

INVERTED HONOR: A READING OF *THE LIFE OF ESTEBANILLO GONZÁLEZ*

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This paper deals with the last major Spanish picaresque novel of the seventeenth century "*La vida y hechos de Estebanillo González, hombre de buen humor*" (c1646), or using the title of the English translation that is used in this paper- "*The Life of Estebanillo González, the pleasantest and most diverting of all comical scoundrels*"² (c1707).

This novel has been called by Harry Sieber the apex of the picaresque in Spain³, and it is, according to Nicholas Spadacinni, a work that "*either sums up or consciously elaborates most of the structural, thematic, and socio-ethical problems of the picaresque novel...*"⁴. Yet the relation between *The Life of Estebanillo González* and the picaresque canon is highly problematic, and while it employs the various structural, thematic and socio-ethical elements that define the picaresque, it does so in a way that transgresses the established boundaries of the genre. This is clearly represented by the novel's most distinctive feature- the transformation of the picaro-protagonist/narrator Estebanillo into a buffoon. The fact that the protagonist/narrator stops being a picaro through an elaborate play on the thematic elements that Spadacinni identifies as "Freedom," "Survival" and "Desengaño"⁵ (disillusionment and/or disappointment) and becomes a buffoon, marks both a symbolic/thematic and literary break from the picaresque. While this paper does not deal directly with the poetic definition of this work, I am of the opinion that *The Life of Estebanillo González* should be read as an early novel that stands in an inter-textual relationship to the picaresque, but is not strictly picaresque. As such I seek to re-examine this work through an exploration of the themes of honor, transgression and inversion that are, as I shall attempt to show, inseparably tied together in Estebanillo's transformation.

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² The first Spanish edition of the novel was printed in Antwerp in 1646 and was subsequently followed by a re-issue in Madrid in 1652; the novel's sole English translation from Spanish saw light in London circa 1707 and was translated by Captain John Stevens, a renowned translator that a few years earlier translated Don Quixote (Spadacinni, *Estebanillo González and the Nature of Picaresque "Lives"* 1978, p. 209). This is the only English translation of the work, due to my own limitations I am forced to use it as my primary source while acknowledging that this may potentially destabilize my own reading.

³ (Sieber 1977, pp. 37-8, 59)

⁴ (Spadacinni, *Estebanillo González and the Nature of Picaresque "Lives"* 1978, p. 210)

⁵ Ibid, Same.

The Life of Estebanillo González was published as the autobiography of Estebanillo González, a real life pícaro and a buffoon par excellence. While today most scholars agree that this claim is simply an exaggeration of the picaresque theme of the pícaro as narrator, and that the author is in fact anonymous⁶, I am of the opinion that this work should be read with an awareness of the author's claim that *The Life of Estebanillo González* "is not like the fictitious one of Guzmán de Alfarache, or the legendary one of Lazarillo de Tormes, or even the hypothetical one of the Gentleman of the Pincers, but a true account, with proof and witnesses who are named so that everyone can validate my experiences...⁷." While this claim does not assert the work as a true account it does bespeak of the complex relation between author, narrator and character that imbues the text with its particular power. A trait that is already manifest in the novel's opening lines- "*To deal Ingeniously with you, Courteous or Unmannerly Reader, for either is alike to me, and I value not whether you take it well or otherwise; I can tell you no more of Family, but that my Name is Estebanillo González, and I owe all I am to my self.*"⁸

This opening is a parody of a formulaic opening addressed at the reader, which peculiarly both insults and de-values the reader while also informing him of several important facts. When we observe this paragraph with greater depth we can see that the narrator announces several crucial facts to us- 1. That the narrator is now dealing with the reader/reading public ingeniously, that is "*Having or arising from an inventive or cunning mind; clever: an ingenious scheme*"⁹, and is therefore compelling the reader to treat the text with due respect and caution, 2. The novel is intended for a wide reading public of a heterogeneous socio-economic makeup¹⁰; as such the narrator's perspective is not aimed at

⁶ The novel was published and is presented as the work of Estebanillo González, yet this claim is highly dubious due to the structural similarities between this work and other picaresque novels. While this remains a subject of debate most scholars regard this novel as a work of fiction. For a summary of the entire debate regarding the authenticity and authorship of the work see: (Bjornson, "Estebanillo Gonzalez": The Clown's Other Face 1977, pp. 436-8).

⁷ (Sieber 1977, pp. 34-35) This excerpt is from the Spanish edition's prologue which was emitted in the English translation, the translation is Harry Sieber's.

⁸ (Anonymous 1707, p. 255)

⁹ From: Ingeniously. Dictionary.com. The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. [http://dictionary.reference.com/ browse/Ingeniously](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Ingeniously) (accessed: December 25, 2008).

¹⁰ Since the advent of the printing press in the mid sixteenth century (1455 if counting from the *Gutenberg Bible*) the reading public in Europe dramatically expanded and diversified. When seen from this angle the novel is the literary form which arose as a result of this expansion and diversity. While Richard Bjornson asserts that *The Life of Estebanillo González* was intended for a well educated and elitist readership, I disagree and instead follow Walter L. Reed's assertion that the picaresque's readership. See: (Bjornson, *The Picaresque Hero in European Fiction* 1977, p. 128) and (Reed 1981, pp. 32-33), for an elaborate discussion of this topic as well as the relations between the nobility and writers in seventeenth century Spain see: (Gúterrez 2005) and compare with: (Reed 1981, p. 27-30)

gratifying the educated elite, nor the more mundane reading public, and is, in this regard ingenious, 3. The Narrator is Estebanillo González himself, he cannot or is not willing to tell us about his family, that is his origins, and is therefore either a self made man or the sole responsible party for his own fate. Therefore the words written in the following novel are his words, and his alone.

Immediately following this opening paragraph are several pages of biographic information, from which we learn that Estebanillo was born in the first decade of the seventeenth century in Salvatierra de Miño, a small township located in the southern tip of the Spanish province of Galicia just north of the border with Portugal, to an Italian father and a Spanish mother, a mixture that is described by him as "... a *Mongrel betwixt a Galician and a Roman*.¹¹" his mother died when he was a young boy, and as a result he grew up in Rome. We learn that Estebanillo's origins themselves are delivered to us ingeniously, for while he describes himself as a Mongrel and claims his father is a failing painter and gambler, it becomes apparent in the first half of the Novel that his family belongs to the respectable Middle Class¹², and that his father is in fact an affluent and respectable roman Merchant who has strong commercial and familial ties that extend across the Spanish Kingdom¹³.

Another clue about his origins is given to us by the surname González which is the correct form of Estebanillo's surname as spelled in the Spanish original. While the English translator opted for the easier phonetic spelling of González he ignored the fact that this spelling of the surname marks the person to whom it belongs as a *Marrano*, that is, a descendant from Jewish *Conversos*, and that his blood is therefore considered tainted. While Estebanillo claims to be a Mongrel, his surname signifies respectable Spanish origins, and his pure blood renders him an "Old Christian"¹⁴ in a society obsessed with purity of descent.

¹¹ (Anonymous 1707, p. 495)

¹² Elliott describes in length the crisis of the middle class in 17th century Spain- this description is enhanced by Reeds survey of Spanish literary history and the relation between the birth of the Novel as a literary genre and the social structure of Spanish society. It is important to note that when seen through the social and literary aspects, Estebanillo is indeed a mongrel between two vastly different cultures. See: (Elliott 1963, pp. 303-315) and (Reed 1981, pp. 19-43)

¹³ The standing of Estebanillo's father is further illustrated by his capacity to enroll Estebanillo in a private school where he receives a humanistic education, and once Estebanillo is kicked out from the school, his capacity to arrange for Estebanillo two different apprenticeships with respectable Barber-Surgeons, which he of course fails miserably.

