# Sweetmeats and Preserves: Food Imagery in Lope de Rueda's *Pasos*

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## Aperitivos

Lope de Rueda, a key figure in establishing professional theater in Spain, was probably producing plays by 1540 and continued until his death in 1565.[1] Among the works attributed to him are four plays, three pastoral colloquies, and four *autos*.[2] However, Lope de Rueda is best remembered for his *pasos* of which 24 are extant. The *pasos* are characterized by their simplicity, minimal number of actors, usually two or three, and their practical function. They allow for prop and costume change, create the illusion of passing time and lengthen the overall dramatic show.[3] The *pasos*, as well as Rueda's other theatrical works were published posthumously. In 1567 Juan de Timoneda published *El deleitoso*, a collection "pasos graciosos," and later, in 1570, a second collection called *Registro de representantes.* Previously critics have treated Lope from a historical perspective, concentrating on his evolutionary role in the creation of the theater and his role as a transitional figure who brought ideas from popular Italian theater to Spain.[4] Other critics, par-

[1] N. D. Shergold, *A History of the Spanish Stage. From Medieval Times Until the End of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 153.

[2] Lope de Rueda, *Pasos*, Fernando González Ollé y Vicente Tusón, eds. (Madrid: Cátedra, 1989), pp. 11-12.

[3] Randall W. Listerman, "*Las aceitunas* of Lope de Rueda: The Role of Mencigüela," *Romance Notes* 29.2 (Win 1988): pp. 133-34.

[4] For Lope's connection with Italian theater see, Othón Arróniz, *La influencia italiana en el nacimiento de la comedia española* (Madrid: Gredos, 1969). For his role in the development of Spanish theater see, Ángel del Río, *Historia*

ticularly Randall Listerman, have explored the vitality of Rueda's language, his theatricality and the power of his character sketches.[5] Today I am returning to this slapstick playwright to recover the historical, sexual, and social underpinnings of the use of food and food imagery in the pasos.

Before sitting down to table with Lope, I would like to return to the early days of Hispania and recall some of the more significant turning points in the development of Spanish food. Apart from language, law and architectural wonders, the Romans brought to Hispania their gastronomic necessities: wheat, olive oil, wine and vinegar.[6] Hispania rapidly became the empire's most important supplier of olive oil, which in turn became one of the basic elements of Spanish cuisine. The production and marketing of olives is the focal point of Lope de Rueda's *paso*, "Las aceitunas." The Romans also introduced a variety of cooking methods: roasting, broiling, grilling and baking. In the Middle Ages, with the absence of a single unifying power, the production of local cheeses increased and today Spain enjoys hundreds of distinct regional cheeses. Spanish cuisine would not be what it is without Arabic influence which includes the introduction and/or cultivation of citrus fruits, rice, eggplant, sugar cane, and such herbs and spices as saffron, cinnamon, cumin, caraway, cilantro, and mint. In contrast to the Visigoths, who promoted livestock farming, the Arabs contributed a wide variety of fruit and vegetables which still remain an important part of the Spanish meal.

While it is commonly agreed on that Lope de Rueda wrote and performed his pasos in the 1550's and 60's, some 60 years after Columbus first returned from the New World and more than 25 years after Cortés eradicated most of the Aztec empire, New World food products are absent from this dramatist's works. In keeping with a universal reluctance to change eating patterns, Spain did not rapidly incorporate New World products

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*de la literatura española* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967) and Carroll B. Johnson, "El arte viejo de hacer teatro: Lope de Rueda, Lope de Vega y Cervantes," *Lope de Vega y los orígenes del teatro español. Actas del I Congreso internacional sobre Lope de Vega*, Manuel Criado de Val, ed. (Madrid: Edi-6, 1981), pp. 95-102.

[5] The MLA bibliography reveals only 14 articles in the last 15 years. With the exception of a 1991 study of Lope de Rueda's play, *Medora*, no book-length studies have been published since the 1970's.

[6] Alicia Ríos and Lourdes March, *The Heritage of Spanish Cooking*, (New York: Random, 1992), p. 47.

into its dietary habits.[7] People were skeptical of the aggressive red of tomatos and peppers, the bitterness of the black cocoa bean, the monstrous ears of corn, and the subterranean potatoes.[8] These products and their uniquely Spanish culinary treats, el gazpacho andaluz, pimiento relleno, pisto manchego, and la tortilla española, would take more than a century, to become established in the Spanish gastronomic system. Also absent from the *pasos* are foods general associations with hospitality, grace, bonding, compassion, and celebration. There is no spiritual significance to a food event. Instead food stimulates biological urges, promotes craving and lust and as such is intrinsically tied to sexual desires and needs. In the *pasos* the presence or lack of food also instigates lies, violence, humiliation and fear; basic responses to a repressive power structure.

