

PLAYING DOUBLES: ANOTHER LOOK AT ALEMÁN'S VENGEANCE ON MARTÍ

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One may say that Mateo Alemán was a master writer of sequels, for although he does not directly appropriate the character of the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes*, he is the first to provide a continuation of substance to Spanish picaresque literature.¹ It is not surprising, however, that he should be deeply aggravated by the apparently treacherous continuation of the first volume of his own *Guzmán de Alfarache*. At the time the *Guzmán* was written, popular texts were often provided a sequel by some ambitious writer who perhaps hoped to benefit from the success of the original. Alemán, however, felt betrayed and offended by the apocryphal continuation of his *Guzmán*, carried out very probably by an individual of his close confidence. In the prologue to part 2 of *Guzmán de Alfarache*, Alemán clearly conveys the disappointment that he feels as a result of the appearance of Juan Martí's² sequel in 1602, *La segunda parte de la vida del pícaro Guzmán de Alfarache*. He suggests that if one cannot read well, one should not take up the pen to write, and then continues to list several ways in which Martí had failed to read correctly. Were that the extent of his revenge, little explanation would be required. But it is through the development of the text that Alemán exacts his vengeance, doubling his personal revenge with the revenge exacted by the protagonist of the story, with the sermons of the narrator, and with the devices of the text. Doubling, in fact, is so prevalent it seems almost playful--a taunting artifice constructed by Alemán to expose the ineptitude of his rival.

The viciousness and extent of Alemán's vengeance has been well examined by critics such as Donald McGrady and Benito Brancaforte. McGrady was one of the first to establish firmly the relationship between Alemán's Sayavedra and Martí's Guzmán, a fact that most critics had overlooked before McGrady's studies. Brancaforte expands upon McGrady's foundation by establishing a psychological theory that permits the identification of Sayavedra as a double not only of the false Guzmán, but also at times of the author Juan Martí, and at others of Alemán's Guzmán. Although both of these critics offer detailed analyses, neither of them, naturally, has exhausted the possible interpretations of the double theory as applied to Alemán's vengeance.

In his book titled *Mateo Alemán* (1968), McGrady separates himself from the majority of critics who had accepted the notion that Sayavedra represents Juan Martí. He suggests that Sayavedra's presence is primarily meant to serve as a stand-in for the protagonist of Martí's text and thus allow Alemán to compare his "true" protagonist to the "false" imitator. It is not difficult to show that Sayavedra is the double of the false Guzmán. Sayavedra himself presents the clearest evidence in the words he shouts as he leaps to his death: "I am the shadow of Guzmán de Alfarache! I am that shadow that wanders the world!" (307; pt. 2, bk. 2, ch. 9). On the level of the story, Sayavedra's death represents a killing-off of Guzmán's imitator, the murder/suicide of the protagonist of Martí's text.

As one begins to isolate incidents and details, certain phrases and situations would appear to point away from an exclusive Sayavedra/false-Guzmán comparison and seem rather to support a multiple doubling theory. For example, when Guzmán the sermonizer/narrator states, "It is ridiculous to think that a prudent man can anticipate a person who lies in wait for him,"³ (135; pt. 2, bk. 1, ch. 8), one is led to compare Sayavedra, the disloyal friend, to Juan Martí, the supposed author of the false *Guzmán*, who, like Sayavedra, took advantage of his friend's confidence and betrayed him. The constant references by the authentic Guzmán to Sayavedra's native city, Valencia, also seem to suggest a connection to Martí, whose city of origin is Valencia.

Another example of a variation from the Sayavedra/false-Guzmán relationship comes after Guzmán's humiliating ride on a pig through the muddy streets of Rome (107-109; pt. 2, bk. 1, ch. 5). Sayavedra enters the scene, offering succor and friendship to Guzmán. Guzmán, embarrassed but relieved, voices his initial impressions: "He was a sharp young man and not less than I" (131; pt. 2, bk. 1, ch. 7). Here a direct comparison is made between the authentic Guzmán and Sayavedra, not Sayavedra as a double for one of Martí's characters, but Sayavedra as a double for Alemán's own protagonist, a friend worthy of Guzmán's company. Sayavedra's personal history, in fact, proves that he is neither the exact double of Martí nor of Martí's Guzmán, in spite of the fact that many of his actions and comments point to such a relationship. Alemán seems consciously and carefully to create Sayavedra with an identity independent of and perhaps superior to his enemy and his enemy's creation.

