course of the narrative. The author of *Lazarillo*

³ See, for example, Friedman (1997). Frank Casa makes a counterargument. See also, as selected studies of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Willis (on the relation between time and structural design), Sieber (on the semiotics of the text), Shipley (on the rhetoric of the narrative and specifically the nature of the *picaro*'s defense), and Friedman (2010) (on *Lazarillo de Tormes* and the form of the modern novel). For more general studies of picaresque narrative, see Parker; Taléns; Reed; Wicks; Dunn; Cruz; Garrido Ardila (2009 and 2015); and Friedman (2006, 33-106; 2015).

⁴ The self-referentiality of picaresque narrative—the narrator's consciousness of the writing process—creates an opening for the metafictional extravaganza of *Don Quijote*. See Hutcheon, Waugh, and Currie's edited collection for commentary on the art of metafiction.

de Tormes takes special care in representing—and engaging the reader in—the psychology of the *pícaro*. Subsequent writers of picaresque narrative will do the same.

The notion of *amplificatio* may come to mind when one compares *Lazarillo de Tormes* with *Guzmán de Alfarache*, and it is true that the *primum mobile* and the operating premise of each narrative are the same. Alemán expands the narrative spectrum, not only by increasing the number of pages but by dedicating substantial space to the thoughts, opinions, and grievances of Guzmán de Alfarache. The interdiscursive mix of narrator and implied author in *Lazarillo de Tormes* initiates a mode of communication that distinguishes the picaresque from idealistic fiction and from traditional autobiography. The author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* deconstructs the lofty nobility of the knight errant and the exemplarity of the autobiographical subject. The narration is, within the parameters of the fiction, not a gesture at sharing a “life” with a reading public but rather a response to a request and, in light of a clouded charge, a defense. Lázaro prefers not to begin *in medias res*, but to start from the beginning, with his most modest birth. His tactic is to prove—in the parlance of a court of law—that by standards of relativity, he has traversed a perilous road and, all things considered, has reached a successful end. The material that he offers indicates that he has had to grapple with powers geared to trample upon him with no warning and no remedy. Under these conditions, survival itself is a victory. Guzmán de Alfarache’s defense is oriented toward clarifying the events that lead to his condemnation to the galleys. Like his predecessor, Guzmán traces his family history so that his back story will—if not exonerate him—justify his behavior. Interestingly, both narrators defend themselves as defenseless, and neither can “trust” his creator for support. The anonymity of the author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* could be deemed a blessing for the abstract nature of the implied author. Mateo Alemán is very much in the picture in *Guzmán de Alfarache*.

From the outset, *Guzmán de Alfarache* is ruled by tension. In the introductory passages, Alemán rails against those who have oppressed him and those who stand in wait, eager to abuse him and to disparage his art. He appeals to the discreet, who are few and far between. The defeatist air is fixed before Guzmán commences his narration, which maintains the negative cast. Lázaro’s father is a thief; Guzmán’s father is a New Christian suspected of heresy, a usurer, a charlatan, effeminate in appearance and demeanor, in short, a composite of undesirable and offensive traits. Lázaro’s mother is a widow with poor judgment who cannot attend to the needs of her son; Guzmán’s mother is a prostitute and a concubine who carries on with the man who would beget the *pícaro*. The couple later marries, and Guzmán has a family, albeit a dissolute one. Guzmán is twelve years old when his father dies, after having stolen his wife’s accumulated earnings and, lamentably, giving her no female heir to follow in her mother’s footsteps. There seems to be no love lost in the household. Guzmán is restless, and he decides to journey to Italy, where he hopes that his father’s relatives in Genoa will be his new guides. Alemán seems to go out of his way to exaggerate the defects of Guzmán’s progenitors. If bad blood is a detriment to a smooth voyage through life, Guzmán is doomed from his conception. In the description of his parents and his early years, Guzmán seems oblivious to the callous style and derisive language of his commentary. The irony of the discourse may be discernible to the reader, but not, it would seem, to the speaker. By the time that he writes the narrative, Guzmán has been hardened to—and by—the world, yet even when he endeavors to reimagine the child’s emotional state, he comes across as detached, completely disconnected from his mother and father. While he does not judge them *per se*, his words do them harm. Their bloodlines have predetermined, to an appreciable extent, the direction of his life. His bitterness is internalized, although not entirely concealed. The adult Guzmán knows

the rest of the story, but cynicism and coldness seem to attend him from childhood. Guzmán's performance as narrator is unquestionably matched by that of Alemán as wordsmith.