¹⁴ The term "Old" Christian designated a person as a descendent from a pure Christian family, that is, without any Jewish or Moorish blood in its origins, this differentiation became immensely important in seventeenth century Spanish society, when rich merchants, usually of a "New" Christian origin began to infiltrate the nobility. For a concise analysis of the "racial" stereotypes and associated social/cultural structures in seventeenth century Spain, see: (Hillgarth 2003, c2000, pp. 160-169), for an in-depth analysis of seventeenth century nobility, its honor and reaction to the "New" Christians see: (Creel 1988)

After describing his genealogy in some length Estebanillo declares that "*In Short, to the End my Birth may not be Dishonour'd, or my Country call'd in Question*¹⁵" Estebanillo thus establishes himself as a person of respectable origins, who once had the capacity to "... *have taken a better Course than I have done*¹⁶...", but who by his own volition and due to his "*Wicked Idle Temper*¹⁷" has become "*an Honest Rake*¹⁸". More importantly for our enquiry as to the treatment of honor, we can see that Estebanillo himself by way of his pure blood and respectable origins was once suitable for a honor that befitted his middle class descent¹⁹, and that due to his actions he has wasted that honorable potential.

It seems that the claim made in the first paragraph has been both refuted and enhanced, refuted by way of negating the stated fact that "*I can tell you no more of Family*", and enhanced once we see that for Estebanillo it is not "My Family" but only "Family" and that in this regard Estebanillo is truly a self made (or unmade) man. This development also marks another important aspect of the Narrator/Estebanillo relationship- as a literary construct Estebanillo is his own origin, that is, he is original, but while his fate seems to be decided by his actions, it seems that Estebanillo himself as well as the aforesaid actions stem from the deeper well-spring of his moral character. The following excerpt is from the opening chapter of the novel:

*In the mean while I will do as I have done hitherto, be in with' both sides, and throw the Shuttle with both Hands; I'll be a Spaniard in holding up my Head, and a Roman in Vanity; a Galician among Galicians, and an Italian among Italians; getting what I can by both Nations, and sparing neither for my Advantage. Nay' I Must own it, with Germans I am a German, with Flemmings a Flemming, and with Armenians an Armenian; for I suit my self to my Company, and whatever Card turns up, still I am Trump*²⁰.

Estebanillo refers to two qualities when he considers his own descent- pride and vanity, both of which he embraces whole heartedly. These "national" characteristics are

¹⁵ (Anonymous 1707, pp. 256-257)

¹⁶ (Ibid, p. 258)

¹⁷ (Ibid, same)

¹⁸ (Anonymous 1707, p. 259)

¹⁹ Regarding Honor and Merchants see: (Baroja 1992, pp. 96-8), for a more thorough discussion of honor and wealth see: (Ife 2002, pp. 24-26).

²⁰ (Anonymous 1707, p. 257)

manifestations of *Vainglory*, the deadliest of the seven cardinal sins, this is certainly one of the attributes of Estebanillo- he is vainglorious, but this choice also indicates another element altogether. Estebanillo by his own words is a man of the world, a chameleon like mercurial man that has a trump like quality, that is, he has the attributes of a *joker*, a trait that is enhanced by his transformation into a Buffoon later on, as such his embrace of pride and vanity do not only signify his sinful nature, but also signal the possibility of another interpretation. Estebanillo is a man who tries to make the most out of a given situation and his choices are, at least partly, motivated by instrumental considerations. When seen in this regard Estebanillo's adoption of Pride and Vanity indicates Estebanillo assumes the decorum of "*Gothic*"²¹ honor by which he seeks to create the impression of honorability through his conduct and therefore enhance his worth in the eyes of others.

In order to simplify the discussion of honor I shall borrow the terminology used by C.F Liepmann, a late 19th century German Jurist who developed a simple categorical conception of honor²². According to Liepmann this type of honor, i.e. the external worth of an individual as based upon his assumed or perceived qualities is what he termed "*Objectified Honor*", this type of honor is complemented by "*Subjectified Honor*" which is a sense of one's worth and qualities as pertaining to other individuals and to the world at large, together they form a whole that constitutes the actual honor of an individual. For Estebanillo there is no correlation between his "Subjectified" and "Objectified" honor, his own sense of self worth is extremely negative, prompting his perception of himself as a "*Vile Insect*"²³ when in the company of honorable persons. Only when he is surrounded by persons who have no honor, his "Subjectified" and "Objectified" honor are up to par with each other. That is to say, Estebanillo is a man who truly internalizes his estate, his sense of self-worth is governed by the same mechanism of property and entitlement that govern the nobility, but with one significant difference, while for the noble man, whether a *hidalgo* or *grandee*, the sense of entitlement is based on a pedigree which that asserts his substantive worth in the eyes of others and an estate that represents his actual material worth, Estebanillo has nothing, he is a man of mundane origins, not a nobleman, and as such has no honor, this is what Estebanillo internalizes, a feeling of belonging to the bottom of society, both in the economic as well as in the moral sense, a feeling that puts Estebanillo in disparity with the world.

²¹ "... In Spain the aristocracy claimed to be descended from the Goths.... From this comes the expression '*hacerse los godos*', to '*behave like the Goths*,' which was [an] allusion to excessive pride." (Baroja 1992, p. 100)

²² The theory of honor of C.F Liepmann is expounded in length in (Stewart 1994, p. 16)

²³ (Anonymous 1707, p. 519)

Here we may begin to discuss Estebanillo's relation to honor as it develops in the narrative. When reading through the novel we can observe that Estebanillo undergoes a profound transformation- from a Middle Class child he becomes a homeless wanderer, he turns into a sharper, sailor, cook, petty merchant, thief, soldier, beggar, singer, servant, surgeon and many others²⁴, all of which belong to the first phase of the narrative- what we might call Estebanillo's raking life. In this phase Estebanillo is transformed from a wanderer-child of thirteen year of age to a young sharper in his early-twenties. Through this development Estebanillo's adopts a life philosophy that is reflected in his statement that "*Experience having taught me to look to my own when my Neighbour's House is on fire*²⁵..." and his surmise that "*My House being thus fallen, because I met with one that was Sharper than my self*²⁶...". Yet this first phase is not delivered to the reader as a tragic story, it is in a sense an age of carefree innocence, a period in which Estebanillo knows freedom and liberty, and a time when he can live a life without possessing honor and yet without feeling dishonored:

*".. I Slept undisturb'd. Jealousie did not keep me waking; I had no Creditors to Dunn me; no Children to cry for Bread; nor Servants to put me into a Passion; so that I car'd not a Straw whether the Turk had the better, or the Persian the worst, or what became of the world. I liv'd at me ease, and my Debts were paid; I valu'd not Punctillo's of Honour; and made a Jest of the Notions of Reputation; for in my Opinion there is no Life like that of a Rake."*²⁷

This excerpt marks the high-watermark of Estebanillo's first phase, it encapsulates a feeling of yearning and a sense of nostalgia, while also demarcating the end of a period, the time when the relation between Estebanillo and the world was that of a 'happy go lucky' rake. Here begins the second phase of the narrative- Estebanillo transformation into a Buffoon. In this phase Estebanillo relation to the world, as well as to honor, undergo a profound change, he becomes a man marked by death, this is followed by a sense of mortal fear that entails a need for protection that he receives from noblemen in exchange for becoming a buffoon, who

²⁴ The Spanish edition of the novel mentions in the prologue eighty-three distinct roles and vocations Estebanillo "played" throughout his life. See: (Bjornson, "Estebanillo Gonzalez": The Clown's Other Face 1977, p. 439)

²⁵ (Anonymous 1707, p. 323)

²⁶ (Ibid p. 354)

²⁷ (Ibid, p. 345)

is, I argue, depicted as a type of being that is marked by its parody of honor. Furthermore, by being forced into a series of exchanges that strip him of his natural honor and by which he receives protection and the privileges of a buffoon, he loses the freedom and the liberty of the rake and becomes a person who has to contend with the melancholy of a lonesome life in a world where death and dishonor are ever present, and who, by and by, has to play the "Ingenious" role of the clown²⁸.

