
Humor and Eroticism in Baltasar del Alcázar's *Joyous Supper (Cena jocosa)*

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The last twenty-five years have witnessed a heightened awareness of the role of burlesque in erotic poetry throughout the Spanish Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Baroque, as more texts have entered the literary mainstream. Keener critical analysis of these texts as well as of those that were already well known has enhanced the general discourse on these subjects, and more is needed toward a better understanding of the cultural significance of this type of poetry.¹

The multifaceted nature of the term “burlesque” can be readily ascertained in the list of adjectives and nouns employed by Kimberly E. Contag in her doctoral dissertation. Burlesque, for Contag, relates to the adjectives: “farcical, travestyng, parodic, mocking, mimicking, ludicrous, comic, overdone, sarcastic, derisive, bizarre, grotesque, bawdy, indecent, off-color and risqué,” and nouns: “peep-show, strip tease, girlie show, nudie, slapstick, follies and harlequinade” (62). In this overall view of the subject, four groupings are observable: the variations of the comic; the mimicking, which requires a previous model; the bizarre or grotesque; and the risqué. The adjectives listed allow Contag to distinguish different forms of the burlesque (and their developments) in multiple areas, from Cervantes’ mockeries to modern vaudeville, and undoubtedly they could also be applicable to medieval works. But only two of the four are the *sine qua non* to what is called in Spanish the “erótico burlesco” (the erotic burlesque), the comic and the sexual.

There will be, of course, many different manifestations of both, from Rabelaisian guffaws to witty and sometimes obscure double-entendres intended to elicit a complicit smile, from obscenities to puns to a plethora of signifiers that can be understood only within specific cultural codes of reference. But ultimately the goal of all the variants of the erotic burlesque is the same, and equally important: to allow us to laugh at something that is crucial to all human beings, our own sexuality.

In the Spanish Renaissance and Baroque periods, one must take into the account the fact that the rebellious nature of the burlesque does not imply that there

was a group of marginalized artists attempting to subvert established principles and beliefs; what has appropriately been defined as “anti-values” does not amount to a serious rupture with official truths, but rather as rupture with seriousness itself. Robert Jammes, who coined the term, reminds us that these “anti-values” bring along with them “a great margin of ambiguity, which is the burlesque proper” (“un gran margen de ambigüedad, que es propio de lo burlesco”; 35), although, of course, jokes are not devoid of meaning. The burlesque is not so much a question of belief, as an attitudinal conceit, a voluntary, momentary—and some critics, such as Aída Díaz Bild, might add “liberating”—distance from religious creeds and social mores. As such, the burlesque is not a heterodox canon of truths opposite to officialdom, but an escape from ideology. Francisco de Quevedo, for instance, who could be writing *The Life of the Blessed Thomas of Villanueva* or translating Epictetus or Seneca, could find solace in writing sonnets such as “The Greatest Whore of the Two Castiles.”

The burlesque will cast a hard glance at man’s non-spiritual side, his *feritas*, and its probe will not be confined to any particular genres or poetic forms; it may be found in popular lyrics as well as in the elaborate sonnets of Luis de Góngora. According to a recent encapsulation by Charles Presberg in studying the paradox in Cervantes, the burlesque spirit represents “a celebration of paradoxes resulting from the human being’s mutable condition: a creature formed in the image and likeness of God, destined for eternity, yet immersed in the material and temporal order” (*Paradoxical* 20-21).

Robert Jammes has proposed a series of themes and attitudes in which the burlesque manifests itself in Góngora’s poetry, abbreviated later by James Iffland. These themes are: 1) pleasurable eating and drinking; 2) the joys of the village vs. the city; 3) a comfortable individualism; 4) casual love affairs, and 5) a vague sense of immorality. The burlesque perspective, then, by its own nature, will be attracted by the powerful magnet of sensuality, eroticism, and the eschatological.