Perhaps it was due to the multiplicity and complexity of doubles in the *Guzmán* that Brancaforte decided to devise a way to classify systematically those statements and experiences that suggest doublings other than the Sayavedra/false-Guzmán relationship. In *Guzmán: ¿Conversión o degradación?*, Brancaforte explains the need to analyze Alemán's Guzmán as a "psychological entity." Brancaforte's reason for selecting this method of analysis seems to stem from the desire to consider one event or phrase in isolation from others. He proposes that we should examine every action, every statement, every thought, and determine their psychological motivations. Brancaforte suggests that language and reaction to individual events reflect the true personality of fictional characters. Brancaforte's theory can help to explain specific phrases and incidents which appear to somehow share in the vengeance theme. Once such a phrase has been isolated, one can attempt to determine who is being compared to whom in Alemán's apparently all-encompassing revenge.⁴

In his prologue to the reader Alemán foreshadows the major areas which will be attacked in his revenge. Of these, one of the areas he emphasizes is an area passed over by McGrady and discredited by Brancaforte:

Que haberse propuesto nuestro Guzmán, un muy buen estudiante latino, retórico y griego, que pasó con sus estudios adelante con ánimo de profesar el estado de la religión, y sacarlo de Alcalá tan distraído y mal sumulista, fue cortar el hilo a la tela de lo que con su vida en esta historia se pretende, que sólo es descubrir--como atalaya--toda suerte de vicios y hacer atriaca de venenos varios un hombre perfecto . . . (2: 21-22)

Had Alemán clearly stated in part 1 that "making a perfect man" was part of his agenda, Martí might have created a more satisfactory Guzmán. Martí, however, along with many other subsequent readers, apparently failed to detect any such intention, probably because the intention is plainly not present in the text. Alemán's accusation, then, is false, according to the textual evidence, yet it becomes a focal point for modern critical debates, causing readers of Alemán's part 2 to question whether or not Alemán succeeds in accomplishing that which he accuses his rival of neglecting. Is Guzmán a perfected, repentant

man by the end of the text? His sincerity is certainly questionable. In fact every time an apparently repentent Guzmán-narrator makes a penitent remark, that remark is countered, or we might say, doubled, by an unrepentent act or remark. And if his own forgiveness is in question, his ability to forgive remains in doubt through the final chapter. Is it his loyalty to the king or his desire to seek revenge that motivates him to expose the mutiny and thereby gain his freedom? Brancaforte has chosen to focus on the unrepentant side of Guzmán as the "true" manifestation of the protagonist. He highlights the imperfect, unrepentant, unforgiving side of Guzmán by analyzing specific incidents and phrases and extracting the reading he needs for his interpretation. Of course, one may likely be able to provide similar examples which would reinforce Alemán's own declaration that he intended to convert his protagonist into the perfected man that Martí had failed to produce. Reading the doubles in a different light produces different, but perhaps equally valid, conclusions.

For example, as Guzmán and Sayavedra fled to Milan soon after their first successful card game in which they cheated their opponents out of a large sum of money, Alemán's Guzmán-narrator states:

Yo con mis pensamientos y Sayavedra con los suyos, íbamos mudos ambos, aunque con gran diferencia, que sólo el mío era de verme puesto en salvo y Sayavedra deseando saber lo que había de tocar de las monedas. (207; pt. 2, bk. 2, ch. 4)

This assertion, when used as a tool for vengeance, has various applications. At one level we see that the authentic Guzmán is showing that his aspirations are superior and his survival skills better developed than those of his lackey, Sayavedra. "Verme puesto en salvo" can be interpreted to mean that only Guzmán was sure of the money they had stolen--it was in his control. To be more literal one can say that Sayavedra was not wise enough to look beyond the immediate satisfaction of the stolen money and consider a means of securing an escape from the imminence of retribution. If, however, we examine the statement with an eye to possible doubles, we can easily see the false Guzmán as a double of Sayavedra, Alemán thus demonstrating the superiority of his Guzmán's wit and foresight to Martí's. Let us, for instance, recall the false Guzmán's failed attempt to escape the authorities after stealing three capes: "yo, que no sabía la tierra, me

turbé mucho, y corriendo doy en un hoyo abierto que había en medio de la calle. Cogiéronme, y conmigo una de las capas que habíamos pillado" (428). It is quite possible that Alemán, in order to show the preeminence of his Guzmán, echoes this scene to draw a comparison between the false Guzmán and Alemán's Sayavedra: both are only concerned about the loot and fail to take preventive measures to keep from being caught. A third way of evaluating this passage is to establish the relationship Guzmán/Alemán, Sayavedra/Martí. If we consider that Alemán is voicing his own thoughts through the narrator, then the phrase "que sólo el mío era de verme puesto en salvo" can be interpreted as meaning that only the author of the real Guzmán had the foresight to provide his character with freedom.