Estebanillo's natural propensity to merriment, practical joking, drunken behavior, and folly in general are already glimpsed in the first phase of the narrative where the onset of Buffoonery is suggested when Estebanillo is bestowed with the jovial nickname "*Monsieur d'Alaigresse*"²⁹ roughly- 'Mister Gladsome', by a French army captain who commands Estebanillo's mercenary company. These qualities are presented by Estebanillo as stemming from his moral character, raking life and love of liquor, and do not seem to point in the direction of Buffoonery. Indeed it takes a major event to shift the plot from its seemingly natural course of picaresque adventures and usher in the process that transforms Estebanillo into a Buffoon. This process is likened to dying by an interwoven motif that substitute death with mortal fear and execution with performance³⁰. It begins when Estebanillo kills another soldier in his company- "*I happen'd one Day to fall out with a Soldier about a Lye given, and my Sword unluckily running into his Throat, he kick'd up his Heels, thro' his own Fault*"³¹...

Although Estebanillo portrays this development as an accident, it is quite clear that in fact what seems to have occurred was a duel. Yet instead of perceiving his victory as an act that bestows honor upon him, Estebanillo runs, thus in effect asserting that the duel was in fact a murder. He hides in a church, but his captain, assisted by the *Alguaziles* (low ranking law officers) violates this sanctuary and drags him to prison where they- "*...put me into Irons, Bolted my Hands and Feet with a Chain, and a Collar about my Neck, from which a long Bar*

²⁸ At this juncture it is important to acknowledge Richard Bjornson's paper- "*Estebanillo Gonzales*": *the Clowns other face*, in which Bjornson summarizes Estebanillo's narrative of Buffoonery as- "*Against a background of moral corruption, social decadence and war, his life illustrates the manner in which his environment perpetuates and institutionalizes one form of self-degradation. The clown has another, more human face beneath his mask of "good humor," and it is profoundly marked by the anguish and loneliness of his pathetic existence.*" (Bjornson, "*Estebanillo Gonzalez*": *The Clown's Other Face* 1977, p. 441) While certainly viable I cannot whole heartedly agree with Bjornson analysis, which is filled with an anachronistic self-righteous sentiment that pre-judges the work in accordance with a late twentieth century liberal valuation of such habits as alcohol abuse, and does not seek to understand the actual relations and ironies presented in the text.

²⁹ (Anonymous 1707, p. 351)

³⁰ I base this reading on Reeds conception of substitution through the "*...protocol of ersatz, in which a substituted object or experience is made to serve, provisionally, as a replacement for something else. The substitute is offered deliberately, with an awareness of its lesser value and reduced efficacy. But it serves as a challenge to the intrinsic worth of that which it replaces, a challenge to the status of the status quo.*" (Reed 1981, p. 51)

³¹ (Anonymous 1707, p. 355)

always pointed to Heaven. I was Prosecuted as a Deserter and Raiser of Mutinies in the Fleet³²..." the verdict in his trial is death by hanging, and suddenly for the first time in the novel Estebanillo is possessed by mortal fear:

"It was impossible to avoid making some wry Faces when I heard it [the verdict], some Sighs broke loose in spite of all my manhood, and the Salt tears trickled down my Cheeks.... If the Hand which is soft Flesh, hurts so much, what will it be when a hard Hempen Rope Is there? I kneel'd down, crying out to Heaven for Mercy, Professing, if I was restor'd to my Liberty, that I would do Pennance for my Sins, and begin a new life; but these were all Vows made in Storms.³³"

Estebanillo's beseeching prayers are answered through with the visitation of two gentlemen:

".. they ask'd [servants of the prince-cardinal] me, how it came that I so little matter'd Death? I told them, it had troubled me sufficiently, as long as I could get no Wine, which had such a wonderful Effect on me, that as soon as ever I drank any, it dispell'd all Melancholy.... so to disburden my Conscience, and take care of my soul, they would do me an extraordinary Favour, and I would Solemnly engage my self to them, as a Gentleman of Worth, to return within the Time limited, to the fatal execution... they were so well pleas'd with my Request that understand my Good Humour, and perceiving how Merrily I spent my Time, they promis'd to do all that lay in their Power for me³⁴."

In this moment Estebanillo's vow to begin a new life takes hold, although unbeknownst to him, the visiting servants of Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand of Austria³⁵ see in Estebanillo a

³² (Ibid, p. 356)

³³ (Ibid, p. 357)

³⁴ (Ibid, p. 360)

³⁵ The Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand of Austria, or the "Prince-Cardinal" as he is referred to in the text, becomes Estebanillo's first master, and remains his primary master until his death in 1641. At that time Ferdinand was one of the strongest men in the Habsburg's Empire, and one of the chief architects of the 30 year war.

prime candidate for a buffoon and as such are willing to assist him³⁶. As a result of this encounter the prince overturns the verdict, and Estebanillo has his first brush with buffoonery:

"I cast my self at His Highness' Feet, retuning thank for the Favour receiv'd, and he, after hearing some of my Jestes, and listening to several Stories, resolv'd to Reward my good Services, by making me a Grandee of Spain, ordering me to be cover'd, and promising, in time, to prefer me to be Gentleman of the Snuffers. In short, he treated me like a Buffoon, and order'd I should have Drink like a Drunkard³⁷."

In this exchange he learns how to trade his "Jests" for protection and money, but he is also intuitively aware of a price to be paid- *"But tho' I was within an Ace of putting on my Cap, and taking possession of my Employment, yet I forbore, on Account of the Bangs and Pinches his Pages over Bountifully bestow'd on me, as also out of Respect to the Soldier's Habit I wore, and was very fond of³⁸."* He is physically molested by the Pages of the Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand, who as lowly servants of the Grandee assert their superiority over him. Their physical blows are humiliating actions, by not being able to respond to these blows, that is, by being put in the position of the Buffoon- a man who is physically abused for the amusement of others, Estebanillo is degraded and robbed of his Honor. At this point Estebanillo becomes aware of honor as an external (social) force which surrounds him, an awareness that demolishes his *"Subjectified"* honor, and which results with his quick retreat from the notion of becoming a Buffoon. Yet it seems Estebanillo has now become dissatisfied with his previous way of life, whether it being his brush with death, the contact he had with the higher estate, or the feeling of degradation that ensued from the entire episode, a simple return to his raking life is no longer an option- *"I talk'd with all that knew me, and scrap'd Acquaintance with those that did not; and being disgusted at all my former professions... I took upon me to be Father of the Maids; Protector of the Ladies; and Upholder of Poor Jades.... [by being] their Pimp³⁹."*

³⁶ This situation is not unfeasible historically, as Beatrice K. Otto explains many stories about the recruitment of buffoons show that noblemen and their servants were always on the lookout for potentials, often persons of bizarre and awkward behavior who were encountered in adequately unusual circumstances. For a detailed description on the recruitment of Buffoons and the attitude of the nobility towards them in European history see: (Otto 2001, pp. 1-6)

³⁷ (Anonymous 1707, p. 361)

³⁸ (Ibid. same)

³⁹ (Ibid, p. 366)

And so after being dissatisfied with the life of a mercenary Estebanillo becomes a Pimp- a "*Despicable Person*"⁴⁰ whose vocation is the trade of women's honor. Thus Estebanillo has internalized the commercial logic of the buffoon- honor is a commodity that can be sold for money (and protection). And so by becoming a pimp Estebanillo is applying the very same commercial logic elsewhere, instead of selling his own honor he attempts to sell the honor of others, in this case of women, persons who are more vulnerable than himself. We can now see that Estebanillo's initial carefree relation to the world has profoundly changed, he has lost his innocence by acquiring a sense of honor, a transformation that becomes ironic when seen in relation to Estebanillo's prayer while incarcerated- while his liberty has been restored, his newly acquired awareness has robbed him of his freedom, forcing Estebanillo to become in effect a different person, albeit "*vows made in storms*". His degrading experience was injurious to his psychological wellbeing, by becoming a Pimp Estebanillo seeks to recuperate from this injury by doing onto others what was done to him, that is, by degrading others.

