

Travel, space, and the landscape of the nation in
El Buscón

Tania De Miguel Magro
West Virginia University

Abstract

Taking as a theoretical base Foucault's concept of the heterotopia, this article explains how space and geographical mobility are used in *El Buscón* as extended metaphors for the social and economic changes that were taking place in Spain at the beginning of the 17th century. Pablos' and Don Diego's ability, or inability, to occupy certain spaces reveals the anxieties surrounding the success of the crypto-Jew in early modern Spain. The novel follows Pablos' travels across symbolic Spanish towns and, ultimately, the New World in his attempt to erase his past and climb the social ladder. His movement mimics the disintegration of the medieval order and the emergence of a proto-capitalist nation.

While¹ early analysis of *El Buscón* tended to see the novel as lacking any organizing principle or message, recent scholarship considers the book to be a rejection of the social changes surrounding the emergence of the early modern state. Victoriano Roncero López summarizes what is today the most accepted view: "lo que pretendía Quevedo con la escritura de *El Buscón* era alertar a sus contemporáneos del peligro que suponía para la estabilidad estamental la existencia de individuos como Pablos o don Diego Coronel que buscaban el medro social" (271). Taking this interpretation as valid, I will focus on a question that is central to the novel but that has received little attention: Quevedo's use of space and travel as a way of portraying his view of a changing Spain. In order to do so, I will apply to my examination of the novel some of the ideas presented by Foucault in "Of Other Spaces," particularly the concept of heterotopia and his analysis of how the perception and meaning of space changed with the transition from feudalism to modernity. Scholars such as Cesareo Bandera, Idalia Cordero Cuevas, Edward Friedman, Costance H. Rose, José Antonio Maravall, Roger G. Moore, Ana Inés Rodríguez Giles, and Anthony Zahareas have alluded to the significance of Pablos' continuous geographical displacement, but there has not been a systematic reading of space in *El Buscón*.

In this essay I argue two points. First, that Pablos' desperate attempt to climb the social ladder and to secure a place in Spanish high society is accompanied by his desire to inscribe himself in the physical space of the nation and to find a welcoming and safe place where he can be who he wants to be. Pablos' continuously unfruitful search is contrasted with the sense of belonging enjoyed by Don Diego. The master belongs to a network of wealthy crypto-Jews who ensure him a position of comfort and safety wherever he goes. Secondly, I will demonstrate that the locations that appear in *El Buscón* are not just stages for the plot, but entities inscribed with historical and symbolic significance. As the book progresses, Pablos moves further and further away from the heart of old Castile, Segovia, into the spaces of modernity: the progressive Uni-

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versity of Alcalá, the recently (re)established capital of Madrid, Seville (port to the Americas and center of crime), and the New World. His journeys parallel the movement of Spain into a modernity that Quevedo feared.

In “Of Other Spaces,” Foucault centers his analysis of space on the kinds of sites that:
have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect. These spaces, as it were, which are linked with all others, which however contradict all other sites. (24)

According to Foucault, these special spaces can be of two types: utopias and heterotopias. Foucault explains that heterotopias are places “which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (24). We can find in *El Buscón* examples of some of the heterotopias identified by Foucault (the boarding school, the prison, the cemetery, the brothel, and the church) and of others that work in similar ways (the inns, the university, the house of the “caballeros hebenes”, and the house of the thugs in Seville). Quevedo is particularly interested in heterotopic spaces because they can function as microcosms that embody an upside-down version of the ideal Spain he wants to hold onto and, at the same time, prove that that Spain is disappearing.

Robert Forger has already applied the concept of “heterotopia” to the study of urban spaces in the picaresque. He uses “the notion of the heterotopia to approach the early modern city as a utopian/dystopian space of freedom and social control” (48). I believe that Foucault can be useful to read not only the urban spaces that appear in *El buscón*, but other kinds of spaces. Additionally, Foucault provides a very interesting insight into how the relation between space and the individual was drastically altered when feudal structures disappeared. According to Foucault, in the Middle Ages space was understood as something organized and stable:

[I]n the Middle Ages there was a hierarchic ensemble of places: sacred places and profane places; protected places and open, exposed places; urban places and rural places (...) There were places where things had been put because they had been violently displaced, and then on the contrary places where things found their natural ground and stability. It was this complete hierarchy, this opposition, this intersection of places that constituted what could very roughly be called medieval space: the space of emplacement. (22)

Quevedo longs for this kind of hierarchical medieval space in which each element is properly emplaced (whether naturally or by force) and where there is an identity between the man and the place he occupies (both symbolically and physically.) In the feudal period, the existence of a “place of emplacement” was possible because ownership of land created an indissoluble link between blood, wealth, and power. In Castile, even though a well-established feudal system did not develop, the process of the reconquest also resulted in the formation of a social structure based the confluence of those same elements. A reduced number of families owned the majority of land and, as a result controlled power and wealth.

Much to his dismay, Quevedo’s Spain, the fluctuating world in which Pablos lives, had entered into a postmedieval era. At this historical moment, as Foucault explains, “a thing’s place was no longer anything but a point in its movement” (23). The creation of the modern state led to

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the development of new positions of power and sources of capital that were not necessarily connected to nobility and that, in any case, broke the feudal linkage of land, blood, and wealth. In this proto-capitalist society, power derived from money, instead of land; and money, unlike land, is transportable. The end of 16th and beginning of 17th centuries saw an increase of geographical and social mobility caused by social and economic changes, which in turn triggered changes to the landscape of the nation, mainly because of the rural exodus and the rapid growth of urban centers like Madrid.