Burlesque eroticism is a very wide field that invites distinctions. Before proposing some, three factors must be borne in mind: first, that, as Arellano Ayuso recommends in his study on Quevedo’s poetry (29ff) the reader must always consider the internal point of view (the implicit authorial voice) in every poem, as this voice dictates the tone of the poem, and the burlesque is fundamentally a matter of tone; and second, the fact that while some poems may be predominantly burlesque, in others the burlesque traits could appear in a reduced fashion, as just one element among the many a given poem might exhibit, and they may not constitute its most revealing characteristic. The third factor would borrow the term “fuzzy sets” (recently applied to the Cervantine picaresque by Howard Mancing).

"Fuzzy sets," for the categories we will propose here, as the ones proposed by Mancing *vis-à-vis* Cervantes, are not hermetic or totally mutually exclusive. There are poems that change in tone from stanza to stanza, and even within a poem that is primarily burlesque and erotic there are differences such as repetition and emphasis: a poem in which there are abundant words that are deemed obscene would be very different from one in which these terms are also used, but sparingly.

One of the possibilities for a categorization of the burlesque is by themes; Antonio Carreira (24-25) has proposed such a division. Leaving aside the question of the quality of the works, another way of looking at them would be according to their "semantic traits" ("rasgos semánticos"; 30) Emil Volek detects in literary texts. For example, one category of the erotic/burlesque could be comprised of works that explicitly deploy terms that were considered taboo (four-letter words) at the time the poem was written. The poem by Quevedo to which we referred previously would be in this category, as the word "puta" ("whore") was, and is, considered an obscenity. There are several examples of this type of poem in the anthologies gathered by Alzieu, Jammes, and Lissorgues.

The second category would be comprised of poems that do not make use of forbidden terms, but that use the mechanism of allusion Arellano Ayuso has detected: plays on words, double entendres, euphemisms and/or code words that refer directly to genitalia, sexual acts, or any forbidden erotic practices. A classic example of this type of composition is Diego Hurtado de Mendoza's "Tercets to the Carrot" (see Luisa Fernanda Aguirre de Cárcer and José-Ignacio Díez-Fernández's study). Although there are no impolite lexical items, the double entendre that pervades the text equates carrot to a penis in unmistakable fashion. Regarding this very frequent manifestation of the burlesque an anecdote narrated by Kimberly Contag reveals the aesthetic gap (a sort of erotic *différance*) between true revelation (of nudity, in this case) and the mere representation or creation of illusions; Contag points out how clearly Gypsy Lee Rose, a most skilled interpreter of the "Dance of the Fans," understood her own artistic endeavor, and how misunderstood it was by others. Gypsy tells about the complaints some people had about her dance, in which the viewer invariably thought (s)he saw "more" than could actually be seen: "June St. Clair, for instance, complained to the Associated Press that I was a fraud. 'Gypsy's work isn't art', she was quoted as saying. 'She's fooling the public. Why, she doesn't even strip'" (60). Clearly, Gypsy Lee, who understood her own "art," knew that her business was not nudity *per se*, but the game she so artfully played with her public.

In the third category of the erotic burlesque one can find a more subtle eroticism, an eroticism that is hidden or, perhaps better said, distilled, refined, an eroti-

cism that pervades the atmosphere of the poem, in part or as a whole, in which one doesn't find either socially unacceptable language or obvious farcical allegories to the sexual anatomy or lustful acts. The poem by Baltasar del Alcázar that we are about to see belongs to this category.

In another study (see "Comicidad") we have discussed more fully some aspects of Alcázar's life. A very brief summary of the most salient points would include his position in society: he was the descendant of a prominent and well-to-do family, of Jewish background; was appointed mayor of a small Andalusian town by the Duke of Alcalá; became a widower at a relatively young age; and apparently was a devotee of the town's taverns. He died of gout at the age of 76. Alcázar apparently found in the tavern a refuge and a solace for his loneliness. The tavern was to him a site of divestiture where he could shed all the trappings life had imposed on him: as a nobleman, as an educated man, as a mayor, as a young widower. The drinking establishment in his poetry is always comfortable, a synonym for merriment where instincts could be satisfied freely. "Joyous Supper" is one of the foremost examples of the liberation the poet finds in this milieu, and one that became popular during the poet's lifetime. Alcázar's best friend, Francisco Pacheco, teacher of the painter Velázquez (as well as his father-in-law), said that this poem was "one of the best" ("una de las más luzidas cosas"; see Rodríguez Marín's edition, 83) that Alcázar composed.