A predisposition to dislike the protagonist—although the reader may be inclined to sympathize with his plight—might derive from the aloofness of the stance and language of the narrator. Guzmán simply does not inspire empathy. The reader may be more apt to monitor, maybe from an ironic distance and with a modicum of glee, an unpreventable—or obligatory—fall. And, behind the scenes, Alemán may delve into this territory in order to distance himself from his character, yet he may fall victim to the ironies of overcompensation. When Guzmán leaves home, his life is not, in fact, a clean slate. He is, as a child, a marked man. Destiny will take him to numerous locations, but he will not be able to break free from the iron will of heredity. The ingenuous Guzmanillo cannot deal with the painful realities of the road. He is battered, physically and mentally, and he finds no reason to think the best of people, since, with few exceptions, they receive him with negligible signs of benevolence. The universe of *Guzmán de Alfarache*, nevertheless, does contain some scraps of humanity, of human kindness and goodwill, and the protagonist retains the hope of justice to the very end. Disillusionment will be his steady companion as the stakes get higher and the punishments more severe.

In Book 1 of the first part of *Guzmán de Alfarache*, Alemán unveils a blueprint for the organization of the narrative. The linear plot takes the young protagonist toward maturity, as his fortune wanes and his desperation escalates. The ordeals that Guzmán suffers are striking in their brutality and frequency. The narrative is packed with action: encounters replete with conflict and animated dialogue, ruses, frauds, thefts, falsifications, changes of identity, hardships, humiliations, beatings, revenge (on both sides), and, less commonly by far, stabs at pursuing the straight and narrow. Little goes as planned, and little goes well for the protagonist. Guzmán is an absorbing narrator: garrulous, rambling, and never at a loss for words. He is a compelling storyteller, but that is not what makes him singular among narrators. He is a sterling commentator, who eloquently—if scornfully—rehashes the calamities that befall him. Rather like the contemporary editorial columnist or blogger, he is the narrator as philosopher, moralist, malcontent, and skeptic. Debates about *Guzmán de Alfarache* have revolved around the dichotomy of action and commentary (sometimes referred to as “moral digressions”), but the differentiation may miss the point. In *Guzmán de Alfarache*, Alemán creates a spokesman unrestrained by the need for brevity. Guzmán's narration is regularly unfiltered, his stories unabridged, and his deductions informed by experience and by hard-earned prejudices. Guzmán has to wait for the second tome of his narrative to be designated “atalaya de la vida humana,” but he merits the epithet from the beginning. He is the leading actor, the recorder of events and anecdotes, and the educated and articulate critic of society, human nature, and the law, written and unwritten. The author *gives voice* to the narrator in a most wide-ranging way. Guzmán is the teller, the tale, the reviewer, and the moralizer. Alemán borrows the deconstruction of idealism from *Lazarillo de Tormes*, deepens the vision from below, and elaborates on the feelings (and failings) of the protagonist. *Lazarillo de Tormes* defines a space for the narrator as outsider. *Guzmán de Alfarache* brings baroque energy to that space.

The narrative force of Guzmán de Alfarache is a decisive aspect of Alemán's project. The intensification of the picaresque story is enhanced by the intensification of the picaresque discourse. There is virtually no limit to the intercession of Guzmán, and, hence, the same applies to Alemán, who can use the narrator and the narrative openings for his own agenda. The dialectical positioning of the two—stemming from inferiority versus superiority—may become blurry when the author sees the chance to insert his protests and complaints, to confuse his passions with those of the *pícaro*. The diatribes may correspond to the episodes that precede them, but at times the

placement and the content seem random. The form of *Guzmán de Alfarache* is experimental. It is hybrid and unwieldy. It is a remarkable narrative, without fully conforming to the criteria—elusive, at best—for the novel. The structure of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, itself modeled after the autobiographies of illustrious individuals and motifs of idealistic fiction, chiefly the romances of chivalry, would seem to provide a template for *Guzmán de Alfarache*. Alemán rehearses the stages of character development, the defensive rhetoric, and the ironic undercurrents of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, and he respects the rigorous constraints against social climbing. The society that Alemán depicts is manifestly more unforgiving and its reprisals more traumatic than that of the earlier work. The length of the commentaries and the venom spewed forth add a dimension to the narration, as does a strange rhythm triggered by the alternating clash and camaraderie of character and author, at odds with each other and of a single mind. Alemán is in control of the text, yet, as he voices the first-person narrator, he cannot seem to back away from the dissatisfaction and the burdens that torment him. Alemán is always, at minimum, a co-writer of the invectives.