In order to understand the full extent of the cultural, social, and ideological changes that took place during the Spanish baroque, José Antonio Maravall argues that we need to reconsider them in the light of the economic growth of the preceding centuries. While in the second half of the 15th century and most of the 16th century all “branches of human culture in which an expansion took place (...) were accompanied by an openness toward the future” (7), after the decade of 1580 the upper classes developed a “feeling of disquiet and insecurity” (6) towards change and progress. They interpreted what was a positive change “as a threat to the situation in which their primacy and effective power reside” (6). Many thought that the new economic patterns and the subsequent social changes “would bring nothing but ill-fated consequences and lead to disorder and excess among individuals” (5). These preoccupations were generalized among the European elites who “feared that they had gone too far in their tolerance of mobility” (25) and who thought the solution was to be found in “a strengthening of seigniorial interests and a sublimation of past nobiliary ideals” (26). Quevedo, no doubt, felt this fear of change. His famous “Poderoso caballero es don Dinero” attests to his preoccupation with the effects of the emerging capitalism on the established social order.

Each of the main cities that appear in *El Buscón* represents a different stage in the social and economic development of the nation. Pablos’ travels through space (from Segovia to America) and symbolically also through history (from a feudal town to the capitalist New World). Segovia is a place still connected to the feudal structure. Many critics have pointed to the irony that Pablos, who spends his life trying to hide his roots, would start the tale of his life by discussing his infamous ancestry. However, this is not entirely accurate. The fact is that Pablos begins by identifying himself with his hometown, drawing attention to the relation between the self and the origin, identity, and space: “Yo, señora, soy de Segovia” (89). The beginning of *El Buscón* inverts *El Lazarillo*. Lázaro first states his name, then his parents’ names and place of origin, and only after that his own place of birth: “Pues sepa V.M ante todas cosas que a mí llaman Lázaro de Tormes, hijo de Tomé González y de Antona Pérez, naturales de Tejares, aldea de Salamanca. Mi nacimiento fue dentro del río Tormes” (12). *El Buscón* flips this order by commencing with Pablos’ birthplace and parentage. In fact, we do not learn Pablos’ name until chapter four of the second book. Through the act of writing, the adult narrator has come to realize that he could not start the story of his life saying “I am Pablos,” because his is not the life of an individual who is able to choose his own path, but the life of someone born in a certain physical and social place, someone whose heritage supersedes his individuality. The adult man must identify himself with his physical and social place of birth in a feudal manner.

By setting the origins of Pablos and Don Diego in Segovia, Quevedo draws attention to the relation between the path of these characters and the history of the town and the Coronel family. Since the 14th century Segovia had played a key role in the economy and politics of Castile. During the 16th century, it enjoyed significant economic and demographic prosperity, thanks mainly to the development of the cloth industry. However, at the turn of the century, the arrival of the black plague (1598), the expulsion of the *moriscos* (1609), the generalized decline of the

economy, and the collapse of the incipient industrial development brought the town into a period of decline. As a consequence of the crisis, “Segovia experimentó una vuelta al régimen casi feudal, pues los ciudadanos más ricos invirtieron su dinero en la compra de tierras” (McGrath, 20). The once successful cloth producers became ranchers and shepherds, which led to migrations that inverted the current tendencies of most of the rest of Europe: the city dwellers started to abandon urban life in favor of rural settings.

Segovia embodies the regression to old hierarchical Castile in a time when the rest of Spain is moving towards a new social and economic system. It is a close-knit community where secrets are widely known and social groups are clearly identifiable. When Pablos introduces his parents, he shows how in Segovia the will of the individual is buried under the “truth” everyone knows. Any attempt to escape one’s position is denied by the voice of the community. Pablos’ father had tried to dignify his profession of barber “diciendo que él era tundidor de mejillas y sastre de barbas” (90); he cannot because the townsfolk know about his moral character, “[d]icen que era de muy buena cepa, y, según él bebía, es cosa para creer” (89); and his thefts, “las malas lenguas daban en decir que mi padre metía el dos de bastos para sacar el as de oros” (90). The same happens to Pablos’ mother who has adopted a very Christian sounding name, but “[s]ospechábase en el pueblo que no era cristiana vieja” (89). Through gossip, the community empties Pablos’ parents where they belong.

Like his parents, Pablos soon finds out that in Segovia, family shame is a public affair that cannot be hidden. When one day a boy shouts at him: “hijo de una puta y hechicera” (96), Pablos throws a rock at him and runs home in search of reassurance, but his mother tells him “esas cosas, aunque sean verdad, no se han de decir” (97). Pablos is astonished: “Yo, con esto, quedé como muerto, y dime por novillo de legítimo matrimonio, determinado de coger lo que pudiese en breves días y salirme de casa de mi padre: tanto pudo conmigo la vergüenza” (97). The violent discovery of his tainted past both makes Pablos want to put space between him and his family (“salirme de casa de mi padre”), and perpetually freezes him into this heritage (“quedé como muerto”). He is trapped by the medieval forced emplacement that forever links him to his origins, so he concludes that in order to fulfill his dreams of wealth and social advancement, he must run away to a place where the links between the individual and his origins can be broken. Segovia cannot provide him with a reassuring sense of emplacement, but he will soon discover that geographical mobility will not give him the option of fully dislodging himself from his social origins.