Cena jocosa

Baltasar del Alcázar

En Jaén, donde resido,
Vive don Lope de Sosa,
Y diréte, Inés, la cosa
Más brava dél que has oído.

Tenía éste caballero
Un criado portugués...

Pero cenemos, Inés,
Si te parece, primero.

La mesa tenemos puesta;
Lo que se ha de cenar, junto;
Las tazas y el vino, a punto:
Falta comenzar la fiesta.

Rebana pan. Bueno está.
La ensaladilla es del cielo;

*Joyous Supper*²

Baltasar del Alcázar

I live in Jaén, where
Don Lope de Sosa resides,
And I'll tell you, Inés, the most
Amazing story about him.

This gentleman had
A Portuguese servant...

But let's dine, first, Inés,
If that's all right with you.

The table is set;
The serving bowls at hand;
The cups and the wine are ready:
The party only needs a starting.

Slice some bread. It is good.
The salad is heavenly;

Y el salpicón, con su ajuelo,
¿No miras qué tufo da?
Comienza el vinillo nuevo
Y échale la bendición:
Yo tengo por devoción
De santiguar lo que bebo.
Franco fue, Inés, ese toque;
Pero arrójame la bota;
Vale un florín cada gota
Deste vinillo haloque.
¿De qué taberna se trajo?
Mas ya: la del cantillo;
Diez y seis vale el cuartillo;
No tiene vino más bajo.
Por Nuestro Señor, que es mina
La taberna de Alcocer;
Grande consuelo es tener
La taberna por vecina.
Si es o no invención moderna,
Vive Dios, que no lo sé;
Pero delicada fue
La invención de la taberna.
Porque allí llego sediento,
Pido vino de lo nuevo,
Mídenlo, dánmelo, bebo,
Págolo y voime contento.
Esto Inés, ello se alaba;
No es menester alaballo;
Sola una falta le hallo:
Que con la prisa se acaba.
La ensalada y salpicón
Hizo fin; ¿Qué viene ahora?
La morcilla. ¡Oh gran señora,
Digna de veneración!
¿Qué oronda viene, y qué bella!
¿Qué través y enjundias tiene!
Paréceme, Inés, que viene
Para que demos en ella.

And this garlicky salmagundi,
Doesn't it smell wonderful?
Start with the new wine
And give it your blessing:
It is my way of praying
To bless what I drink.
You helped yourself well;
But pass me the wine-bag;
Each drop of that rosé
Is worth a florin.
What tavern did it come from?
But of course, the one on the corner;
There each quart is worth sixteen;
It has no cheaper wine.
Oh, God be praised, it's a gold mine,
That tavern in Alcocer;
What a relief to have
A tavern as a neighbor.
Whether or not is a modern inven-
tion,
By God, I don't know;
But it sure was perfect,
When they invented the tavern.
Because when I get there thirsty,
I ask for their youngest wine,
They measure my drink, they serve it,
I drink, I pay, and I leave happy.
All this, Inés, is its own praise;
There is no need for further praises;
There is only one thing wrong with it;
That it's all over too fast.
The salad and the salmagundi
Are finished; What comes next?
The blood sausage. Oh, great lady.
Worthy of veneration!
How smugly she comes, how beauti-
ful!
What a girth it has, what substance!

Pues ¡sus!, encójase y entre,
Que es algo estrecho el camino.

No eches agua, Inés, al vino,
No se escandalice el vientre.

Echa de lo trasaniejo,
Porque con más gusto comas:
Dios te salve, que así tomas,
Como sabia, mi consejo.