If *Lazarillo de Tormes* exemplifies a balanced reciprocity of narrator and implied author, *Guzmán de Alfarache* would seem to muddy the waters in this regard. The mature Guzmán reflects on the past, and shifts in perspective denote the dialectics of actual incidents and recollections. As he writes his narrative, Guzmán appends his opinions on all manner of issues, and the amalgamation of judgments hints at the presence of Alemán, not so much in the role of ventriloquist but as the possessor of a second voice, with abundant topics—and dissension—on his mind. *Ozmín y Daraja*, the first of four intercalated novellas in *Guzmán de Alfarache*, appears in chapter 8 of Book 1 of Part 1. The inclusion of the self-contained story shows Alemán's consciousness of entertaining his readership—to which he alludes in the prefatory materials—as he surveys (and admonishes) society and its shortcomings. As the narrative continues, Alemán repeats the dominant linear and discursive patterns while enriching the range of plot devices and commentaries.

Book 2 ends with Guzmán's arrival in Italy, but much happens in his journey through Spain. The youth Guzmán quickly begins to have adult—that is, sexual—adventures. He becomes more and more adept at larceny, and he is by turns victim and victimizer. A bottom line of his exploits is mortification, as he is exposed, literally and figuratively, to degrading retribution for his offenses. He pursues women and falls prey to gold diggers, their unsavory handlers, and reprobates of many stripes. Guzmán's view of love is nebulously rendered, treated as a commodity rather than as a deeply-felt sentiment. The commentaries in this section foreground the vainglory of honor—"las vanidades de la honra"—and Guzmán disdains the ostentation and hypocrisy that honor encourages. The points are well taken, but the posture of moral superiority is incongruous with the behavior of Guzmán and the ever-compounded scale of his transgressions. For a short while, Guzmán gains profits from his crimes and misdemeanors. He enlists with a company of soldiers bound for Italy, but he loses his money and his comrades before embarking. He becomes the servant of a captain, who takes advantage of his expertise at pilfering and who dismisses him as soon as they reach their destination. In spite of the hard knocks along the way, Guzmán feels ready to face the new country and new family members in the city of Genoa, a city from which much that is undesirable to Spaniards emanates. Because his father had lived there, Guzmán is contaminated by the negative association.

In Book 3, Guzmán undergoes extreme humiliation at the hands of an uncle. Heritage will not be his ally. Dismayed by the meager force of blood, he travels to Rome, where he joins a band of counterfeit beggars, who make a mockery of the practice of charity. Guzmán the hypocrite casts aspersions on hypocrisy as he categorizes the hoaxes and deceptions of those who seek alms from

an unsuspecting public. In a clever counterpoint, one of the speeches of the narrator looks to heaven as he degrades earthly rewards and material possessions. A strong character in the third book is a kindly cardinal, who takes pity on Guzmán and brings him into his household as a servant. The new master hopes to shield Guzmán from temptation, but the young man is susceptible to the lure of gastronomic and other delights, and his thefts persist. Forsaking his mentor and would-be spiritual guide, Guzmán turns to gambling, and the cardinal finally discharges him. As a sign of his descent, the soldier-turned-servant becomes a buffoon in the household of a French ambassador. In the Holy City, he seems to have hit rock bottom. He has no interest in treading the path of righteousness. Delinquency is a chosen course rather than an unavoidable mode of conduct. The cardinal—who stands in contrast to the selfish and heartless clerics of *Lazarillo de Tormes*—epitomizes piety and uprightness. Guzmán looks in the opposite direction. As Part 1 concludes with the novella *Dorido y Clorinia*, the protagonist has reached a nadir in his ambition to thrive in society. The role of buffoon is a most appropriate analogue of his rung on the social ladder. In his closing comments, he uses the lexicon of gambling to intimate that his luck will not improve in the promised second part. The thrust of Part 1 is the downward spiral of Guzmán de Alfarache, but Book 3 does not make a strong argument against social injustice. Guzmán the outsider is not wholly a pawn of fate, bereft of the ability to sway, even slightly, the hostile stars. He is toughened by experience, but he appears to lose sight of goodness, even as he sermonizes on bigotry and intolerance.