As Carroll B. Johnson points out, another reason for starting the narration in Segovia is to be found in the last name of Don Diego Coronel. The Coroneles had their origins in Seville in the Middle Ages, but the family name disappeared after falling into disgrace in the 14th century. A new line of Coroneles appeared in 1472 in Segovia, when the Catholic Kings gave this surname and the condition of *hidalgo* to the *converso* Abraén Seneor and his descendants. When *El buscón* was written, the Coroneles were a prominent family in the city. Agustín Redondo argues that the circle of court aristocrats for whom Quevedo was writing would, without a doubt, assume that the character of Don Diego was a *converso* inspired by the actual Coronel dynasty. They could have not missed the implications of the name, particularly considering that those readers would have had first hand experience of life in Segovia, because the court was there several times between 1600 and 1613. Mauricio Molho adds a detail that corroborates how obvious the last name was for the readers: the neighborhood of the old *judería* of Segovia, where Pablos lives and where the actual family Coronel had its palace, was known as “barrio de los Coroneles” (106).

From the beginning of the text, the contrast between the fates of Pablos and Don Diego

makes it clear that social position and economic power determine the luck of individuals and their capacity to hide secrets, which translates into their ability to inhabit spaces and take refuge when needed. Both Pablos and his master share *converso* blood, but what this actually means for each of them is very different. For example, one day, instigated by Don Diego, Pablos shouts “Poncio Pilato” (97) at the *converso* Poncio de Aguirre, who runs after the boy with a knife. Poncio’s reaction after being called a Jew is the same Pablos had when someone called him “son of a bitch,” that is to harm the person that voices the forbidden truth. While no measures were taken against the boy that insulted Pablos or against Don Diego for instigating the Poncio Pilatos joke, here Pablos tries to take refuge in the house of his teacher and receives twenty lashes instead of protection. Why? Because society does not allow Pablos to cover up his past, but Poncio de Aguirre and Don Diego Coronel can do so. As their names indicate, they are rich *conversos* whose families have already secured a place in the Spanish order by subverting the old structures and now close ranks to perpetuate the same structure that originally excluded them by pushing out anyone who attempts to do what they did. The scene of Poncio Pilatos is the first of many in which Pablos is punished, expelled, or denied refuge by established *conversos* (like the teacher) when he threatens them or tries to enter their circles. Don Diego belongs to a group that managed to insert themselves in the higher Spanish society through money, before the fear of the elites for the collapse of the social order became generalized. He now belongs to those elites who feel endangered by people like Pablos.

Edmund Cros and Mauricio Molho argue yet another motive for setting the birth of Pablos in Segovia: the relevance the city had for the Comuneros Revolt and the fact that several *Coroneles* actively participated in it. Segovia was the site of the first armed confrontation between *Comuneros* and supporters of the king. The uprising, originally against Charles V and in support of his mother Juana, soon became a rebellion against the privileges of the landed nobility. The *Comuneros* were finally repressed, but the nobility lost some power and the urban elites acquired a more relevant role in the government. Segovia is a reminder of the brutal repression of those who defied the crown and the nobility, but also a sign of the fragility of these institutions. The *Comuneros* were defeated, but the *Coroneles*, a family of *conversos* who supported the revolt, still held positions of power.

According to Cros, the key scene of the *Rey de gallos* may be a metaphor for the *Comuneros* revolt. In Segovia, the carnival was organized by cloth manufacturers and merchants, many of whom were rich *conversos* like Don Diego’s family:

Es lícito en efecto colegir que esta muchedumbre que invade las calles de la ciudad gritando, cantando y bailando [like Pablos], bajo el control de una gente que ya tiene el poder económico y organiza una escenografía provocadora [like Don Diego], haya podido representar una amenaza política que convocara para el partido de los nobles linajes [like Quevedo’s readers] el recuerdo de la rebeldía fracasada de las Comunidades. (22-3)

Pablos’ participation in the carnival is in fact both an example of risk represented by *conversos* who try to climb up and a symbolic staging of the repression of this minority.

The treatment of movement and space in the *Rey de gallos* scene establishes a pattern that will be repeated throughout the book. Pablos fakes a high status (king of fools), physically climbs up (on a horse), is brought down by others (locals throw vegetables at him making him fall), and moves to a different space (out of his home and into Don Diego’s), from which he will once again

attempt to move up.² From this moment on, all his geographical displacements will be the result of either his desire to run away after a shameful experience (as in this case) or the need to leave a location from which he is expelled or in which he is not welcome (as will happen in the university). As Edward Friedman explains, this repetition of movements (up, down, away) creates a sense of circularity that emphasizes Pablos' inability to leave his condition: "If Pablos's vision stresses vertical movement (social ascendancy), Quevedo reverts time and again to circularity as the reigning motif of the *Buscón*" (203-4).

Ultimately, Pablos' fake kinship is nothing but a reminder of his Jewish blood and the fate of his parents. After the traumatic experience of the *Rey de gallos*, Pablos takes his first steps towards distancing himself from his origins: he moves into Don Diego's home. As an adult narrator, Pablos recounts his early relation to Don Diego as one of friendship, because he thought that by living in the same house, he would be part of Don Diego's family and status. Pablos fails to understand that living under the same roof does not make them equals, because their relationship to space is superseded by their social status: one is the master and the other a servant. This becomes clear on their first trip outside Segovia. Quevedo describes in detail the arrangements made by Don Diego's parents to secure him comfortable lodgings at University of Alcalá, proving that he owns a place in the world. Don Diego travels with objects that would allow him to set up a home wherever he goes: "una media camita, y otra de cordeles con ruedas para meterla debajo de la otra mía y del mayordomo (...), cinco colchones, ocho sábanas, ocho almohadas, cuatro tapices, un cofre con ropa blanca, y las demás zarandajas de casa" (115). By contrast, Pablos travels without any personal belongings; he is in fact part of the luggage, just one more item to facilitate Don Diego's transition into a new space.