Mas dí: ¿no adoras y precias
La morcilla ilustre y rica?

¡Cómo la traidora pica!
Tal debe tener especias.

¡Qué llena está de piñones!
Morcilla de cortesanos,
Y asada por esas manos,
Hechas a cebar lechones.

¡Vive Dios, que se podía
Poner al lado del Rey!
Puerco, Inés, a toda ley,
Que hinche tripa vacía.

El corazón me revienta
De placer. No sé de ti
Cómo te va. Yo, por mí,
Sospecho que estás contenta.

Alegre estoy, vive Dios.
Mas oye un punto sutil:
¿No pusiste allí un candil?
¿Cómo remanecen dos?

Pero son preguntas viles;
Yo sé lo que puede ser:
Con este negro beber
Se acrecientan los candiles.

Probemos lo del pichel.
¡Alto licor celestial!
No es el haloquillo tal,
Ni tiene que ver con él.

¡Qué suavidad! ¡Qué clareza,
¡Qué rancio gusto y olor!

It seems to me, Inés, that she is coming
So we may lay into her.

Well, hurry up! In you go, sausage,
Nice and tight, the path is narrow;
Don't water the wine, Inés,
So your belly won't get upset.

Have some of this well-aged wine,
So you may eat with more gusto:
God save you, since you wisely
Follow my advice.

But pray tell: don't you love
This illustrious and rich blood sausage?
How the treacherous one stings!
It must be loaded with spices.

So many pine nuts in it!
It is a blood sausage for courtiers,
And cooked by hands
Expert in fattening pigs!

By God, pork, Inés,
That could swell an empty gut
As a blood sausage that
Could be seated next to the King!

My heart bursts
With happiness. I don't know about
you,
But judging by me,
I suspect you are content.

I am merry, by God.
But here's a delicate question:
Did you put an oil-lamp over there?
How come I see two?

But these are dumb questions:
I know what it could be:
With this damned drinking
Oil lamps multiply.

Let's try the wine in the pitcher.
Oh, lofty, celestial liquor!
The rosé cannot compete,

¡Qué paladar! ¡Qué color,
Todo con tanta fineza!
Mas el queso sale a plaza,
La moradilla va entrando,
Y ambos vienen preguntando
Por el pichel y la taz
Prueba el queso, que es extremo:
El del Pinto no le iguala,
Pues la aceituna no es mala:
Bien puede bogar su remo.
Pues haz, Inés, lo que sueles:
Daca de la bota llena
Seis tragos. Hecha es la cena:
Levántense los manteles.
Ya que Inés, hemos cenado
Tan bien y con tanto gusto,
Parece que será justo
Volver al cuento pasado.
Pues sabrás, Inés hermana,
Que el portugués cayó enfermo...
Las once dan; yo me duermo:
Dejémoslo para mañana

It is nothing like this.
What smoothness! What clarity,
What an authentic taste and aroma!
What relish! What color,
All so finely done!
But here comes the cheese,
The dark olives are going in,
And both are asking
For the pitcher and the cup.
Try the cheese, it is excellent;
Pinto cheese can't match it.
And the olives aren't bad either:
They can pull their own weight.
So, Inés, do as you usually do;
Take from the wine-skin
Six drinks. The supper is over:
The table-clothes may be removed.
Now that we have dined
So well and with so much pleasure,
Inés,
It would only be just
To return to the aforementioned story.
Well, as I was saying, Inés, my sister,
The Portuguese servant fell ill...
But it is eleven o'clock; I'm falling
asleep...
Let's leave it for tomorrow.

The first item of interest is that this is a framed poem, a frame created by the first and the last stanzas. The content of the first stanzas is an interrupted narrative, a bit of gossip that involved a gentleman and his Portuguese manservant. In the interruption, mention is made of Inés, the poet's interlocutor and companion. The last stanza abandons the purported telling of the story of the Portuguese manservant altogether; the teller is sleepy, he can no longer care, or perhaps better said, he no longer needs to tell it.