Alemán seems to conceive of a mixture of elements to drive Part 1: autobiography, social critique, humor, gripping confrontations, revealing perspectives. Guzmán will not succeed in society, but he is given an unaccustomed slot in the narrative and he is given the verbal space in which to express his—and Alemán's—dissent. It may be difficult to detect a base of unity, because the conventions of the novel have not been established. Within a reduced frame, *Lazarillo de Tormes* inscribes a linear and circular structure, a dualistic system of irony, and symmetry between voice and voice-over. One might propose that the first part of *Guzmán de Alfarache* moves in a novel direction without moving in the direction of the novel. Alemán's structural model may be the *miscellany*, less dependent on unity than on an assortment of components and effects. As intuited from the dense and thorny narrative discourse, Alemán's stance vis-à-vis his narrator/protagonist seems to vary from the dissimilarity that would set them apart to a shared sense of resentment. Antipathy governs the proceedings, but the subject positioning is never stable. This seems to be a logical result of the confluence of composition and substance. The narrative order of *Guzmán de Alfarache* is not haphazard, but instead a group of (pseudo-)autobiographical threads and defensive postures couple with something like what would become stream of consciousness. The reader can perceive two minds at work. Part 2 magnifies the anxieties of the *pícaro* and his creator, both of whom have learned to fear the unknown, for the devil never rests. Surprises can do double duty.

Part 2 is shaped by the appearance, three years after the publication of Part 1, of a sequel written under the pseudonym Mateo Luján de Sayavedra. The continuation borrows from the original, and what is new is not alluring or fresh. Mateo Alemán, habitually irate, is infuriated, and, in a note to the reader, he accuses the secretive author of plagiarism. He has had the impetus to ready the legitimate second part, of which he is “su verdadero autor,” yet the sadness and aggravation that this unexpected intrusion has caused seem to have made him lose concentration. In Book 1, Guzmán resumes the account of his time with the French ambassador. The first chapter consists mainly of self-reflection, and the second chapter places Guzmán as an intermediary in the love intrigues of his master. The stories and commentaries in the opening section, including the

novella *Don Luis de Castro* in chapter 4, are not remotely connected to Guzmán's current predicaments. The *pícaro* is once again front-and-center in the later chapters of Book 1. Guzmán's dealings on behalf of the ambassador lead to an hour (or, more precisely, days) of reckoning by a lady who wants vengeance. His punishments are, as it were, incremental and excremental. Guzmán cannot steer clear of public ridicule. A stranger named Sayavedra helps him out of a bind, and they take to the road. Guzmán plans to visit a colleague named Pompeyo. At one point, Sayavedra steals Guzmán's trunks and other possessions being held by Pompeyo, and then takes off. The theft becomes an allegory of the robbery of Alemán's intellectual property.

Sayavedra serves as Guzmán's co-protagonist in Book 2 (a pairing that replicates Alemán's link with Luján). Taking leave of Pompeyo, Guzmán returns to the road. By chance, he runs into Sayavedra, who apologizes for his misdeeds and agrees to work for Guzmán. The two meet up with Alejandro Bentivoglio, Sayavedra's partner in crime. Guzmán sues Bentivoglio, but the legal action completely misfires. The defendant's wealthy father protects his son by turning the tables. Guzmán is found guilty of defamation of character and is incarcerated. The protracted commentaries on injustice bond Guzmán with Alemán; the robbery, together with the attendant pain and miscarriage of justice, is an outrage, an emblem of society's failure to protect all citizens. Fairmindedness is subordinate to favoritism and to rank. Guzmán's jail term signals integrity gone awry, order overturned by privilege. In such a state of duplicity, innocent men can be judged guilty, just as talented writers can have the products of their imagination stolen. *Nota bene*, gentle reader: In a manner that is truly ironic, and paradoxical, the introduction of Sayavedra into the narrative roundly benefits the story and the discourse of Alemán's second part. The robbery perpetrated by Sayavedra and his accomplices gives Guzmán a focus: to recover his belongings, to seek justice, and to decry injustice. His journey through Italy with Sayavedra allows Alemán to bring into the text a comparison of the two *pícaros*, one genuine and the other an impostor. Within the analogical scheme, Alemán is able to demonstrate the superiority of his creation (character and narrative) and to reveal the name of the author of the false second part: Juan Martí. Guzmán is in charge of Sayavedra; he is the master, the mastermind, and the master criminal. Sayavedra is contrite, willing to assist Guzmán, and less proficient at criminality. Guzmán acquires considerable hard cash during this period. At the end of Book 2, following pleasant and unlawful escapades in Italy, presented as a type of travelogue, Guzmán and Sayavedra board a ship bound for Spain. A storm erupts, and Sayavedra is unnerved. He jumps overboard, declaring himself "the ghost of Guzmán de Alfarache." The fourth of the intercalated novellas, *Bonifacio y Dorotea*, is meant to comfort Guzmán in his bereavement, but the period of mourning is fleeting. Guzmán may be more relieved than sorrowful. Uncannily, Alemán encodes a ritual murder into the text. He plots the suicide of Sayavedra, the false Guzmán and a metonym of Martí, the author of the spurious sequel.