On the way from Segovia to Alcalá, Pablos and Don Diego stop at the Venta de Viveros. Inns are recurring heterotopic spaces in *El Buscón*, as they are linked with others places, and they are the physical sites of encounter between people from different origins, but they are able to invert the way in which those people relate to each other under normal circumstances. Don Diego is safe in Segovia, in Alcalá, and in Madrid, but not at an inn, because the inn suspends real social networks and substitutes them with reversed ones. In Viveros, Don Diego has to pay for the expenses incurred by a rascal who pretends to be a Coronel. At the heterotopic inn, the wealth and status of Don Diego are not enough to put him in control of those who, in the "real" world, are his inferiors (the rascals). Furthermore, it is those same attributes that situate him on top of others in everyday life (money and a recognizable last name) that become a hazard to him when he is at the inn. The reverse rules of the heterotopic inn convert the tokens of success into dangerous liabilities.

The arrival in Alcalá reestablishes the conventional positioning of Don Diego. His father has rented a comfortable house owned by a *morisco* and emplaced "fuera la puerta de Santiago" (122), that is, in the old *judería*. The family's wealth and connections to other well-to-do new Christians smooth Don Diego's transition into the new town. He pays the *patente* and is welcomed by the older students with these words: "Viva el compañero, y sea admitido en nuestra amistad. Goce de las preeminencias de antiguo. Pueda tener sarna, andar manchado y padecer la hambre que todos" (123). Money, not blood, is what buys Don Diego the right to enter into a desired social and physical space. His acceptance parallels how *converso* families like his own were able to integrate into the nobility in exchange for services. Once admitted, the newcomer can enjoy the privileges of the old members, even if he goes around "manchado" (in obvious

² Similarly structured scenes are to be found, for example, when Pablos falls down from Berengela's roof and when he falls down from the rented horse in front of Doña Ana and Don Diego.

reference to his tainted blood).

Pablos has neither money to pay the *patente* nor family connections, and thus has no right to move into the same social and physical spaces as his master. As soon as he steps into the college quad, older students call him new (reference to his status as freshman and his Jewish blood) and spit at him. He runs back home in search of protection, but he is hit and ridiculed by his *morisco* landlord. Then, Pablos hides upstairs in his master's bedroom, but Don Diego also hits him and reprehends him by saying: "¿Es buen modo de servir ése, Pablos? Ya es otra vida" (125). This is actually the first time the name "Pablos" appears in the book. Pablos' individual identity is established as a consequence of the rejection by his master. As children, the two boys shared the bedroom (at Diego's home and in Cabra's boarding school), but in the grown-up world, Don Diego needs to spatially project his superiority over his servant by placing him in the inferior space where he belongs: "[Don Diego] mandóme desnudar y llevar a mi aposento" (125). In the modern state, what bonds individuals is not friendship or blood, but similar purchasing power. Don Diego acts like a god expelling his creature from the safety of paradise, condemning him to an eternal wandering of loneliness: "Mira por ti, que aquí no tienes otro padre ni madre" (125). In Segovia, there was no need to keep appearances, because everyone knew who was who, but outside their hometown, the wealthy *converso* must distance himself from the poor one if he wants to be part of the elites. The exclusion of Pablos from the circle of Don Diego and his inclusion into his proper social class is completed on his first night sleeping in the servants' quarters, when his roommates beat him up, defecate on his bed, and show him covered in feces to Don Diego.

The two very different rituals Pablos and Don Diego go through before entering their respective university circles reveal the heterotopic character of this institution. According to Foucault:

Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures. (26)

Don Diego fulfills the rite of entrance to the university by paying the *patente* and also purifies himself by expelling Pablos from his side. Pablos' ritual of purification involves several beatings, insults, being covered in filth, and public humiliation. Later in life, Pablos will go through other rituals of entry into other heterotopic spaces. He will be easily welcomed into the *cofradía* in Madrid and the house of thugs in Seville, because they are spaces appropriate for someone like him, but the compulsory entry into jail will prove more challenging.

The ease with which Don Diego enters the university space reveals a change in the rules of society. At least in theory, admittance to the university should require the possession of an *estatuto de limpieza de sangre*. Although the rule was not always applied and, in fact, often openly rejected, for Quevedo the presence of *conversos* in the university was highly problematic. Our author had shared his experience at University of Alcalá with actual members of the Coronel family, and Carroll Johnson thinks that perhaps Quevedo's disdain for the Coroneles could be due to the fact that several of them had been prominent in the intellectual life of Alcalá (25). Maravall states that the expansion that took place in many aspects of life in the 16th century (economy, education, literacy, commerce, etc.) "awaken a strong stimulus in terms of social aspirations" (16) which by the end of the century "spark off their attempt to convert themselves into

a more combative position, that is to say, into revindications” (16). When Pablos pretends to enter the university he is symbolically vindicating his right to prosper.

Once both Don Diego and Pablos are assigned to different spaces, Don Diego virtually disappears from the story. He becomes to the reader and to society an invisible *converso*. Meanwhile, Pablos decides to inhabit the only physical and social spaces available to him in Alcalá. He accepts his condition as an outcast, “vine a resolverme de ser bellaco con los bellacos” (130), and remains outside the university campus. After this picaresque awakening, he temporarily stays where he “belongs,” and thus he thrives. The first thing Pablos does as a “bellaco” is to steal two pigs that enter his room. According to Pablos, the pigs were trespassing and offended him: “me enojé tanto que salí allá diciendo que era mucha bellaquería y atrevimiento venir a gruñir a casa ajena” (130). With these words, Pablos shows that he has interiorized the idea of social stratification and forbidden spaces. He punishes the pigs that have dared to enter a space that was banned to them. With his first crime, he is reproducing the societal interest in expelling or punishing trespassers. What he does to the pigs is the same that his master and the older students did to him. He is asserting his superiority by excluding those below him and by separating himself from his Jewish ancestry. Pablos calls the pigs “marranos,” a word often used to refer to Jews and *conversos*, and then proceeds to eat them, which was a common way of publically displaying that one was not a *converso*.