The two anthropologists who have most influenced studies of foodways are Claude Lévi-Strauss and Mary Douglas. The former maintains a structuralist approach with emphasis on binary oppositions, for example, between the raw and the cooked: "The raw/cooked axis," Lévi-Strauss argues, "is characteristic of culture... since cooking brings about the cultural transformation of the raw."[9] "La tierra de Jauja" reveals a transformation from raw to cooked and also addresses the relationship between food and sex. Douglas, on the other hand, avoids binary oppositions and instead, concentrates on the complex web of foodways and social relations. The two pasos, "La generosa paliza" and "Los criados" reveal a complex pattern of food and socioeconomic relations particularly between people of different social stratification. Surprisingly, or perhaps not so, both Lévi-Strauss and Douglas draw consistent analogies between food and culture: that food categories encode social events.

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[7] For more on the introduction of New World products to Europe see, Barbara Ketcham Wheaton, *Savoring the Past. The French Kitchen and Table From 1300-1789*, (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1983), pp. 81-85; Martin Elkhort, *The Secret Life of Food. A Feast of Food and Drink History, Folklore, and Fact*, (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1991).

[8] Cocoa first arrived in Spain in 1528 when Hernán Cortés presented it to Carlos V. Later, Felipe IV's daughter brought it with her to France when she married Louis XIV in 1660. See, Ríos op. cit. p. 15; Ketcham, op. cit.

[9] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked Introduction to a Science of Mythology:* I, John and Doreen Weightman, trans. (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 142.

**Primer plato**

"La tierra de Jauja" is one of Lope's most well-known pasos. Although the origin of the word "jauja," is uncertain, Corominas suggests that it derives from the name of a Peruvian city.[10] The Spanish "Jauja" also corresponds to a distorted, popular version of the mythology of Eden, that took shape between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries known as the land of Cockaigne.[11] Montanari explains that, "The best cure for fear of hunger lay in dreams: dreams of tranquillity and a full stomach, of abundance and overindulgence; a dream of the land of Cuccagna where the supply of food was inexhaustible and readily available."[12] However, the Catalan Bernart Metge understood this land in more dismal terms. For him it was a land of idleness: "there [on the island of Cockaigne], there was neither God nor nature, since there was neither order nor measure, nor anything rational."[13] It was, then, a false paradise; a grotesque version of the biblical land of milk and honey that reflected a deteriorating food situation and an increasing difficulty to satisfy one's appetite.

In the *paso*, the two thieves, Honzigera and Panarizo, are worried about where they will find their next meal. Fortunately, they encounter the simpleton, Mendrugo, who, with a baked rice dish in hand, is on his way to visit his wife in jail.[14] In order to

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[10] Listerman, op. cit.: p. 115 n 3.

[11] Massimo Montanari, *The Culture of Food,* Carl Ipsen, trans. (Cambridge, Eng.: Blackwell, 1994), p. 95.

[12] Montanari, *op. cit* , p. 94.

[13] Cited in Piero Camporesi, *Bread of Dreams. Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe,* David Gentilcore trans., (Cambridge, Eng.: Polity P, 1980), p. 80.

[14] While the origens of rice into Spain is unknown, it is thought to have been introduced by the Byzantines in the sixth century. However, the Arabs introduced the large-scale production of rice in the eighth century. For more on Arab influence in Spanish cooking see, Campesori, op. cit. Traditionally, rice was cooked in a broth. Ruperto de Nola's 1520 cookbook *Libre del Coch* (*Libro de guisados,* 1525) contains a recipe for arroz en cazuela al horno: "y cuando el arroz estuviere dentro en la cazuela echarles haz tanta cantidad de caldo, como te pareciere que será menester para que se cueza no más, y cátalo que esté bueno de sal y bien grueso, y ponerlo a cocer en el horno, y un poco antes que se acabe de cocer sacarlo del horno y echarle algunas yemas de huevo enteras que sean frescos, sobre el arroz, y después tornar la cazuela al horno para que se acabe de cocer ... y este es buen arroz." Ruperto de Nola, *Libro de guisados,* Dionisio Pérez, ed., (Madrid, 1929), p. 82. This recipe corresponds to the type of casserole Mendrugo is bringing to his wife.

distract Mendrugo and consume his casserole, the two thieves create an elaborate tale of a land full of succulent delicacies described in visual, auditive and aromatic terms. Honzigera and Panarizo alternate back and forth in their description:

> Honzigera: Mira, en la tierra de Xauxa, hay un río de miel; y ... otro de leche; y entre río y río, hay una puente de mantequillas encadenada de requesones... que están diciendo: "Coméme, coméme"
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> Panarizo: troncos son de tozinos.... las hojas son hojuelas, y el fruto d'estos árboles son buñuelos y caen en aquel río de miel qu'ellos mismos están diciendo: "Maxcáme, maxcáme"....
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> Honzigera: las calles están empedradas con yemas de huevos; y entre yema y yema, un pastel con lonjas de tozino .... Y assadas, qu'ellas mismas dizen: "Tragadme, tragadme"
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> Panarizo: Hay unos assadores de trezientos passos de largo, con muchas gallinas y capones, perdizes, conejos, francolines .... Y junto a cada ave, un cochillo, que no es menester más de cortar; qu'ello mismo dize: "Engollíme, engollíme"
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> Honzigera: hay muchas caxas de confitura, mucho calabaçate, mucho diacitrón, muchos maçapanes, muchos confites .... Hay ragea y unas limetas de vino que él mismo s'está diziendo: "Bevéme, coméme, bevéme, coméme."[15]

The thieves' description begins with the raw, sensual foods of milk and honey, continues with prepared foods, butter, cheese and baked pastries, and then turns to a wide variety of cooked foods, fried eggs and bacon, roasted hens, partridges, and rabbits. Orality in this *paso* is emphasized by the spoken language and by the act of eating. Douglas suggests that, "Eating, like talking, is patterned activity, and the daily menu may be made to

[15] González Ollé op. cit., pp. 162-64.

yield an analogy with linguistic forms."[16] Here, the two are intrinsically linked together; story telling leads to eating. The thieves are able to achieve one oral act by producing the other; as they speak, they eat.

Orality is also emphasized by the relationship between food and sex. Martin Elkhort discusses the physiological relationship between the enjoyment of eating and the enjoyment of sex and explains that biological urges and bodily sustenance are frequently connected with sexual desire and lust (107).[17] Abstinence only heightens these needs. In *La tierra de Jauja*, Mendrugo is the nexus that links the two desires to consume.[18] He is bringing food to his wife in jail who has been arrested for her practices as alcahueta. Her absence from the home suggests his unfulfilled sexual desires while his presence underscores unfulfilled gastronomic needs. Honzigera begins the description of the land of Jauja with, "un río de miel" (162). Though not very nutritious, honey is psychologically pleasing and connotes erotic imagery. It is sweet, delicious and pure. It does not need to be cooked, cultivated or civilized. Honey is basic, primordial sustenance. It is raw pleasure, instinct without human control, nature without culture.[19] For Honzigera and Panarizo, honey is their point of departure into a world of illusion and deception, one that advances from simple, raw pleasures into complex, "cooked" gluttony and debauchery that eventually deceives Mendrugo and leads to his defeat.

Not only does their selection of food begin with the raw and natural and end with the cooked and cultured, their selection of verbs progress from the normal to the absurd, climaxing with gorging and gluttony. In this fantastic land, the raw food calls out, coméme, coméme," the buñuelos, "maxcáme, max-

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[16] Cited in *Cultural Analysis. The Work of Peter L Berger, Mary Douglas, Michel Foucault, and Jürgen Habermas*, Robert Wuthnow, James Davison Hunter, Albert Bergesen and Edith Kurzweil, eds. (Boston: Routledge and Kegan, 1984), p. 111.

[17] For the relationship between food and sex in the *Decameron*, see Frank Capozzi, "Food and Food Images in the *Decameron*,"*Canadian Journal of Italian Studies* 10.34 (1987): pp. 1-13.

[18] James Parr discusses the semantic nexus of sex and food in *El burlador de Sevilla* in his article, "Erotismo y alimentción in *El Burlador de Sevilla*," *Edad de oro* 9 (1990): pp. 231-39.

[19] Alexandra Carter discusses honey's symbolism in her work, "Aspectos antropológicos de la alimentación humana en la literatura," *Káñina* Vol. 8.1-2 (1984): pp. 97-101.

cáme," the bacon and eggs, "tragadme, tragadme," and finally the poultry exclaims, "engollíme, engollíme."[20] Their language then, begins with basic palatal gratification and culminates in lubricious gluttony. The sumptuous description ends with sweet desserts, and wine; only then does Mendrugo, previously absorbed in the opulent descriptions, realize that the two thieves have consumed his food as he has consumed their story. In exchange for such a vivid description, the two thieves satiate their appetites, but Mendrugo is left empty-handed to visit his wife, without means to fulfill neither his gastronomic nor sexual appetite.

**Segundo plato**

While "La tierra de Jauja" deals with food at its primary level, that is, satisfying basic needs, "Los criados," and "La generosa paliza," treat food in relation to social boundaries. In "Los criados," two servants, Luquitas and Alameda, are sent on an errand to buy cheese and onions. On the way however, they stop by the house of the "buñolera" and rapidly devour a variety of pastries, both sweet and meaty, fresh and moldy. On returning home, they lie to their master, Salzedo, about the money and time they had squandered. Salzedo then denies them their own lunch and physically punishes them.