The center—and centerpiece—of Part 2 of *Guzmán de Alfarache* is Alemán's rejoinder to the false continuation published two years before the legitimate sequel. Through a series of deceptions that are difficult to comprehend and to pinpoint, Juan Martí has had access to portions of Alemán's work in progress, or so Alemán alleges. This puts the author in a bind, and Book 1 of the second part seems directionless until Sayavedra appears, as a lead-in to Book 2, which fictionalizes the real-life dilemma. There is a tight, if curious, unity to Book 2. The doubling motif—the usurpers against the authentic character and author—produces an equilibrium in the tale of literary larceny. The moralizing complaints cover reality and fiction. The balance is broken, ironically, by irony. Alemán helps Guzmán to exorcise Sayavedra, but the damage done by Martí cannot be undone. And, it must be noted, Alemán immortalizes the rival author by condemning his book and by publicizing his name. Sayavedra and Martí loom large in the bid to expunge them

from the story. They may be inferior to their significant Others, but they are memorialized in print, in a classic work. They aid in giving direction to Alemán's narrative, and they do not fade from view. This may be a favorable decision by the author, for Sayavedra is more relevant than the altruistic cardinal or the licentious ambassador to Guzmán's personal story and psychological development. There is also the matter of superiority. Alemán, who takes pains to distance himself from the protagonist when he begins the narrative, now defends his creation. The argument for Guzmán's superiority is based, of course, on a negative criterion: he is a more outstanding delinquent. The competitor recognizes his inadequacies and kills himself of out shame, in essence as an act of homage to his master. Whether, when all is said and done, the joint triumph of Guzmán and Alemán is a pyrrhic victory depends on the perspective of the reader, to wit, on the consumer of Part 2 and the analyst of the extratextual circumstances with which the author deals. What would have aggrieved Alemán no end incites him to vie with his rival in print and to increase the metaliterary orientation of the narrative. At no point is the fit of event to commentary more resounding or more persuasive.⁵

At the start of Book 3, Guzmán, having landed in Sevilla, is on his own in the city of Zaragoza and later in Madrid. Alemán inserts a celebrated treatise on human nature and human foibles titled *Arancel de necedades* in the first chapter. Guzmán records his pursuit of a range of women—from stately widow to prostitute to a mother-and-daughter team of swindlers—which unflinchingly ends in disaster, more than once punctuated by excrement. The disappointments foreshadow Guzmán's marriage to a woman who quickly squanders his fairly sizeable and illegally acquired savings. Instructed by his wily father-in-law, Guzmán—exercising the trades of merchant and usurer—learns new ways of cheating in commercial transactions, and he recovers most of his losses. The subsequent commentaries go back and forth on economics and matrimony. Guzmán delivers harangues on the ethical void and widespread deception in the realm of business and financial negotiations. When Guzmán's wife dies after six years of irreconcilable differences, the widower seems less concerned that she has expired without confessing than that he must return her dowry to her father. His commentaries on marriage may be more heated than those on commerce. Chapter 4 marks a turning point. Guzmán decides to give up his home and property so that he may study for the priesthood. At the University of Alcalá de Henares, he figures, he will have food on the table and no creditors to badger him. He relishes the collegiate life of pranks and hazing. His motives seem far more secular than devout, and his actions are peculiarly immature, but Guzmán excels in his studies. He is the top scholar in his class, but first honors go to the son of an aristocrat, and the oversight leads to a commentary on nepotism. Guzmán has chosen a hallowed path, but shortly before he is to be ordained, he falls in love with a woman named Gracia and proposes marriage. They are happy for a while, but the death of Gracia's father, an innkeeper who supported his relatives, drives the family to penury. Guzmán returns briefly to the university in the hope of earning a degree, but he cannot afford this luxury. In a radical turn-around, he is reduced to pimping for his wife. She brings in income until the law catches up with her, and the couple is exiled from Madrid. They end up in Sevilla, where Guzmán is reunited with his mother.