As time goes on, Pablos’ crimes expand geographically: from inside the house (with the pigs), to the *corral* (in the “pío, pío” incident), and then to the streets. First he remains in the *judería* (he steals twice from a bakery in Calle Mayor), but then he moves further away. His most celebrated prank, the taking of the swords from the night police, occurs outside a brothel near Calle de la Victoria, on the opposite side of city. By the time Pablos is about to leave Alcalá, he is stealing food from the heart of town, “la plaza del pueblo” (138), and from outside the city walls, “habares, viñas y güertos” (138). His centripetal movement gives the reader an image of how the relative anonymity provided by the college town favors disorder and allows someone like Pablos to move freely across the city, becoming a danger to the entire society.

While in Segovia Pablos was unable to hide his crimes and sins, but in Alcalá his wrongdoings are actually celebrated by others. When Pablos inhabits an urban space and temporarily gives up his dream of becoming a *caballero*, that is, when he occupies his proper space, Quevedo allows him some happiness. The adult narrator remembers being happy only three times in his life, always in a city and while he was a successful criminal: during his days as “bellaco” in Alcalá, when he lived in the *cofradía* in Madrid, and when hiding from justice in Seville. But Pablos’ happiness never lasts long, because he is not content with being at the bottom of the social scale, far from the sources of power.

Pablos’ inability to find his place in the world is marked by the amount of time he passes on the road. The road itself is the absolute opposite to the medieval perception of emplacement. It is, by definition, a space of movement and a metaphor for change. It is also a space that escapes the law, which is why there are references to police and punishments for crimes and transgressions in all towns that Pablos visits, but there seems to be a total lack of authority on the roads and inns.

The path followed by Pablos in his trip from Alcalá to Segovia is clearly detailed. He encounters the *arbitrista* “pasado Torote” (146) (the river Torote) and they get separated in Torrejón (Torrejón de Ardoz). He spends the first night in the inn of the town of Rejas and the second at another inn in Madrid. From there, he walks towards “el puerto” (163) (Puerto de la Fuenfría in Sierra de Guadarrama) and reaches the town of Cercedilla before nightfall. The next day he

arrives in Segovia. Along the way, he meets others like him who are also on the road because they do not belong anywhere or are running away from somewhere. By placing the encounters between Pablos and a whole array of dangerous outcasts on recognizable roads and inns, Quevedo creates the sense that Spain is full of people who live outside of any social or geographical limits, posing a threat to the stability of the country.

Of all the people that Pablos meets on roads, the only one who is not an outcast is the rich Genovese merchant. Suspected of being crypto-Jews and always assumed to be *conversos*, Genovese merchants dedicated their lives to what Quevedo considered the most dishonest of all activities: business. The Genovese embodies the displacement of the warrior knight by a new upcoming class of the merchants and administrators. The itinerant life of the merchant does not grant him a physical emplacement to call his own, but money gives him a position and the ability to move freely from place to place. Like the Coronel family, the merchant represents the ultimate threat to the feudal structure; he is able to occupy a social space without the need for geographical emplacement.

After a long journey, Pablos arrives to the walls of Segovia. In spite of all the horrible things that happened to him there as a child, the adult narrator recounts this his last trip to his hometown with a certain feeling of joy: “Vimos los muros de Segovia, y a mí se me alegraron los ojos” (171) and “entretúveme en ver mi tierra toda la tarde” (178). There is in the use of “mi tierra” a sense of belonging that does not seem to appear anywhere else in the book. Grown-up Pablos, a man who has given up all hopes of ever succeeding in life, understands that Segovia was his place.

Nevertheless, in Segovia Pablos revives the family shame in the scene when he has to ride next to his uncle, the hangman (a scene similar to the *Rey de gallos* adventure). He also has to witness the dismembered body of his father that had been scattered over the roads outside the town after he died in the gallows. The kind of punishment to which Pablos’ father was subjected was reserved for those who had committed particularly dangerous crimes and did not deserve to occupy any space in the town cemetery. According to Foucault, the cemetery is a symbol of social relations: “The cemetery is certainly a place unlike ordinary cultural spaces. It is a space that is however connected with all the sites of the city-state or society or village, etc., since each individual, each family has relatives in the cemetery” (25). By placing Pablos’ father outside the cemetery, the town is symbolically cutting any ties with the individual. His memory is erased and he is expelled from the Christian community for eternity.

Pablos witnesses the exclusion of his family and decides to claim his inheritance and leave his uncle’s home, symbolically closing all connections with his past: “me fui a una posada, sin que me sintiese; torné a cerrar la puerta por de fuera, y eché la llave por una gatera” (180). Indeed, he will never again see his family, but their legacy will haunt him years later, in Madrid, when he reencounters Don Diego, his only lasting connection to Segovia. Pablos made sure to cut all links to his relatives, thinking that he could bury his origins that way, but he forgets that family shame was a public issue in Segovia. The old master will be the one to reestablish the nexus to his origins and again humiliate Pablos.

Cutting the ties to Segovia also mimics passing from a feudal structure to a capitalist one. In the former, the servant (Pablos) is linked to a family (Coroneles) who pays for his services by defraying living expenses (housing, education, clothing, and food). While in Alcalá, Pablos started an independent capitalist enterprise that consisted in keeping part of the money that Don Diego gave him to buy provisions, but he was still under Don Diego’s protection. Only after Pablos inherits enough liquid cash is he able to move away from Segovia and decide for himself

how and where to live.