The voice curtails the story in order to direct itself to the ritual that is about to take place, that of a succulent supper. The celebrant of this ritual directs his attention to the items on the table much as a priest might review the articles on the altar before beginning to say mass. As in a mass, bread and wine are essential. By

slicing bread the ceremony of supper commences, and it will end with the lines “The supper is over” (*Ite misa est*), “the table cloths may be removed.” Before the eyes of the reader the victuals parade in the order dictated by the gastronomy of the times; the hors-d’oeuvres, and the appropriate wine make an early appearance. But this order is also interrupted so the poet may sing the praises of the tavern. The social phenomenon of the tavern was, according to the Spanish critic Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo “ennobled” by Alcázar’s poetry (Rodríguez Marín 80). In his poetic tavern, Inés was the undisputed Queen, and Alcázar her “buffoon” (the role of the buffoon has been discussed by Francisco Márquez Villanueva); it represents a concrete manifestation of what R. Jammes has defined as a “magic circle” in which “that which is forbidden . . . may be tolerated” (“lo vedado . . . puede ser tolerado”; *La risa* 9). Through its disrespect for societal prohibitions, the tavern is a variant of the-world-upside-down, an eternal *Carmina Burana* in which a goliardic bonhomie dictates the terms of the game; the tavern is both a cultural pre-text and a rhetorical pretext for an escape from “good taste” and the prevailing ethical code. And best of all, the joys of this little unorthodox paradise are accessible to all who can pay for them! “They measure my drink, they serve it, / I drink, I pay, and I leave happy.” In other poems it becomes evident that the purchasable pleasures of the tavern are not limited to food and wine; Inés is also a commodity.

After the second interruption comprising the mention of the tavern, the poet proceeds with the ritual, relishing every new delicacy, and lamenting only how little everything lasts: “it all ends in a hurry.” When the teller of the story returns to the story of the manservant of the Portuguese gentleman, he is, literally, full: full of food and wine, and also full of enjoyment.

The zigzagging structure of the narrative, which takes the reader from the interrupted gossiping to the food, the account of which is also interrupted by the encomium of the tavern only to return to the food and later to the story that is left unfinished, suggests a lack of organization, a mind that refuses to concentrate in any linear fashion. The “disorder” of the poem provides a sense of arbitrariness, of casualness, of that which is joyfully and intentionally disarrayed.

The poem is practically devoid of jokes. The only construct that could be seen as one occurs in the 20th stanza, when the voice asks, “Didn’t you put an oil-lamp over there / How come there are two of them?” Of course, with the “damned drinking,” the drunkard sees two lamps instead of one. But the poem’s tone, its atmosphere, is decidedly festive, and one of the techniques Alcázar has employed is commonplace in the burlesque epics. Two procedures are essential to the way burlesque epics (whether they be Pope’s *Rape of the Lock*, Lope de Vega’s

Gatomaquia, or Tassoni's *Secchia Rapita*) make fun of their subjects: the elevated treatment of vile themes, and the vulgar treatment of elevated subjects. Alcázar utilizes the first technique throughout his poem; the food at the tavern is in no way exotic, but the cheese is "excellent," and the blood sausage is "illustrious and rich," "a blood sausage for courtiers," "seated next to the King."

The poet will resort to the same procedure in order to add a blasphemous note to the ambiance of his tavern: three times he invokes the name of god in vain ("By God") and in another instance he swears ("Oh, by Our Lord") in praising the tavern; when Inés follows his advice and drinks the well-aged wine, he commends her ("God save you"). Additionally, the lexicon of the devout is mixed in with the descriptions: the salad is "heavenly"; Inés should give her "blessing" to the new wine; and the poet tells us that "It is my devotion / To bless what I drink"; "Don't you *adore* ... the blood-sausage?" he asks. With all these blessings and devotions it is not surprising that the wine in the pitcher is a "lofty, celestial liquor." The vocabulary emanating from religious practices became mundane in the Renaissance; many a love poem would employ "to adore" in a non-theological sense. In the Neoplatonic scale from the divine to the feral, "to adore" could signify, at its highest manifestation, the love of God; in descending order, the blinding love between two lovers; and at the bottom of the scale, it could have the coarse meaning it has here: simply something to satiate our appetite. "To bless" follows the same pattern: it could mean the sacramental gesture of a priest, the making the sign of the cross by a believer, or simply the tasting of the wine, a "blessing" that is gloriously profane.