In circular fashion, the now decrepit former prostitute coaches her daughter-in-law, but Gracia is dissatisfied with her life and flees to Italy with a ship's captain and with her husband's money. Guzmán goes back to thefts, scams, and swindles, sometimes abetted by his mother. His agile mind and hands bring him success, and no one, high or low, escapes his attention. His false aura of magnanimity wins him a place in the home of a respectable lady, whom he robs. When

⁵ See Kartchner, Ridley, and Friedman (2000) on the treatment of the false continuation. See also Castillo's chapter on *Guzmán de Alfarache* in *(A)wry Views*.

apprehended, he is imprisoned and then sentenced to the galleys for life. Much happens to the condemned man aboard ship. He remains a troublemaker, but he has time for contemplation and pledges to seek redemption. He is the victim of betrayal and violence by his peers, including a fellow prisoner named Soto, and by officers. He helps to ward off a mutiny engineered by Soto, and he is given a pardon, while the insurgents receive strict penalties and, in some instances, death. Guzmán, redeemed on earth, attests to the firmness of his religious conversion and his hope for eternal redemption. He alludes to a third and final part of his narrative, as does Alemán in his preliminary note to the reader.

Book 3 is fast-paced. Alemán transports Guzmán back to Spain, with Italy and Sayavedra—if not Martí—behind him. There is a profusion of thefts, frauds, anecdotes, and diversions. The education in Alcalá and the perplexing, if unfulfilled, commitment to the priesthood are framed by two miserable marriages. The robberies become more refined, but crime leads to punishment. Guzmán offers many details about life in prison and in the galleys. Although Guzmán professes the earnestness of his change of heart, he still clings to remnants of his sinful career. He beseeches the reader to trust his honesty and sincerity. His narrative exposes his life and his attitudes, so faith in the reliability of the narrator becomes a leap of faith. The closing chapters of Guzmán's chronicle take him from dispassionate and contemptuous con man to ardent convert. His hands are never quite clean, and his intentions are never entirely pure.⁶

The formal conundrum of *Guzmán de Alfarache* is the problematic correlation between the narrator/protagonist's pre-conversional story and his post-conversional discourse. There should be markers of the present (or future) state of mind in the commentaries, but ranting and raving prevail. There should be signs of a generosity of spirit and an acceptance of the flaws of humanity, but the speaker is, as a rule, cynical and pessimistic. Guzmán bears the scars of social determinism. He has had to endure loss, prison, the galleys, and torture. Conversely, he has received dispensation in this life, and he has vowed to merit eternal life. There is a new Guzmán in the picture, but this transformed figure is not yet a *homo novus* and not yet evident in the discourse. It must be understood, however, that the form of *Guzmán de Alfarache* is open, sprawling, unrestricted by "laws" or prescriptions of unity. Alemán finds inspiration in a variety of traditions, which surely include the anti-idealism and the pseudo-autobiographical movement of *Lazarillo de Tormes*. The pretext (pre-text) is the misspent life of Guzmán de Alfarache—the result of a shared liability between a society that abuses him from birth and his propensity toward criminal conduct—and the resolution to reform. Guzmán is a victim, but when fortune would allow him to choose wisely, he decides otherwise. The narrative is, in its distinctive way, well crafted. The case for conversion is not. Alemán takes a literary outline and makes the narrative a wellspring of jumping-off points. Guzmán can speak for Alemán as he uses the discourse to speak against Guzmán. Both are embittered, easily riled, vexed, and keen on airing their grievances. Both are conscious of the need to amuse and instruct the reader. Guzmán flaunts his resistance to a society that would prejudge him on the basis of lineage, and he stands *for* and *against* Alemán, who likewise combats injustice at every step. The linear plot is juxtaposed with a *mélange* of additional materials that may echo or diverge from a given episode or topic.⁷

⁶ For analysis of Guzmán's professed conversion, see the book-length studies, generally offering a skeptical approach, by Arias, Brancaforte, Rodríguez Matos, and Whitenack. See also Longhurst (1987); and Norval.