The matter of the *pícaro's* freedom recalls the dénouement of both Martí's continuation and Alemán's own part 2. In both versions the narrators inform us that they have been freed from the galleys. Martí's version seems rushed and careless. The narrator hurriedly concludes without proper development: "Aquí me trujeron mis pasos inconsiderados, aunque, por gracia de Dios, presto me vi con libertad" (430). That is it. Sixteen brief words sum up the entire book. Paralleling the false-Guzmán's failure to consider his escape from the authorities after his cape-stealing activities, his creator, Juan Martí, here functions as his double--Martí fails to consider seriously the method of his character's escape from the galley. Alemán's conclusion, on the other hand, takes a full chapter to explain how his character obtains his freedom, weaving in the complex themes and images that have characterized the entire work.

A fourth way of evaluating this small passage is to focus on the use of the word "salvo." "Puesto en salvo" means 'set free,' but if the intention were to be limited to a physical freedom, the word "libertad" would probably have been adequate; indeed, "libertad" is the word Martí chooses to describe his protagonist's freedom. "Salvo," on the other hand, gives the phrase ambiguity--perhaps intentionally. It is possible that of the two *Guzmán* authors Alemán is the only one to worry about his character's salvation. One can take the analogy even further and suggest that Martí's aims for writing his text are only financial, as were those of his protagonist, while Alemán wishes to provide an example of a man set free--physically, spiritually and perhaps textually.

Although one may choose to reject the explanations I have

suggested, the vague nature of Alemán's language and the readiness with which one may associate his characters Guzmán and Sayavedra to any of various doubles reveals the extreme difficulty one faces in arriving at a single interpretation. The multiplicity of doubles also demonstrates Alemán's ingenious ability to clothe his vengeance in such a way that the removal of every layer displays one more brilliant demonstration of superiority to his rival. In his book on self-conscious fiction titled *Partial Magic*, Robert Alter defines a double as a "reflection or . . . imitation that exposes hidden aspects of the original" (23). If Martí's protagonist was an imitation of the original Guzmán, the protagonist of Alemán's part 2 was a reflection of both the original and the false Guzmán. And since the Guzmán of Alemán's part 2 claims intentions not apparent in the recounting of part 1, we may say that the Guzmán of part 2 is not the same as the protagonist of part 1, but rather, a double, a reflection of the original, a fact which Alemán himself admits in the prologue.

Perhaps Alemán's retaliation is less a revenge than a playful experimentation with the devices of doubling. He did not, one should note, kill off his own protagonist at the end of the book as did Cervantes; rather, he left him alive and well, even permitting the narrator to announce a future sequel in which he would recount the final years of his life. This openness, this near invitation to would-be sequel writers, perhaps indicates that although his vengeance was thorough, at least it was not embittering. The very fact that the revenge was enacted through writing demonstrates a creative sublimation of vengeful desire, and perhaps, therefore, indicates a measure of perfection. Alemán accuses Martí of polluting his fiction with real people and events. Alemán himself, on the other hand, disguises the "real" identity of his characters through the creation of fictional doubles. Therefore his fiction is more pure, more perfect, verisimilar if not "true."

Let us return to Alemán's claimed intention: "descubrir--como atalaya--toda suerte de vicios y hacer atraiaca de venenos varios un hombre perfecto" (2: 22). If we are to accept this claim at face value, Alemán must convince us by accomplishing with the "real" Guzmán those things he accuses his rival of failing to accomplish with the "false" Guzmán. In addition, were Alemán unable to succeed in a portion of his claims, his revenge would be incomplete. Merely to eliminate Sayavedra, the double of the false Guzmán, would not devalue the

Martí text. To discredit the false version entirely, Alemán must be able to perform in his own book each of those things which he accuses Martí of neglecting. Few would doubt that Alemán demonstrates with great vengeance the superiority of his Guzmán in Latin and Greek--both McGrady and Brancaforte give ample evidence. Nor does one question the completeness of the revenge Guzmán takes on his Genovese relatives: Guzmán's careful and elaborate revenge of the inconsiderations shown to him by his Italian relatives serves both to avenge Guzmán and to satisfy Alemán's desire to point out Martí's inattentiveness to what Alemán considered such an important detail. Additionally, Alemán demonstrates the authentic Guzmán's superiority as a thief: to Sayavedra, to the false Guzmán described Sayavedra, and to the false Guzmán created by Martí. Only the concept of a perfected man remains unresolved. If, as I have suggested, Guzmán's perfection lies in his more perfected fictional nature, then here, too, Alemán would have established his superiority to Martí.

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NOTES

¹ I would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Judith Whitenack for introducing me to *Guzmán de Alfarache*.

² Juan Martí published his book under the pseudonym "Mateo Luján."

³ English translations are mine.

⁴ Although the theory Brancaforte sets forth is broad and well developed, he applies it only so far as it supports his central thesis concerning the troubled question of the *pícaro's* conversion. See, Brancaforte, *Guzmán: ¿Conversión o degradación?*, ch. 4.

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