Yet this attempt is only temporary, quickly Estebanillo is cast back into his soldiering life, where, to his dismay, he is forced to take part in the famous Battle of Nördlingen⁴¹, Estebanillo is again wrested by mortal fear, he feels his life is in peril and is panicked by the sights and sounds of warfare⁴², his reaction is- "*I... withdraw into a dry Ditch there was near our Army: the poor Habitation of a Skeleton Horse... I clung so close to him, lying all along on the Ground turning my back upon him because of the Stink, that we both together look'd like an Imperial unfeather'd Spread Eagle*"⁴³

By crawling into a ditch alongside a dead horse he has lost all the intrinsic qualities that might make him a man of honor, he was tried in battle and miserably failed. Thus Estebanillo undergoes a second "death", this time the death of the coward. When lying in the ditch Estebanillo's silhouette is combined with that of the Skeleton Horse to form a mockery of the imperial banner, and so the form of the coward is combined with the form of the butchered animal to show the affinity between cowardice and butchery thus de-feathering the '*Imperial Spread Eagle*' and with it, it seems, the heroic image of warfare. In this manner

⁴⁰ From: pimp. Dictionary.com. Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1). Random House, Inc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/pimp> (accessed: December 26, 2008).

⁴¹ One of the pivotal battles of the 30 year' war was fought in Bavaria on the 6st/7th of September, 1634, and ended with a decisive Spanish victory over the Swedish.

⁴² "*I was so... terrify'd at the dreadful Noise of the Cannon, the furious Flashes of the Powder, and the unsupportable Whizzing of the Bullets, that I concluded all the power of Sweden was falling on me alone...*" (Anonymous 1707, p. 373)

⁴³ (Ibid, p. 374)

Estebanillo's act operates on a symbolic level, and as such is actually a negation of dishonor, that is to say, by disengaging himself from the combat and becoming a coward Estebanillo has heroically retreated from a dishonorable world, and as such has become worthy of honor. While this reading is suggested by the text, it is external to the plot, thus underneath the surface Estebanillo wishes he was a man of reputation and worth, and the damage to his self esteem is almost beyond repair. As a result Estebanillo sets out to amend the situation by gaining the reputation of bravery and valor in a "traditional" manner:

"I took so much courage as to get down into the Plain, to gain the Reputation of Bravery, and fish in Troubled Waters.... [I] found whole Legions of Slaughter'd Swedes, and making use of my Virgin Sword, began to thrust, hack, and hew as fiercely among them, as if I had been a Giant amidst Pigmies; for I am none of the first that has strutted when the Danger was over, or exercis'd his Valour upon the Dead. The Havock I made was so great, that I could not but stop to make Reflection, That no Man is so Cruel as a Coward when he has an Advantage, nor none more Brave than a Good Man when he has Right on his Side."⁴⁴

Estebanillo realizes that cowardice leads to cruelty, this cowardice itself stems from either being a bad man with right on his side or being a good man on the side of wrong. Now it seems logical that if Estebanillo concluded that he was a good man and it was the world that was wrong, he might have dealt with his cowardice differently, but since his treatment of the dead was so "cruel", it becomes an imperative that he is after all a coward. Through this realization he willingly throws off the soldier's habit he was so fond of and with it his last recourse to Honor. Yet when we look closer at this excerpt we can see that things are not as straight forward as they are presented by Estebanillo, his show of bravery is actually a parody of the ideal of valor itself, and as such it forms a direct attack on the orthodox concept of honor by negating one of its main elements.

I shall now bring into play Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the *Carnavalesque*, or more precisely its characteristic attitude of "*gay relativity, an attitude in which all the official certainties are relativized, inverted or parodied... in which the high, the elevated, the official, even the sacred, is degraded and debased, but as a condition of popular renewal and regeneration*"⁴⁵. When seen through this concept the Buffoon as a mythic trope exemplifies

⁴⁴ (Ibid, pp. 377-378)

⁴⁵ (Dentith 1995, p. 68)

the attitude of gay relativity, by being a person that is cast in a special pariah like role that sets him aside from normal interaction the buffoon is allowed to transgress the normative boundaries of estate and etiquette through inversion and parody. As will become clear my reading of this text is based on an understanding of the buffoon as a being that exemplifies the principle of inversion. Here I would like to assert that unlike the whore which is a normal being that has been stripped of honor, the buffoon with its special pariah status is not without honor, but is possessive of a quality of inverted-honor, that stems from mockery, infamy and ridicule and by which debasement becomes an act of giving. When seen in this regard, Estebanillo act of mock-valor actually endows him with the properties of honor that mark a buffoon- that is inverted honor, and another solution to the previous scene is presented, an inverted man in an inverted world is akin to good man with right on his side. The following excerpt is from a duel scene between Estebanillo and an extremely obese coward that occurs shortly after the battle:

"In short we were a long while dismembering our Shadows, and wounding the air. Till the weight of our Blows, and the heaviness of our heads, made us both fall, and rendered us incapable of rising. Then our Seconds, and other Friends, ran in, crying, Enough, Enough, hold your Hands; you have both behav'd your selves bravely, we are satisfy'd of your Valour."⁴⁶

We can see that Estebanillo has entered into a balanced and in a way a perfect duel. But whilst the ideal duel matches perfectly honorable and matching opponents in a contest that results with the death of both contenders which by and by endows opponents with honor and post-mortem prestige, this duel of cowards' ends with the utter defeat of both contenders and even one might say, the defeat of the concept of dueling itself. The duel is stopped by the seconds who do not expect from the contenders to show anything other than cowardice. We can also see that instead of perceiving cowardice as a quality that destroys his self worth, Estebanillo has internalized cowardice and incorporated it into his identity, thus equalizing his "Subjectified" and "Objectified" honor and by so doing solving his disparity with the world.