⁷ See the books on *Guzmán de Alfarache* by Enrique Moreno Báez, Donald McGrady, Ángel San Miguel, Michel Cavillac (and the review essay by C. A. Longhurst), Nina Cox Davis, and Francisco Ramírez Santacruz. A dozen additional studies that have influenced my reading of *Guzmán de Alfarache* are those of Bjornson; Blackburn; Close; Eoff; Johnson (1996); Jones; Mancing; Peale; Ramírez; Ruan; Sánchez, and Sobejano. I am indebted to all the critics listed and to many more.

Lazarillo de Tormes demonstrates the complementarity of story and discourse, of narrator and implied author, and of linearity and circularity, with each dichotomy connected and reinforced by irony. *Guzmán de Alfarache* is not neatly arranged, and there seems to be no calculated order in its disorder. Alemán uses the linear plot to keep the autobiographical elements in force, and he uses the limitless narrative space to devise an extensive set of stories, interpolations, commentaries, and dialogical encounters. Lázaro defends his domestic situation and his place in the social continuum. Guzmán alternately reproves and excuses his behavior, while he defends his conversion as sincere. In the midst of composition, between Parts 1 and 2, Alemán has to contend with the false sequel. His response is to conceive an allegory in which he reconstructs the theft, identifies the author of the invasive tome, and expunges Guzmán's double. The Martí book is appalling on one level and fortuitous on another. According to Alemán, the unauthorized continuation plagiarizes his work, and that is, indeed, despicable. The affront notwithstanding, the introduction of Sayavedra enlivens the action. The metaliterary ploys mirror the underlying themes of injustice, dishonesty, aggression, and legitimacy. Alemán puts the competing protagonists on display, and Guzmán proves superior in the fictional rivalry. In Book 3, the world continues to treat Guzmán badly—and he treats the world badly—but the story ends with a spiritual conquest, if one is to believe the self-proclaimed convert. The reader may be worn out when reaching the end of Part 2, which heralds a third part. That could be because the text seems to point in infinite directions and to present a panorama of facets of Spanish society and literary tradition. *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzmán de Alfarache* are regarded as the seminal picaresque narratives, but the focus and economy of the former are lost in the latter, which replaces concision with verbosity. The prolix Guzmán speaks for his current and younger selves and for Mateo Alemán, who has countless complaints and axes to grind well before Mateo Luján de Sayavedra comes into his purview. Alemán stretches the boundaries of the implied author, as he seems less and less like an abstraction within the text. It takes *La vida del Buscón* (1626) of Francisco de Quevedo to formalize the picaresque archetype.

El Buscón is closer in narrative structure to *Lazarillo de Tormes* than to *Guzmán de Alfarache*, in that the plot follows Pablos from birth to maturity, with emphasis on his downhill route through life. Quevedo brings *conceptismo* and hyperbole to the picaresque. Society treats Pablos mercilessly, and he becomes more antisocial, more thick-skinned, and more doggedly criminal than his predecessors. His audacity reaches new heights before his fortune plummets. At the end of his narrative, he alludes to a second part that will deal with his excursion to the New World, but he warns the reader not to expect a change in character as a consequence of the change in geography. Quevedo makes his presence known through the ornate, over-the-top rhetoric and through the abject failure of every objective and stratagem of the *pícaro*. Society and the author—real and implied—band together to keep the upstart in his place. Literary determinism becomes the equivalent of social determinism. Like the earlier works, *El Buscón* probes the psychology of the *pícaro*. Pablos is, from every standpoint, the antithesis of Quevedo, a conservative elitist par excellence, who makes his narrator speak as no one has ever spoken in quotidian reality. It is a paradox, then, that Pablos achieves a profound subject position—a locus of his own—in the text, and that, despite the derision around him, he manages to articulate the pain and the agony of a marginalized existence.⁸ At one defining moment, Pablos elects to be a criminal rather than a servant, a nonentity; he views having a negative identity, or notoriety, as preferable to having no identity. The reader can follow his descent, simultaneously deploring his sins and comprehending their source. As with his actions, the bravado that Pablos affects and the comic wordplays that he

⁸ Edwin Williamson offers a reading of authority and subject positioning in *El Buscón*. See also Friedman (1996).

employs are a cover, a defense mechanism. Quevedo's course is direct, with an eye on the deep structure of *Lazarillo de Tormes* and with convoluted discourse as the primary distraction.