There is another passage in which a ritual dear to many Andalusians might be being mocked. This has to do with the way the blood sausage arrives at the table:

What comes next?
The blood sausage. Oh, great lady,
Worthy of veneration!
How smugly she comes, how beautiful!
What a girth she has, what substance!
It seems to me, Inés, that she is coming
Just so we may lay into her....

In Andalusia—and most certainly in Seville, Alcázar's home town—during Holy Week the church authorities parade the religious images that are normally kept in the churches. It is not uncommon for the people gathered for the procession to complement aloud the images. When the response is rhymed it constitutes a *saeta* (the Spanish word for "arrow"). Susan Verdi Webster has pointed out how the common folk's religiosity can be translated into "a variety of vocal responses" to

the circulating of their favorite saints; sometimes these responses may be quite profane. In this case, Alcázar's praise, which has the contours of a *saeta*, is not in any way coarse, but the recipient of the praise, she who is a "great lady worthy of veneration," smug and beautiful, is just a virginal sausage. Alcázar's *saeta* is prompted not by devotion, but by salivation.

It is also noteworthy that this blood sausage is made of out of pork. The *Diccionario de Autoridades* (*The Dictionary of Authorities*) explains the blood sausage could be made out of the "tripe of the pork, mutton or some other animal, filled with blood and cooked with spices" ("tripa de puerco, carnero u otro animal, rellena de sangre y guisada con especias"). Alcázar could choose the type of sausage he wanted in his poem, and he deliberately chooses pork. This is not uncommon in his poetry, and we have discussed elsewhere his choice of "ham" in another poem (*Comicidad*). As has been indicated, the poet's ancestors were Jewish, and this gives rise to some questions: is the sausage made of pork because it was important to Alcázar to remind the listeners in the Spanish tavern that this food was not forbidden to him, since he too was a Christian? Or is it rather that in the amoral ambience of the tavern we may ignore and deride all prohibitions?

With respect to the eroticism of the piece, it is obvious that there is nothing overtly sexual or even provocative in this poem. There is, however, a certain *suggestive* power in the description of the dinner, and the listener/reader experiences a sensation akin to watching the voluptuous banquet in the classic film *Tom Jones*. Let's see how this experience is transmitted in the poem.

In other Alcázar burlesque poems, as we have indicated, it is clear that Inés' favors may be rented, and that her company often satisfied the sexual instinct. The relationship between food and sex is as old as civilization itself; Soledad de Montalvo has dated it back to the Sumerians, who held banquets and participated in sacred prostitution, as the Israelis did. In studying a poem by another Spanish Renaissance poet, Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza, Olympia González has noted that in the Mendoza work "to sit down at the table and cohabitation are forms of sharing that may be compared to each other, one being analogous to the other" ("reunirse a la mesa y cohabitar son formas de compartir que muchas veces se describen comparablemente, siendo una analogía de la otra"; 239). The woman in this poem, according to González, "enjoys eating more than making love" ("se siente más a gusto comiendo que haciendo el amor"; 240). The relationship between Bacchus and Venus is clearly stated by the Spanish Renaissance aesthete and theorist Alonso López Pinciano. Although El Pinciano did not value highly minor works of humor, he does give a "scientific" explanation for the nexus between both instincts in his *Philosophía antigua poética* (*Ancient Poetic Philosophy*). In dis-

cussing “appetite” as an interior sensitive potency, he explains that “[Appetite] has its site and main dwelling in that which is common to all men, from where it grows and sends its seeds to other parts, to the reproductive organs and the stomach—where it affects the areas pertaining to Venus as well as gluttony, and the other areas of concupiscence” (“[El apetito] tiene morada y asiento en el sentido común, de cuyo nace y crece y envía sus semillas a otras partes, a los miembros de la generación y al estómago—adonde mueve a la Venus y a la gula y las demás pasiones de lo concupiscible”). In another Alcázar poem, he tells us how his dining pleasures and Inés are practically undistinguishable; to him, “It is all the same: Inés, ham, [again, pork] and eggplants with cheese” (“Todo es uno, Inés, jamón, y berenjenas con queso”; 544). For this poet in his imagined tavern, food and sex truly are one.