With this newly equalized honor Estebanillo is now ready to truly become a buffoon, a transformation that occurs when he again finds himself in peril, this time by being held for

⁴⁶ (Anonymous 1707, p. 383)

ransom in the castle of a protestant duke who mistakes him for a rich vivandier⁴⁷. By making himself known as a Buffoon Estebanillo demands his right for protection, he is granted his freedom, his transgression- an insult to the Protestants and their cause is forgiven as stemming from his natural role in society and he is even given some money for his jests. This exchange is the moment of transformation- Estebanillo performs jests for pay and is recognized as eligible for the privileges of a buffoon by a grandee. Yet while Estebanillo has now become a Buffoon, he is still tied to his old identity as a rake and as such lacks understanding of what it means to be a Buffoon. Estebanillo sets out into a life of Buffoonery, he goes to see Count Octavio Piccolomini⁴⁸, a man that becomes one of his chief benefactors and to whom eventually *The Life of Estebanillo González* is dedicated. At dinner Estebanillo's chair is set the wrong way, when he attempt to realign it the count stops him, telling him he intends for him to sit in this inverted position:

"A Servant set the Chair for me the wrong way, a thing I was a Stranger to till then; and when I went about to turn it, he [Count Octavio Piccolomini] bid me Forbear, for he had set as I was to have it. having no design at that time to dispute about Points of Honour, but only to stuff my Skin, as ill Seated as I was.... They [Count and the Captain] Challeng'd me to play at Hazard [after dinner], and each of them lugging out a handful of Pistoles, set a parcel Ante Manum, against which, according to the Privilege of my new Profession, I set so many Cuffs on the Ear... I thought I could not in conscience play at that game, because it was like an Unlawful way of Partnership, to be a share in Gain, and not in Loss.... I asked the servant that set me the Chair... what mov'd him to set it otherwise for me.... He answer'd, Those whom my master invites, or who are Gentlemen, have their Chairs set the right way; but those who invite themselves, or are Gentlemen Buffoons, have them revers'd... Then considering that I was now look'd upon as one of the Jovial Crew, and the Fool of the Play, I concluded with my self, that there was no Honour like Interest, and that so I Liv'd

⁴⁷"My Name is Estevanillo Gonzales among the Spaniards, and Monsieur d'Alaigresse among the French. My Trade is Sharping, and my talent playing the Buffoon; accord to the privileges and prerogatives of which Noble Science, I am as free as the Air. " (Anonymous 1707, pp. 394-395)

⁴⁸ Count Octavio Piccolomini becomes Estebanillo's primary masters once the Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand dies he becomes Estebanillo's benefactor and protector. Piccolomini came from one of the strongest Italian families of the period; he began as a count and ended his illustrious military career as a prince. *The Life of Estevanillo Gonzales* is dedicated to the than Duke Octavio Piccolomini, who might have possibly provided for its printing. One of the main theories regarding the origins of the book sees it as an internal publication of Piccolomini court with the author being one of Piccolomini right hand men. See: (Bjornson, "Estebanillo Gonzalez": The Clown's Other Face 1977, pp. 436-347)

*well, I valu'd not who Laugh'd at me; for it signify'd nothing to be well Born and Starve*⁴⁹"

Estebanillo is confounded, he sits at table with the gentlemen but is marked as a "Gentleman- Buffoon" which is the parody of a gentleman. The relations he is to have with the nobility are inverted, he will play them at a game of fortune, seemingly from a fair and equal position, but while his adversaries risk their money he risks physical degradation. This is the nature of the buffoon's relations to the nobility- money for honor; the point of honor (punctilio) is subverted, from an act of honoring it becomes an act of humiliating. This is completely up to par with the principles of self interest Estebanillo acquired in his raking life, he accepts this state of affairs, but finds an ingenious solution to his humiliating predicament- instead of feeling dishonored as he felt on the first occasion when he was physically abused by the nobility, he hijacks honor itself and reformulates it as a form of self interest that equates him with good living, which is after all the greatest advantage for a rake. With this reformulated honor Estebanillo is impervious to laughter, those who mock him, become mocked by him, and as such the winners become the losers. Yet Estebanillo hesitates one last time:

*"...that the heathens [the ancient Greeks] were a parcel of Sots for making Deities of, and paying Adoration to Poetry, Musick, and the Senses, &c. and not allowing the same Honour to Buffoonery, which is a Liberal Art, that has been so acceptable to Emperors, Kings, and Monarchs, and is only hated by Poor Scoundrels and Misers.... The whole senate, and the Wisest, and most Learned Persons alledgeing, That they [Buffoons] were useful to tell the Emperors their Faults freely, to acquaint them with the Grievances and Complaints of their Subjects, and to Divert them in their Uneasie and Melancholy Hours.... He [Count Octavio Piccolomini] directed I should be put into his Livery, that I might be look'd upon by the Gentry, and Protected against Pages and Footmen. It troubled me a little, being satisfy'd that tho it is a habit which seems to denote Liberty, yet it is the emblem of Servitude, and Garb of a Galley-Slave; for upon every disgust a Man must presently Strip*⁵⁰."

⁴⁹ (Anonymous 1707, pp. 396-7)

⁵⁰ (Ibid, pp. 401-2) this scene should also be seen as relating to Desiderius Erasmus' work "The Praise of Folly" (1511), in which Erasmus turns folly into a pseudo-Greek goddess.

Estebanillo lost his carefree freedom of the rake by becoming aware of honor, when he inverted his honor he was able to reestablish his freedom. While Estebanillo doesn't mind selling his honor, he fears that this transaction will put an end to his freedom. He attempts to convince himself, and the reader, that being a buffoon is in fact an important and honorable vocation that is up to par with the liberal arts. If that was the case his benefactor would not be his master and instead become a benevolent patron. But this is in fact not the case, Estebanillo clearly sees that while he will gain the freedom to cross the boundaries of estate and protocol as a buffoon, he will subjugate himself to the will of another. This state of subjugation is diametrically opposed to the freedom of the rake that Estebanillo enjoyed before, this freedom is defined by the capacity to disobey authority, disregard conventions, and to be self-defining, albeit in a very limited fashion. Estebanillo's problem then is a problem of becoming, he must make a choice, either to yield his will or renounce his new profession.

Yet Estebanillo finds an awkward solution, he wears the livery of a buffoon but does not acknowledge the full power of the transaction. When he goes on a hunting expedition with Prince Thomas, cousin of Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand, he becomes bored and wants to leave, the prince prohibits it and threatens Estebanillo with serious consequences. Estebanillo defies the prince and leaves the forest, thus attempting to re-assert his freedom, then a council of noblemen discusses his punishment:

"The Result of the Council was, That I should have a strong Back and Breast put on and that on the Breast should be fastned the Horns of the Stag that had been Kill'd erect and reaching above my Head, with a large Horse Bell hanging at Antler and that of the Skin should be made a Surtout, with a Hood, which, coming over my Head was to hang down to cover those Parts which were not in Armour.... I enter'd Brussels, where the ringing of my bells, and the clattering of the Horses Feet, drew all the inhabitants out of the Houses, and fill'd the Streets with Concourse. The People were astonish'd to behold the Hellish Armour, and Ridiculous Dress, Hooting me along all the way I went, and sometimes Saluting me with Rotten Apples⁵¹ ..."

Estebanillo's transgression against the protocol of Buffoon and Master is an abomination; he is marched through the streets of Brussels dressed as a monstrosity, and suffers public ridicule and humiliation at the hands of the urban mob. When he is presented to

⁵¹ (Anonymous 1707, p. 410)

Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand his ridicule is recorded for posterity in a painting, on which Estebanillo sarcastically remarks- "*The Favour of being so far Honour'd as to be Painted, and the hopes that next Hunting Bout I Might have Statues erected in Honour of me, put all past Shame out of my Thoughts...*"⁵². Yet Estebanillo's ordeal is not over, the noble's council, now including both Prince Thomas and Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand, decide that Estebanillo's spirit has to be broken- "*I am Informed that Estebanillo is Wanton, and Lewdly given, and therefore, to make down his Courage, make him mind his Business, and attend your Service, I am of Opinion that the best way will be to geld him*"⁵³"

This is the supreme act of degradation, for his transgressions Estebanillo will be stripped of his manhood, masculinity and the fountainhead of his honor. By so doing the noblemen break his spirit, turning him into a domesticated animal that has been robbed of its future, that is, of its capacity to progenerate. The threat of becoming a gelding puts Estebanillo in mortal fear once again; he laments the foreseen loss of his manhood and regrets his choice to become a buffoon. After being held in a dungeon for several days, Estebanillo is marched:

"... into a great Hall, the Theatre for acting my Tragedy, where I found a Surgeon with his Searing-Irons ready heated, Brandy, Flax, and Yolks of Eggs, and a Passionate Alguazile, or Officer, who very hastily bid him do his office, as he was directed by his Excellency. Four strapping Soldiers of the Garrison took hold of me, and letting down my Breeches, laid me on a great Table, binding my Hands and Feet, fastening a Ligature about the place where the dreadful Separation was to be made. The Surgeon took up his Incision Knife, and holding it up, began to draw near to the place of Execution. I roar'd out so Unmercifully that I might have rent the Clouds, desiring to be admitted to make my Confession, and prepare my self like a Christian. The horrid Noise brought in one of His Highness's Pages, crying out Merrily, A Pardon, A Pardon; but I was so far gone with the Flight, that I scarce heard the happy Tidings. They took me down from the Scaffold of Execution and being a little come to my self before I cover'd my Naked Thighs..."⁵⁴

⁵² (Ibid, p. 411)

⁵³ (Ibid, p. 412)

⁵⁴ (Ibid, pp. 415-6)

Estebanillo's narration transforms the scene into the similitude of a tragedy, while an act is being performed on him; he in turn is performing to the reader. When suddenly, through a *dues ex machina* in the form of the entering page, the tragic outcome is averted. Yet this is only the surface of this tragedy, by showing his power over the life and death of Estebanillo, the Cardinal-Infante asserts his absolute mastery. While Estebanillo's is physically intact, spiritually (and morally) the mock-gelding fulfills its purpose. Through a proto-magical substitution between symbol and substance Estebanillo is stripped of his manhood, and his spirit, once rebellious, is now chained by the Cardinal-Infante's seemingly supernatural grace. As such the scene functions as Estebanillo third "Death".

In the third and final phase of the narrative Estebanillo establishes himself as a famous Buffoon, he is employed throughout continental Europe, from Austria through the low-counties to Poland and then in the Spanish peninsula itself. He develops a series of relationships with high nobility and even royalty, and becomes an ambassadorial envoy between the different courts of continental Europe. In this phase Estebanillo consolidates his relation to the world, and as a narrator changes his tone and relation to the reader. We shall now return to our discussion through a familiar motif- cowardice and war, the following discussion will eventually lead us to deal with Estebanillo's ingenuity that was suggested by the narrator in the novel's opening paragraph.

Estebanillo again finds himself in a war zone; he is frightened and opts to "retreat" on his own, while running away he meets another deserter who takes him to the little hamlet of *tipple*, a place that is in the process of being looted by Spanish forces. He is dismally hungry and finds no food; this prompts him to - "*Curse all War, and look upon him as a Mad Man, who, having enough to Live at Home in Peace runs Abroad upon such Sleeveless Errands, and hunts about to meet with Death amidst so many Toils and Inconveniences.*"

As a coward Estebanillo can disassociate himself from the war, as a Buffoon he can take a stance of relative neutrality, but once the war discomforts him he must take a stance against war itself. He meets a sutler who stockpiles food for his family, Estebanillo's hunger overcomes him, with a group of officers he digs a tunnel into the sutler's tent, from which he steals all of the family's food. Once the deed is done Estebanillo returns to the scene of the crime- "*I found the Sutler very Melancholy, his wife in Tears, his Children and Servants looking Dismally, and abundance of Officers and Soldiers about the Mouth of the Mine, some*

*applauding the Pardonable Theft, and others blessing themselves at the Cunning of the Undertaking*⁵⁵."

Estebanillo act of looting is a common event in seventeenth century warfare. The military forces were ill supplied and as such had to live from the country-side by hunting, growing or stealing their food. This incident takes place in the Palatinate, an area of Germany that was ravished by the war with a large portion of its population dying from hunger. By stealing the family's food Estebanillo has practically signed their death warrant, he doesn't see it this way, putting his life first, his actions are imperative to his own survival and his offense therefore becomes pardonable. While this description corresponds with Estebanillo's principles and is a realistic portrayal of a common war time event, it also speaks of a change that begins to manifest in Estebanillo's relation to the world by which Estebanillo is no longer disconnected from events. Thus while the war scenes are narrated in the same comic tone as previous scenes it becomes clear that Estebanillo is increasingly becoming perturbed by guilt and fear⁵⁶.

This motif of battle and looting repeats in another battle scene, this time in the year 1641 outside of Leipzig. After the Spanish forces lose the field the fleeing Estebanillo is discovered by a group of defeated soldiers that are lost in the foreign terrain. They ask Estebanillo to guide them to the nearest village; Estebanillo consents and takes them to a small township, once there Estebanillo leads the soldiers on a looting campaign- "*Having lessen'd the Adversairies and encourdg'd my Party to pursue their Design, they fall on with such Bravery, that tho' they lost one Battle that Morning in open Field, they gain'd a compleat victory the same Night in the town, with much less Danger, and more Advantage*⁵⁷"

The defeated soldiers join the renowned coward in a "Brave" assault on the defenseless sutlers, which reinforces and multiplies Estebanillo's realization "*That no Man is so Cruel as a Coward when he has an Advantage*". This time Estebanillo's "Brave" assault is marred when his horse is stolen amidst the looting, he leaves the town on foot and with an empty stomach, thus escaping the full moral consequences of the events he unleashed. In these two scenes we see a transformation occurring in Estebanillo when he becomes an active force beyond major events within the story world.

⁵⁵ (Ibid, p. 443)

⁵⁶ "...whensoever remov'd from that which was my Center, I was nothing but perpetual Frights, Jealousies, and Fears. My only Concern, seeing his Highness Melancholy, was to Divert and make him Merry; sometimes telling him Passages of my own Life, and sometimes of other people." (Anonymous 1707, p. 444)

⁵⁷ (Ibid, p. 460)

In the last battle scene of the novel Estebanillo performs his most extravagant show of cowardice, he defies a direct order from count Picolomini to stand his ground and runs away in a dismal show of public cowardice, yet instead of lying through his teeth to attempt and wriggle his way out of this predicament Estebanillo confronts his master, brandishing his cowardice with pride, claiming that- "*as there are Arch-Dukes, Arch-Bishops, and Arch-Deacons, so I am an Arch Coward*⁵⁸". Before running away Estebanillo ponders what is important in his life, he surmises that- "*[the] Delight I had in this World, was to get Money, at Peace and Quietness, without Dangers or Hazards...*⁵⁹.", he cares nothing for his masters obsession with renown, fame and honor, seeing in them empty play things of the nobility.

This change is marked by a new self-assurance that grows in Estebanillo as he begins to rise in the social ladder, with fame comes wealth, with wealth aspirations, he gains reputation, for the first time accumulating a positive renown- "*yet I said, from a Buffoon I am come to be an Express, which was the first Step of my Rising. I was so Expeditious, that I gain'd Reputation, and was from that time look'd upon as a man fit for Business*⁶⁰." With this change Estebanillo as a mature man of the world that attempts to rise in the social ladder begins to emerge. His self-perception changes, he perceives himself from the outside, considering the repercussions of his conduct on his reputation- "*for it would have been very unseemly, and I should not be accounted a Gentleman had I paid my Creditors, because then there had been none to call upon my Name, nor would any have remembered me when I was gone*⁶¹."

The excerpt above is set between the two last battle scenes. Estebanillo continues to behave as he always has, that is avoiding his creditors while making excuses for himself, this time thou these excuses are formulated in terms of a gentleman's conduct, and as such satirize it. When seen as a motif this scene marks a change between Estebanillo and the world, as his self-assurance grows he begins to see himself as a gentleman and not as the mockery of one, this eventually prompts him to assume the behavior of a man that cares for his reputation- "*[I] paid some of my Creditors, because they demanded their Debts in Submissive manner, and offer'd me their Service with Civility; for he who is not to be Oblig'd by these Methods, must needs value himself upon his Gentility, or be very Barbarous*⁶²."