The structure of *Guzmán de Alfarache* is made clearer when compared with that of *Don Quijote*, whose first part was published in 1605, a year after the second part of Alemán's narrative. Miguel de Cervantes's venture was patently experimental, embracing an impressive intertext while modifying norms and expectations in his tribute to the literary past. *Don Quijote* is bidirectional (and intertextual) in two senses. First, it points to the future of narrative, as it breaks away from idealism and moves toward realism and metafiction. Second, it connects the linear plot built around the knight errant's sallies with the very act of compiling the chronicle. From the prologue and the opening chapter of Part 1, Cervantes gives prominence to writing, reading, criticism, and theory, as well as to history and historiography, perspective, perception, freedom, the relative versus the absolute (in questions of truth and justice), and self-referentiality in art, among other focal areas. Humor, satire, and irony are everywhere to be found. Coincidence would have it that Cervantes is faced with a spurious sequel, published in 1614 by the pseudonymous Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda. Cervantes uses his 1605 prologue—and two alter egos—to deliberate on the writing of a prologue. This metaliterary initiative seems to be the first thing on his mind. In the 1615 prologue, Cervantes defends himself against attacks by Avellaneda and announces that *Don Quijote* will die at the end of Part 2, in order to ward off more continuations. The false sequel first appears in the text proper in chapter 59, and it plays a vital role in the remaining chapters. Cervantes finds ways of maligning the work and its furtive author within the context of the narrative: two gentlemen read and comment, disapprovingly, on the book at an inn; *Don Quijote* sees a copy in a printing establishment in Barcelona; devils in a dream sequence use the book as a replacement for balls in a game of tennis; and Alonso Quijano apologizes in his will for allowing his chivalric feats to inspire such trash. Perhaps the most fascinating example is *Don Quijote*'s meeting with Don Álvaro Tarfe, a character from the Avellaneda tome, who certifies before a notary that the *Don Quijote* and the Sancho Panza before him are the legitimate knight and squire.

Like Alemán, Cervantes immortalizes the literary usurper, but after the prologue he lets the addendum meld with the narrative proper. The new adversary pushes *Don Quijote*, made a bit passive by his celebrity status, into action. Although Cervantes is justifiably upset, the false sequel seems heaven-sent, as it attaches itself to the "real" sequel in an ingenious game of intertextuality. The two continuations—genuine and bogus—occupy a place of honor in the narrative; they fit perfectly into the dialectics of life and art. It seems poetically just that Cervantes—the master of irony—should be granted an extra dose of irony as he completes the narrative. The false sequel forces a move from Zaragoza to Barcelona, and this switch represents a reorientation of Cervantes's original plan. The adjustment is in accord with a structural change in Part 2: the critical intertext shifts from chivalric romance to Part 1 of *Don Quijote*, and the false sequel is the proverbial icing on the cake. In brief, Avellaneda stirs Cervantes to change direction without losing direction. The unwelcome interloper ultimately enriches the narrative. Such an assessment applies to Martí in Alemán's Part 2. Sayavedra is, in effect, and appositely, the second lead in *Guzmán de Alfarache*; he is a link between Alemán and Guzmán and a function of plot, characterization, and metafiction. The Martí sequel emboldens Alemán and sparks his creative juices, but not without leaving an imprint of personal frustration and wrath in the "real" second part.

The "question of form" in the title of this essay may beg the question. If *Guzmán de Alfarache* can be classified as a miscellany, its constitution and contours plausibly will be somewhat amorphous. Guzmán's autobiography and his avowed transformation guide the narrative, while the commentaries and stories, short and long, are not added extras but integral

components of the text. Alemán's subject is, in every respect, plural: variations of Guzmán de Alfarache, variations of Alemán himself, early modern Spanish society, and human nature. Baroque pessimism is evident in a rhetorical configuration marked by mistrust and by the fight for self-preservation. Within his milieu, Guzmán represents the underside of humanity, but the text endows him with standing, a voice, and a tenable defense. The observations, anecdotes, and novellas are part of the story, part of the big picture that Alemán presents to his readership. These aspects of *Guzmán de Alfarache* are digressions only insofar as they take the reader into new domains. They are equivalent to forays and excursions more than to deviations, because they point to the diversity of the text, a picaresque narrative sui generis.

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