The inheritance provides Pablos with the monetary means to obtain certain social mobility, which was not impossible in a period that saw a small increase in professional and social promotion into the middle classes. Pablos understands that to get what he wants he must go to Madrid, a place that welcomes everyone and where no one knows him. Madrid is the post-feudal town. In Segovia and Alcalá the origin of individuals was marked by where their houses were placed, but in Madrid there is a disjunction between blood and space. There is, in fact, no possible connection between one and the other, because there is no old *judería*. Madrid is not an emplacement; it is a living being in movement. Since the court was placed in Madrid (first in 1561 and permanently in 1606), the city had entered into a period of continuous demographical and geographical expansion. Old buildings had to be torn down to leave room for new streets, homes, and palaces. Main roads were altered. Even the walls that demarcated the city limits were redrawn in 1566 and 1625 in order to accommodate the increased size of the city. Modern urban development ate away at the countryside and the agricultural fields, the landscape of a feudal past.

Pablos moves to a big city like many others had done since the last decades of the 16th century. As Maravall explains, territorial mobility was at the base of professional and social mobility (16), because “those abandoning the work they have had until then ... also tend to leave their place of origin when they launch out in search of another professional occupation” (17). As with Pablos, those who moved in search of a new life “usually seek to establish themselves in the capital” (17). Many contemporaries of Quevedo, and *El buscón* is a good example of this, extended the idea that these adventure-seekers frequently ended up as vagabonds or criminals. That was not completely untrue, but those in prominent positions made sure to broadcast that fact because they suspected that acknowledging that some migrants were successful would signify “the fomenting of this tendency and the generalization of this longing to achieve more than what one has” (17).

Madrid welcomed individuals like Pablos’ new friend, Toribio, “que no se les conoce raíz ni mueble, ni otra cepa de la que deciden (sic) los tales” (186). He represents the dissolution of the old nobility. The poor *hidalgo* Toribio had no clear origin (*cepa*) and no attachment to a place, whether through property (*mueble*) or land (*raíz*). He had even sold his grave, that is, he had forfeited his right to a resting place after death and excluded himself from the most basic space of social integration, the cemetery. His lack of money (the marker of power in the modern world) took away his inherited privileges. According to Carlos Astarita, throughout the medieval and early modern periods depriving an individual of a house and a plot of land was forcing him into marginality, but also giving him freedom of movement: “Con su desclasamiento y la pérdida total de medios de subsistencia, lograban una miserable libertad de movimiento que los obligaba al vagabundeo, y sus variadas estrategias de sobrevivencia combinaban el trabajo asalariado ocasional con el delito” (36). Since the beginning of the 16th century, there was throughout Europe a rural/agrarian exodus. According to Maravall, the professional mobility that comes with the rural exodus “brings about disorder in the distribution of population or of resources, and the confusion that it introduces threatens to damage the hierarchical power structure” (19). Toribio is an urban migrant who no longer tills the fields, but who also has no interest in becoming a wage earner. When he abandoned his homeland, he became a social parasite.

Toribio teaches Pablo that in Madrid it is possible to survive by cheating and pretending to be rich. Pablos is enchanted by the idea and decides to enter the world of vagrancy and the *cofradía de caballeros hebenes*. This *cofradía* is a community of fake gentlemen who, like a plague, expanded freely throughout the city. In fact, each of them is allotted by the *cofradía* a neigh-

borhood in which they can commit their crimes without the interference of others. This image of the big city as a dangerous place populated by uncontrollable outcasts had been a staple of Spanish literature since *La Celestina*, as Robert Folger correctly points out (47).

Most events that take place in Madrid are located in identifiable spaces. There is one exception, though; the whereabouts of the house of the *cofradía* is unknown, which reflects the elusive character of its inhabitants. The house is a heterotopic, well-functioning space that reproduces the structure of the outside world in the sense that it has a set of laws, rituals, and a hierarchy, but all of them are inverted. Private property has been substituted for public sharing, and ownership of land for the exploitation of public spaces. The natural social stratification has been subverted by the artificial transformation of beggars into gentlemen. Additionally, the *cofradía* functions as an inversion of other heterotopias: the monastery and the guild. In this counter-monastery, the men organize their tasks following a time structure that reproduces the monastic hours and they participate in a ritual of resurrecting clothes, which is described with a profuse use of religious vocabulary. They also work as a counter-guild of skilled craftsmen who divide their tasks in order to be able to, not produce any goods to be sold, but fabricate fake identities. Ultimately, the police discovered the wrong doings of the *cofradía* and Pablos and his friends are taken to prison. The utopic house is dismantled, but its members are outlaws who should not enter the public sphere; they are instead pushed into the sanctioned space of punishment. They move from a space of self-exclusion to a site of forced exclusion.

There were, at the time, three prisons in Madrid: the *Cárcel de Corte*, the *Cárcel de la Villa*, and the *Cárcel de la Corona*. A deep insight into the life of a Madrid prison can be found in Alfredo Alvar Ezquerra's article about the visit of Juan de Tejada to the *Cárcel de Corte* of Madrid in 1588-1589. From Alvar Ezquerra's analysis, it is possible to appreciate how real jails functioned in a similar fashion to the heterotopias described by Foucault, because they were a reproduction of society at large: "La vida diaria del penado (...) [e]ra, pues, el mismo modelo de vida que se mantenía extramuros en el que la sociedad, ante todo, se dividía en dos categorías: privilegiados y no privilegiados" (316). Money allowed prisoners to improve their living conditions and buy influence. Inmates could determine the physical place they will occupy while serving their sentence, provided they had enough cash to bribe the guards (311), which is exactly what Pablos does. Originally Pablos is taken down into a dungeon with the rest of his friends, but he bribes the guards and buys himself a space in the room called, not by chance, "de los linajes."³ The inverted qualities of the heterotopic jail make it possible for Pablos to inhabit a "noble" space that is banned to him in the outside world.