⁵⁸ (Ibid, p. 457)

⁵⁹ (Ibid, same)

⁶⁰ (Ibid, p. 419)

⁶¹ (Ibid, p. 451)

⁶² (Ibid, p. 463)

Estebanillo begins to demand submissiveness from persons he considers below his rank, a behavior that is intensified when in the next scene he forces an innkeeper to collect his pay from the floor in order to impress a lady of questionable repute⁶³. This transformation is remarkable if we take into account Estebanillo's numerous declarations to care naught for honor. In fact it seems that Estebanillo's new behavior is closely tied to his increasing capacity for cruelty, as can be seen in the horrific tooth pulling scene that immediately precedes his first statement about rising to be an express:

"Being satisfy'd that I never did him harm, he laid open all his Grinders, and I with my Instrument laid hold of the biggest tooth I found in his Mouth, and to make their Majesties some Sport at his Cost, gave such a violent Pull, that I drew not only the Tooth, but a good piece of the Jaw Bone after it. the Jew began to roar; and his Comrades to be enrag'd; their Majesties laugh'd and the People rejoyc'd"⁶⁴.

The king and the royal family are standing at the window of the royal palace while one of their unprotected subjects is being mutilated for the sake of their pleasure. This pleasure is shared by the entire society with the commoners rejoicing at the sight of the degradation of the Jew. In this disturbing scene the royal personage and the urban mob are interconnected into one social entity that derives amusement from the degradation and torture of the unprotected outsider. By satisfying the urge for amusement through the suffering of others that is shared by that social entity, Estebanillo earns renown and material benefits, thus contributing to his arising aspirations. When seen in conjecture with realizations in war, we can see that the aspiration for honor is inevitably tied to survival, which leads to cruelty and opportunism. After the last battle scene, where Estebanillo declares himself to be an Arch-Coward in a pseudo-ecclesiastical hierarchy, his self-assurance and renown become such as to make him consider joining the nobility:

"I had some little Itch to take upon me the Title of Don, and should not have been the first Buffoon that had enjoy'd it, nor would it mis-become me, being an Imperial and Royal Courier, to be call'd Don Estebanillo. However, to avoid being Laugh'd at, as

⁶³ "But I, to gain the more reputation with my new Mistress pull'd out another Patacon, and calling back the Disconsolate Host, said, Now you are convinc'd, and demand nothing, there is what you ask'd. so throwing it on the Ground, I return'd into the City." (Anonymous 1707, p. 466)

⁶⁴ (Ibid, p. 418)

*many are who assume it without an Estate to Support the Dignity, I began to Bless my self, saying, The Lord deliver me from such a Wicked Thought*⁶⁵."

His avoidance of being laughed at is peculiar, it is possible that Estebanillo feared the ridicule of the old nobility, but he has in fact ridiculed this group on every possible occasion. Estebanillo walks away from his aspirations, and is, it seems, content to remain a mere Buffoon. This action is highly significant, he is a man of pure blood, with money and reputation that lives in a society in which- *"In practice... in the decadence of the seventeenth century almost everything had a price: from title of Marquis or Count to that of City, when a municipality which could afford it acquired the pretension to become one rather than to remain a mere town*⁶⁶." Yet he chooses not to join the nobility, embracing his inverted honor, he returns to the neutrality of the Buffoon, which disassociates him from the world, and thus denies the forces that render him cruel and selfish. This is a double play on the theme of authenticity, by seeing his true nature as that of a Buffoon Estebanillo opts for a way of life that is fundamentally inverted and inauthentic, this thou is an authentic moral act in tone with his true nature.

With this choice Estebanillo's narrative of honor is complete, he becomes a Buffoon once and for all, playing his jests, drinking excessive amounts of wine and pondering life. He starts reflecting on *"what a fading Flower Beauty is; how quickly Youth passes away; how insensibly Death draws on; and what mighty Alterations every Day produces*⁶⁷." and decides it's time to retire from his life of Buffoonery, thus he writes his book and opts to run a gaming house in Naples⁶⁸. Yet our discussion is not yet complete, while we now understand the narrative structure and development of Estebanillo's treatment of honor, another dimension of the text when seen in its textual totality alters and magnifies this treatment. Let us return now to the aftermath of the second battle scene, Estebanillo is deeply melancholic and hunted by guilt, when suddenly the narrator changes his tone:

"But there is nothing Commendable in this World without Wealth, nor any thing Contemptible with it; the Folly of the Rich is Applauded, and the Wisdom of the Needy

⁶⁵ (Ibid, p. 478)

⁶⁶ (Baroja 1992, p. 98)

⁶⁷ (Anonymous 1707, p. 486)

⁶⁸ For an extended analysis of this see: (Spadaccini, Estebanillo González and the Nature of Picaresque "Lives" 1978, p. 215)

*is Scorn'd. But what have I to do with that, or who can mend a deprav'd Generation; it is better for me to deliver my own Follies, than rail at the faults of others*⁶⁹..."

This excerpt represents a dimension in the Narrator/Character balance that exists throughout the novel; the narrator's tone suddenly changes, while it becomes self-reflexive the reader is exposed to a specific moral outlook that changes the nature of the entire work:

*"I can scarce hold my tongue or my Pen in this Place from launching out, for I have ten Thousand Remarks I could make upon this matter of Bribes; the Power of Interest, the Corruption of those who devote themselves to it; the Mischief they do and the Punishment they deserve; but that being another Man's Province, and nothing to Estevanillo, I will not let fly, for I should spend my breath in vain, and I had better keep it to cool my Pottage*⁷⁰."

In this regard Estebanillo's treatment of the reader becomes truly ingenious, while Estebanillo the picaro-buffoon continues his notorious adventures, the plot is riddled with multiple instances that turn *The Life of Estebanillo Gonzales* into a political and philosophical satire. A prime example of this is a short poem that Estebanillo composes for Queen Mary Ann of Spain birthday that is presented to the reader as the harmless creation of a jester⁷¹:

"[end of verse II]

But our Duty, and your Merits [the Empress] we ne'er can display/For these require more than that ever can pay.

[III]

'Tis to your Honour, to your Praise, base Subjects should Rebel/For, like Usurping Angels, they will be cast into Hell/Then plac'd with Philip on the Throne, above the reach of Fate/Ith' place of Perjur'd Slaves thrown down, You'll Loyal Heroes Seat/And Crosses, which may seem t' eclipse your Light/ Will make your Name more sweet, your fame more bright/All Musical Strains, Shall be Tun'd to your Glory/And the

⁶⁹ (Anonymous 1707, p. 445)

⁷⁰ (Ibid, pp. 320-321)

⁷¹ "I must intreat the Reader not to expect any thing poetical from me; my Profession was a Jester, not a poet, I did my Endeavours, and those who do not like it, may do better if they can... In short, If I aspir'd to Honour, I should never write my Life, and therefore take it as it is...." (Ibid, p. 446)

*Learned Bards Pens, Shall write no other Story/Immortal Encomiums the Schools shall refund, And even in Pulpits your Praises be found*⁷²."