The presence of Inés, then, constitutes the other element in this banquet, subtly pointing to the “other pleasure.” Inés, is, of course, a willing participant, and her male table companion exhibits a certain degree of courtesy towards her: “But let’s dine, Inés / If that’s all right with you,” “God save you, since you wisely / Follow my advice.” And she is treated with familiarity and affection, as revealed in the last stanza: “as I was telling you, Inés, my sister.” All they do in this poem is eat. The act of eating, however, consists in placing—inserting—food in the digestive tract of a person, and when one eats “so well and with so much pleasure,” “the empty guts” “swell” and our hearts “burst with happiness.” There are two references to the moment when food “enters” the person “the dark olives are going in,” and the order to the blood sausage to reduce itself: “In you go, sausage, Nice and tight, / the path is narrow.” Following the trajectory of the morsel, the poetic voice advises Inés not to water the wine, “So your belly won’t get upset.” The Spanish word *vientre* has more than one meaning: it can mean “belly,” but it also means “womb,” and “pregnancy” (*Casell’s*). The polyvalence of this term is a reflection of its triple semiotic dimension; it is, at the same time, the stomach, the uterus and—in the Hail Mary—the virginal womb of Mary; Jesus is “the fruit of her womb.” A woman’s *vientre* is the Alpha and Omega, the destination of food and the place where life is originated, and the goal of this banquet has been to fill Inés’ belly.³

But perhaps the most erotic sensation the poem produces is the poetic voice’s desire to satisfy Inés. This voice requires her active participation step by step, and repeatedly entices her to partake in the olfactory and tasting pleasures (“And this garlicky salmagundi, / Doesn’t it smell wonderful?”) and praises her when she acts uninhibitedly (“You helped yourself well”; “So, Inés, do as you usually do; / Take

from the full wine-skin / Six drinks”). The happiness of the poet seems to depend entirely on hers, and he can only judge hers by his own:

My heart bursts
With happiness. I don't know about you,
But judging by me,
I suspect you are content.

By the time the poetic voice reaches the truncated story of the Portuguese gentleman and his servant, the juicy piece of gossip is no longer so appetizing. Not only because we have dined and drunk so well, but because we have shared and enjoyed each other, we have lived our own life to the fullest in every sense of the word, and we no longer needed someone else's in order to feel happy.⁴ One of the main purposes of gossip is to establish an intimacy between the gossipers, and here it is achieved through more material means, the joys of the supper. These shared moments, this intimate encounter, is the greatest pleasure of the poem. As James W. Brown has noted,

Appetite, i.e. desire, gives birth to social consciousness precisely because it signals distance, absence, emptiness, and by extension, social dislocation. Eating and ingesting, on the other hand, equate with proximity, presence, and social rapprochement. At the level of the social, language, too, serves to reduce the space between “me” and the “other.” Needless to say, eating and speaking share the same motivational structure; language is nothing more than the praxis of eating transposed to the semiosis of speaking; both are fundamentally communicative acts by which man appropriates and incorporates the world. (13)

In the poet Góngora's treatment of ordinary food items Robert Jammes sees “the mocking rejection of a naive and idealized view of life” (“el rechazo burlón de cierta concepción ingenua a idealizante de la vida”; 159). In contrast, Alcázar's simple delicacies affirm sensuality, affirm carnal pleasure, and thereby affirm at least that aspect of life. The most succulent victual in his *Joyful Supper* is a delectable immance that will transitorily satisfy the senses, creating a poetic milieu where wine will suffice, so there is no thirst of the transcendental. “Let's leave it for tomorrow,” the last verse, predicts that there will be a tomorrow. The supper hasn't been in any sense a “last supper,” and this tomorrow is not likely to bring about repentance or a rejection of the pleasures of the flesh; it will be just another tomorrow without epiphanies, in which, with any luck, there will be another supper with Inés, and another day without sacrifice—human or divine—in the refuge of the *dolce far niente*.