The nature of food as necessity and luxury is inextricably tied to the rest of culture. While describing the sweet and meat pies on which he intemperately gorges, Alameda states the implicit class distinctions associated with food: "de modo que hize que se desayunasse mi estrómago de cosa que jamás hombre de mi linage havía comida."[21] To eat well or poorly was an intrinsic individual characteristic, just as was social class. French and Spanish treatises on nobility frequently refer to the relationship between diet and social rank and emphasize its reciprocity: membership in a social class implied a certain type of consumption, but was itself also a product of that consumption."[22] The luxury of the pastry shop is off limits to Luquitas and Alameda's social class. Their transgression demands punishment. Hence, their sustaining lunch is denied them. Food categories, Douglas argues, "encode social events .... If food is treated as a code, the message it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations

[20] González Ollé op. cit., pp. 162-64.
[21] González Ollé op. cit., p. 97.
[22] Massimo, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.

being expressed."[23] Here, the master, Salzedo, both represents and celebrates social discrimination. He denies his servants both their need for and pleasure of food. The parallelism between food and society, between the hierarchies of foods and of men, was firmly rooted in the culture and image of power. Luquitas and Alameda enter into the pastry shop and steal what they cannot afford. In return, Salzedo denies them what they need. McMahon asserts that, "Inappropriate consumption of food was regarded not simply as an affront to good taste, but a threat to the order of the state."[24] Salzedo, by punishing the servants, suppresses the threat that his servants pose.

In the third *paso* I will discuss, "La generosa paliza," the amo, Dalagón, accuses his servants of stealing his turrón and wrongfully punishes all of them only to find his turrón later where he had last placed it. Realizing his mistake, he offers to share his turrón with all, however, instead of accepting the offer, the four servants, led by the most marginal character, Gascón, rise up against their master, and generously beat him as he had beaten them. Here, as in the other *pasos*, the culture of ostentation and waste coexist with that of hunger. The two are intertwined and emphasize the contrasting expression of different social and cultural categories. "Real hunger," Montanari explains, "was unknown to the privileged classes, but not the fear of it ...peasant society too knew moments of squander: on important holidays and to celebrate the principal rites of passage."[25] In "La generosa paliza," the antithesis of abundance and scarcity comes together in the form of the turrón. First, a sweet food item like turrón is abundant among the upper class, while scarce among lower class. Second, the master believes his turrón has been stolen and accuses all his servants of confiscating it, hence, the abundance/scarcity dichotomy has shifted. But, when he realizes his mistake and tries to offer this same turrón as recompense for his errors, the servants refuse. For them, the turrón is a symbol of the senseless and excessive abuse they continually endure. It represents a subsystem of a larger cultural system that controls them and from which they wish to be free. In both "La generosa paliza" and "Los criados," the masters seek to control their servants using food as the point of obedience. Here, the paso ends

[23] Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," *Daedalus* 101 (1972): p. 61.

[24] Elise-Noël McMahon, "*Gargantua, Pantagruel*, and Renaissance Cooking Tracts: Texts for Consumption." *Neophilologus* 76 (1992): p. 191.

[25] Montanari, op. cit. p. 96.

with the servants uprising against their master, suggesting rebellion as an alternative to the control being imposed on them.

**Postre**

In conclusion then, Lope de Rueda uses food in several ways. He reveals its function of fulfilling primary needs and its relationship to other primary needs, such as sex. He demonstrates the complexities between food and social systems. As a final note of interest, food points to the notion of consumption not only biologically, but also economically. There is a direct relationship between the consumption of food and the consumption of the text as a commodity.[26] As a writer, director and actor for the stage, Lope de Rueda was able to control his work more than later playwrights who had to give up their text to directors and actors. The rapidly changing economic infrastructure forced distance between all involved in theater; however, the printed text facilitates a direct relation between poet and consumer. His *pasos* are his sustenance. To a larger extent, the theater is Lope de Rueda's meat and potatoes.

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[26] Cookbooks, of course, are a central connection between food and the written word. Largely, sixteenth-century cookbooks were an imprinting and circulation of manuscript manuals from Middle Ages. Discourse of cookery both produces and constrains a mixture —the identity of the dish is determined by key ingredients, but that very determination opens the dish to variations potentially infinite. There is no one fixed meaning in cookbooks; values shift as in a marketplace. Writing of recipes broke the absolute dependence of transmission of culinary knowledge through apprenticeship. For an intriguing article on the ties between the consumption of food and literature see, McMahon, op. cit.