Pablos first night in jail reminds the reader of the entrance to the university. In the Sala de los linajes, Pablos' bed is near the toilet (the presence of excrements is a reminder of Pablos tainted origins and his defeats). Pablos complains of the noise and a fight starts among the prisoners. As a result, Pablos is taken back down to the dungeon. The next morning, he pays the old inmates a sum of money (something similar to the university's *patente*) to avoid the *culebrazo* (a beating that acts as a painful ritual of acceptance). His former friends, though, have no money and are beaten up and stripped of their clothes by the old inmates. Very soon Pablos is able to once again buy his way out of the dungeons. Pablos acts here as Don Diego did in Alcalá; he uses money to improve his living conditions and to put distance between him and his older acquaintances: "Yo salíme del calabozo, diciéndoles que me perdonasen si no les hiciese mucha compañía, porque me importaba no hacérsela" (221). He has fully interiorized the same ideology that will ban his

³ We know that in the *Cárcel de Corte* there was in fact a Sala de los linajes. While this room was better than the "calabozos," it was not the best. See Alfredo Alvar Ezquerra.

entrance into the upper classes. Pablos keeps using money to buy the favors of the jailer and the scribe and, ultimately, he is able to serve the last part of his sentence outside the prison space (in the house of the jailer).

The jail is a clear example of how in the modern state money redefines social hierarchies through a reconfiguration of space. Pablos pays his way out of the dungeon and away from the picaros. He then literally enters the noble part of the prison, the Sala de los linajes. Access to this room, as with the Spanish nobility of the time, only requires money. Once Pablos gets to the Sala de los linajes, the rest of the prisoners metaphorically reveal his *converso* origins and he goes back to where he belongs, the dungeons, only to finally manage to completely subvert the structure when he moves into the home of the jailer. Pablos entered the prison to pay for the crimes committed while pretending to be a gentleman. Prison was supposed to put him back into his play, but money has destroyed the power of jail as a tool for control and repression. Much to the contrary, Pablos' life after his imprisonment improves, at least temporarily.

After getting out of jail, Pablos new plan to climb up the social ladder is to find a rich wife. The size and anonymity of Madrid allow him to reinvent himself without the need to leave town. First, he becomes Ramiro de Guzmán and courts the daughter of his innkeeper, Berengela. Then, he calls himself Filipe de Tristán and starts courting Doña Ana.

A quick look at the two oldest preserved maps of Madrid, *La villa de Madrid Corte de los Reyes Católicos de Espanna* attributed to Antonio Marcelli (1622) and *Topographia de la Villa de Madrid descripta por Don Fedro Texeira. Año 1656*, makes it clear that, throughout his stay in the capital, Pablos' actions take place in the vicinity of two main areas. One is the neighborhood where rich *madrileños* live, along Calle Mayor and Calle Arenal, between Iglesia de San Salvador (in the current Plaza de la Villa) and Puerta del Sol, and up to the commercial center of Red de San Luis. The other area comprises the two newly developed recreational places that fall outside the city walls, where rich people go to see and be seen: Casa de Campo and El Prado.⁴

The initially successful seduction of Doña Ana takes place in Casa de Campo and El Prado, the liminal spaces between city and country. Both places are artificially created country-sites that serve as the perfect backslash for the creation of fake identities based on a nonexistent connection to rural land outside Madrid, the symbol of the old feudal order. One day, while Pablos is hosting a picnic for Doña Ana and her companions in Casa de Campo, Don Diego shows up. Don Diego claims that Pablos looks like a servant he had, creating a very tense situation for everyone. The old lady that accompanies Doña Ana says: "Yo le conozco muy bien al señor don Filipe, que es el que nos hospedó por orden de mi marido, que fue gran amigo suyo, en Ocaña" (241). She wants to marry Doña Ana to a person whom she thinks is a nobleman, so she has to hide her own tainted blood (the women are, after all, related to Don Diego and therefore *conversas*). In order to present herself as an old Christian she makes up a story that took place in the countryside, in the old Castilian town of Ocaña. Her strategy is the same used by Pablos three times before: he had convinced the jailer that he could prove that the jailer's wife was an old Christian because his father knew her ancestors "en el pueblo" (224); he proclaimed himself lord of Valcerrado and Vellorete when he seduced Berengela; and he tried to get the attention of rich ladies in El Prado talking "muy recio de las cañas de Talavera" (236).

After Don Diego certifies that Filipe Tristán is indeed Pablos, our protagonist receives two beatings for his trespassing, which leave him with a cut on the face (an external sign of his dishonorable status) and injuries to his legs that prevent him from running away. As it happened

⁴ The only mention of a location outside these two areas is the soup kitchen of San Jerónimo, but Pablos does not go there.

in Alcalá, Pablos wanted to enter the space of the rich *converso* (symbolized here by Doña Ana's body) and the rich *converso* has to expel him in order to maintain his status.