The analysis of one poem is not sufficient, of course, to lead us to any conclusions concerning the period in which it was written, or even the sub-genre of

comic/erotic poetry. But it certainly offers a good example of the type of relief that the burlesque provided from the dictates of an inhibited and repressive society. It flaunts coy rebelliousness, mockery of the sacrosanct, and a good dose of just plain fun. The spirit of the tavern reigns supreme. ✨

Notes

¹ The studies addressing the burlesque-erotic in Spanish literature of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period are by now too numerous for acknowledgment here. Among a few that are essential to our improved understanding and first on the list as a precursor to these other studies is Donald McGrady's edition and study of Cristóbal de Tamariz's "novelas," followed by the compilations of erotic poetry by Pierre Alzieu, Robert Jammes, and Yvan Lissorgues, first with the *Floresta* (see Works Cited below) and later with the *Poesía erótica*. The same year the Spanish edition of the *Poesía erótica* appeared, Ignacio Arellano Ayuso published his two-volume study of Francisco de Quevedo, and José L. Labrador Herraiz and Ralph DiFranco began a collaboration that would later on bring about the publication of several *cancioneros* (poetic anthologies) rich in pertinent material, including the important works of Melchor de la Serna. Soon after appeared Robert Jammes' study of Luis de Góngora. The collection of essays gathered by Luce López-Baralt and Francisco Márquez Villanueva have been equally important, as they detect aspects of the erotic from a *cantiga de escarnio* (a mocking song) dating back to Alfonso X (13th century) to the writings of Gabriel Miró (1879-1930), with contributions by contemporary artists such as Juan Goytisolo and Severo Sarduy. Between 1989 and 1990, three studies of significance were published, by Agustín Redondo, Malcolm Read, and Paul Julian Smith, concerning issues of gender and physicality, and in addition, a series of studies were published by the journal *Edad de Oro* 9 (1990). In 1992, Luce López-Baralt published her finding of the *Kama Sutra* in Spanish, and in 2000, María José Delgado and Alain Saint-Saëns published another indispensable collection of essays in *Lesbianism and Homosexuality*. Adrienne L. Martín, who has already examined Cervantes' burlesque sonnets, is now finishing a study with the title *Sexuality and Transgression in Early Modern Spanish Literature*.

² One of two versions. This version appears in Núñez Rivera's edition as [114b], 381-386. The other version appears as [114a], 377-380. Translated by Eloy Gonzalez and John M. Bennett. For the stanza that begins with "By God, pork, Inés" and ends with the word "King," we have followed the sense determined by the punctuation suggested by Joaquín de Entrambasaguas and adopted by Valentín Núñez Rivera, whose edition of the works of Alcázar we are using here. All other references to poems by Alcázar also are to Núñez Rivera's edition.

³ In studying the burlesque invectives against nuns, José María Díez Borque alludes to a poem attributed to Góngora in which the poet explains that entrance to the convent is forbidden to all *vientres con fruto* (wombs bearing fruit; 94), an even stronger parody of "the fruit of thy womb" that is part of the *Hail Mary*.

⁴ Prof. José Lara Garrido (University of Málaga, Spain) told me at the at the Fifth Biennial Conference of the Society for Renaissance and Baroque Hispanic Poetry held in Columbus, Ohio, in October 2001, that since the Portuguese had a reputation for being overly sentimental, romantic and, teary-eyed in Golden Age Spain, the story of the ill Portuguese manservant could have been “anticlimactic.”

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