Estebanillo prepares us for a mundane poem, full of empty flattery and empty verses, yet the poem we are presented with is a direct assault against the established order. Homage and praise become commodities, the subjects rebel due to the infamy of the monarchy⁷³, the royal family hides beyond the reach of justice, the kingdom's heroes are in fact perjured slaves, the arts are subdued and sold, the church eclipses the power of the secular authority, and royal charity funds the eschatological cries of the preachers. Now, if this poem is read as Estebanillo encourages us, that is as the work of a mere Buffoon, a person whose every utterance is a jest and should be taken as such, than this poem is simply another folly alongside the many others that fill the work. But if instead we disregard the narrator's encouragement and we look at the poem as a political text that bespeaks for the entire work, we read a completely different text and the moral perspective that is present in the text transforms *The Life of Estebanillo González* into an ideologically subversive text.

Although the actual motivations of the author cannot be ascertained due to his anonymity, we have reached a point in our discussion in which the moral/ideological perspective that is presented in the text can be illustrated and contended with. When seen in this light *The Life of Estebanillo González* is a novel of subversive rebellion against the established order, and the act of writing this work becomes an act of defiance against the monarchy and the church. Almost every jest can be read as a double play that ridicules the nobility and its values, assaults the monarchy, and satirizes the corruption of the church⁷⁴. The world as Estebanillo experiences it is a cruel place fit for a coward, a place where the masters prevail at the expense of their servants and where the poor are oppressed and ignored. Honor becomes an instrument of humiliation and degradation, the social order itself is corrupt and abusive, with the nobility hiding beyond its points of honor and a veneer of virtue while in

⁷² (Ibid, p. 447)

⁷³ While this can be read as a general jest, it can be seen as a more specific mockery- around the year 1640 Portugal successfully rebelled and became separate from the Spanish crown, at the time Catalonia was also rebelling and for a time it looked like its rebellion may actually succeed. Also on a larger scale Spain was involved in a massive religious war against the Spanish Netherlands (Low-Countries) that have de-facto asserted their independence from Spanish rule. For more specific details see: (Elliott 1963, pp. 337-345)

⁷⁴ Throughout the novel Estebanillo abuses the various religious institutions and traditions he encounters. He becomes a begging holy man in order to eat, works in a hospice for the dying in order to steal their belonging, receives alms from rich monasteries as a bum, steals the pricy vestment of an arch-bishop, and uses proto-liturgical verses in a mockingly self-righteous way.

fact morally impoverished and completely selfish. This last point is illustrated through Estebanillo's address to the servants of great men:

"I us'd to say to them, Good Gentlemen Pinch-Guts, since you cannot enjoy the Satisfaction of giving, do not hinder the Plague of Begging; for if you pretend to be Stewards and Managers of Noblemens Estates, remember to take care of their Honour and Reputation, which they cannot gain by stuffing your Budgets, or cramming their Servants Wallets, nor by glittering the Costly Apparel; for... he who gives imitates god who is continually pouring down Infinite Blessings and Mercies upon us; whereas he who gives nothing, is like the Devil who only bestows Troubles and Afflictions⁷⁵."

Estebanillo laments the abuses of the nobility, the rich live at the expense of the poor and Christian charity is thrown to the wind. He reminds the reader of the kernel of Christian virtue, and creates a connection between it and true honor. While dealing with the nobility Estebanillo doesn't forget the part of the servants in this charade:

"But the world is full of Conceited Fops, for there are Servants to Great Men who can scarce fill their Bellies with licking of Dishes, and yet only in hopes of rising to some higher Post of Misery, or because they have an Everlasting fine Coat, they are more Haughty than their Masters, and swell like Blown Bladders⁷⁶."

Again we see the workings of the social order; the physically impoverished servants are content with their vestments because it satisfies their hunger for honor and their sense of pride. This insight is part of a larger ideological complex which sees the current generation as morally depraved:

"For now the Martial Profession is come to such a pass, that as soon as any Careless, or over Indulgent Mother discovers her Daughter's Failings, and her own being made a Grandmother by many Fathers, who all put their helping Hands to the making of a Grandchild, she Comforts her self, saying, When the worst comes to the worst, her poor deluded Innocent cannot fail of a Soldier for her Husband; and the great

⁷⁵ (Anonymous 1707, pp. 467-468)

⁷⁶ (Ibid, pp. 479-480)

Misfortune is, that her Ungodly Prophecies never fail. And again, there is no Man, tho' never so Base or Mean, who when he has Committed so many Crimes that the world is too hot to hold him, or cannot tell where to get a Morsel of Bread, does not, at last, betake himself to this Refuge of Desperate Persons. Nay more, the very Moment these Wretches are Lifted they pretend to hold up their Heads, and be thought as good as those who have Worth and Reputation of their own; and I, Making bold with the Liberty allow'd to my Profession, often am so free as to tell them, There is a great deal of difference between old Lions and Young Curs⁷⁷."

In his own way Estebanillo looks back on the great project of the Renaissance, humanism, and marks its failure in the world of the counter-reformation⁷⁸. The Renaissance idealism with its emphasis on the moral betterment of man through knowledge and learning, and especially its claim to stand on the same moral playing field as the ancients, is ridiculed. Yet this relationship is not flat, Estebanillo is also deeply committed to humanism, albeit his failure to study the classics in school⁷⁹, as such his stance is as much a lamentation of humanisms demise as its mocking parody. In this regard this work can be seen an elaboration of the form of the "*sátira latina*"⁸⁰, the humanist satire that seeks to moralize, in a way that combines it with its classical counterpart, the lampoon, a satire that assaults directly, all within the framework of a picaresque novel. Historically *The Life of Estebanillo González* belongs to the later phase of the Spanish Golden Age alongside the works of de Góngora, de Vega and de Quevedo, but morally this text seems, in my opinion, to be connected more acutely to the earlier humanist satires that were influenced by the writings of Erasmus, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

"For true Nobility does not consist in being of an Ancient Family, or in having Mighty Titles, but in showing themselves such; assisting those who are in Distress; favouring

⁷⁷ (Ibid, pp. 497-498)

⁷⁸ In this regard I follow Elliott's assertion that- "*The most pressing of all these problems in the world of the Counter-Reformation was the relationship of religion to the humanist culture of the Renaissance.... This fundamental incompatibility meant that sooner or later there was likely to be a reaction both against the idealism of Renaissance culture and against its anthropocentric emphasis*" (Reed 1981, p. 31, qtd. from: J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain: 1469-1716* (London: E. Arnold, 1963), pp. 238-9.) For a concise exploration of the impact of humanism on the picaresque see: (Parker 1967, pp. 19-20) and (Reed 1981, p. 31, 65)

⁷⁹ "*My father thought fit to give me Learning, and tho', thro' my own Fault, I never arriv'd to Philosophy, yet I prov'd so able a master of Arts, that i can Instruct the Sharpest in the Profession*" (Anonymous 1707, p. 259)

⁸⁰ (Gatti, 2007, p. 90)

*such as cannot help themselves; and honouring all Persons in General; and if they do otherwise, neither I, nor any Body else values whether they are Great or Small*⁸¹."

While this humane vision of true nobility is connected to an older Spanish tradition, the vast exploration of the failure of this vision can be seen, mockingly, as a parody of satire. Yet *The Life of Estevanillo Gonzales* is more than a parody, its elaboration on the picaresque, and parody of the satire, are tied together in an ingenious mixture that render this work into a unique text that encapsulated the tensions of early modern europe. By articulating its sophisticated interplay between inversion and honor through the image of the picaro-buffoon, Estebanillo's narrative elaborates the systematic exploration of the inauthentic that characterizes the picaresque⁸² in a way that transforms this exploration into a challenging discussion of freedom, individuality and the nature of mankind. In this regard *The Life of Estebanillo González* with its enigmatic authorship offers a fascinating window into a world in crisis, change and imminent decline, yet also signaling the vitality of a vigorous new voice that continues to resonate to this day.

⁸¹ (Ibid, p.520)

⁸² (Reed 1981, p. 51)

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