Pablos recovers from his injuries, sells his "noble" clothes, buys a "gabán de pobre" (253) and becomes a beggar. In this, his natural environment, he manages to find a good living very fast, but, as soon as he makes enough money, he goes back to his old habit of adopting a new personality and running away to a new land, Toledo. In Toledo, he gets the only real job he ever had: actor and playwright. He is good at it and makes money, but his original desire of becoming a gentleman trumps the only chance life gives him of improving his condition. Quevedo offers his character a place in the world, but Pablos rejects it because he does not want to work: "ya que me vía con dineros y bien puesto, no traté de más que de holgarme" (262).

From Toledo, Pablos travels to Seville, a town previously mentioned in the book in connection to the world of crime. There, he joins a clan of villains who live in a house whose location remains unknown. Although this house is not described in as much detail as the *cofradía* in Madrid, it is clearly a heterotopic space that functions in a very similar way. While in Seville, Pablos also moves throughout the old *judería*.⁵ One night, Pablos and his new friends kill two policemen, flee the scene of the crime, and take refuge in Iglesia Mayor (the Cathedral), outside the jurisdiction of civil authority. The Cathedral of Seville is the last space Pablos occupies in the book. It is, in fact, the first time he enters a church in the whole story, and he does so at the most immoral point of his life. He has committed a crime that surpasses all his previous ones; he has killed, but he does not repent—he actually celebrates his accomplishment having sex with prostitutes and getting drunk inside the house of God. Paradoxically, it is then and there that Pablos feels more at home than ever: "Súpome bien y mejor que todas esta vida" (273). Always wanting to be a nobleman, to find his place, in the end he discovers that he is happier as a fugitive, that his space is that of hiding.

Pablos' profanation of the church implies a final acceptance of his true condition. As Bjornson points out, Pablos manages to get as far from Segovia and his family as possible but ends up like his father, a drunken thief who lives with a prostitute (57-8). The world has excluded him for a sinful heritage that was not his fault, and he now voluntarily excludes himself from the civil and religious community by committing crimes for which he does not repent and that cannot be forgiven. In a sense, he has also returned to his Jewish origins. He has inverted the trip of the Coronel family, instead of going from Seville to Segovia, he has travelled the opposite direction to end up in a city that was the original point of disdain against the Jews, as it was in Seville that the first assault of a *judería* by Christians took place in 1391.

Eventually, Pablos escapes the church and moves to the Americas. The Indies attracted individuals looking for the wealth and social mobility that was denied to them in Spain. When Pablos goes to the Americas, he admits that he has given up his original plan of becoming a gentleman. At this point in his life, all he can hope for is improving his luck. He has given up his original dream but he is still on the move. The Americas will be for Pablos not the land of new beginnings, but the confirmation of his inability to ever belong.

The Americas function in the book as a Foucauldian utopia:

Utopias are sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of so-

⁵ For more information on the emplacement of the old *judería* in Seville see Montero de Espinosa, José María. *Relación histórica de la judería de Sevilla, establecimiento de la Inquisición en ella, su extinción y colección de los autos que llamaban de fe celebrados desde su erección*. Sevilla: Imprenta de Carrera y Compañía, 1820.

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ciety. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces. (24)

The concept of utopic spaces was popular in Quevedo's time, particularly given to the success of Thomas More's *Utopia* (Quevedo wrote a prologue to the Spanish edition), Plato's *Republic*, and Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun*. For Spaniards living in the metropolis, the Americas were a dreamland of possibilities and wealth. Spain wanted to build there a purified utopian version of itself, and that is why, among other things, the migration of *conversos* to the New World was banned by the license of Comendador Fray Nicolás de Obando in 1501. Utopias, like the imagined Americas, do not exist. Quite to the contrary, reality in the colonies replicated the struggles of the metropolis; the Americas and its inhabitants were as corrupted as peninsular Spain, as demonstrates the fact that a *converso* like Pablos was able to get there.

For Pablos, the Americas were a utopic dreamland that could be the ultimate escape from hierarchy. In the Americas, anyone born in Spain automatically occupied a position of superiority with respect to the natives. Pablos would not have to start at the very bottom there, and everyone would assume that he was an old Christian. But not even on the other side of the Atlantic is Pablos able to succeed. In the land without past, the adult Pablos understands that his defeats are the consequence not of his origins, but of his moral predisposition. He is an "obstinado pecador" (274) who has many times changed "mundo y tierra," (274), but never "vida y costumbres" (274).

All throughout the book, Pablos is a man struggling to escape the dichotomies that place him at the bottom of the social structure by traveling across the nation. He has an utopic image of every place he travels to, but as soon as he arrives, he realizes that the kind of place he is looking for does not exist. Like Quevedo points out in his introduction to the work of Thomas More, utopia means "no hay tal lugar." Pablos runs away from Segovia, the city that cannot offer him a chance to escape his origins, to try his luck in the urban spaces of power: Alcalá (intellectual center), Madrid (administrative center), and Seville (mercantile center). Pablos moves from the quasi-feudal Segovia to lands that are more and more dependent upon and influenced by wealth. But Pablos does not make any attempts to engage in the opportunities of promotion that these new cities offered. Instead, he is trapped in an ideology that condemns him to geographical wandering and social immobility. His identity is precisely that of a "buscón," a searcher. He spends his life moving from heterotopic space to heterotopic space: being expelled from the spaces he wants to inhabit and being forced into the places he wants to run away from. Pablos dreams about establishing himself economically, geographically, and socially, but he can never fulfill his desires because in the old feudal order there is no acceptable place for a low-class *converso* like him, and in the modern world the possibility of emplacement has disappeared all together. As Foucault pointed out, modernity is about movement and mobility. Pablos is, in a sense, the modern man searching to eliminate the identity between blood, wealth, and land. Quevedo, disdainful of any change to the *status quo*, does not allow his creation to break away from his past.

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