

SOCIAL BOUNDARIES: THE LEXICOGRAPHIC EVOLUTION OF SPANISH HOUSEHOLD SPIRITS IN DISCOURSE

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Abstract: This paper constructs a diachronic analysis of the lexicography of the term denoting the Spanish household spirit, the *duende*, focusing on the period between approx. 1490 and 1791. I aim to analyse the linguistic path of the household deity in discourse, in order to see how its depiction has changed. The evolution of the being reflects upon the social perception of the spirit, but also upon societal changes. Cultural associations readily available to the authors of the dictionaries under analysis reveal themselves in the alternation between “low-brow”, folkloric beliefs, and the “high-brow”, learned representations of these beliefs. The many facets of the lexicographic entry help create the discourse surrounding the *duende*, which is essential for the making of a folkloric being. Particularly, the *duende* is a “small god,” as coined by Michael Ostling, denoting pagan deities that survived the transition towards Christianity through novel interpretations, mostly demonic or classical.

Keywords: *duende*, diachronic lexicography, demonology, small gods, folklore

1. Introduction

This paper presents a diachronic analysis of the Spanish household spirit, the *duende*, from the perspective of historical lexicography. In particular, by drawing the path taken by dictionaries from the late fifteenth century (approximately 1490), until the late-eighteenth century (approximately 1791), one can analyse the societal transformations of the period. The historical development of the dictionary is paralleled by cultural transformations, which mark several stages in lexicography. The *duende* is the object of my paper because of its fundamentally pagan, pre-Christian roots, which progressed into a folkloric relevance as the spirit gained new meanings through use in discourse. Moreover, the word *duende* is heavily attested in the language, with roots in an earlier, reduced form (*duen*), dating from the mid-eleventh century. This early form did not, however, carry the meaning of household spirit, but rather of master/owner of the house. As the form stabilised into *duende*, it gathered the meaning of spirit in the mid-fifteenth century in a series of texts, mostly covering religious topics.

As significant tools in the construction of discourse, dictionaries allow one to understand the mentality of a cultural space and time. As Fernando Lara put it, dictionaries are cultural artefacts that “manifest the lexical memory of the linguistic community” (Lara 1996: 252), because they act as proof of intelligibility for all members’ verbal activity. Since the dictionary justifies and validates use (Lara 1996: 252), it is a fundamental tool in the attribution of traits and of establishing a cross-linguistic network of approaches towards small gods like the *duende*.

I aim to articulate a lexicographic and cultural approach to the household spirit, as representative of the popular beliefs which came to be presented and constructed in

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“high-brow” contexts, such as dictionaries and treaties. As such, there may be a dissonance in depictions, depending on what the background of the authors was and what particular aspect they wanted to highlight. My paper will establish the relevance of the lexicographic analysis, in an interdisciplinary approach that, through sociocultural instruments, will determine how the Spanish household spirit evolved, on the backdrop of the Spanish Golden Age.

In order to identify instances of occurrence and to track the lexicographic evolution of the term, I have made use of corpus tools such as the Diachronic Corpus of Spanish (CORDE) and the New Lexicographic Thesaurus of Spanish (NTLLE). In what concerns the methodological understanding of the spirit, I shall approach the *duende* from the viewpoint proposed by Michael Ostling. Ostling coined the category of “small gods” in order to refer to deities that inhabit the margins of Christendom, positioning themselves in a delicate middle ground between a “demonic taxonomy” and the “ephemeral mists of folk belief” (Ostling 2018: 3), which allows for novel interpretations of the social geography of a certain space. However, defining the ‘small god’ is no easy task, because, due to its ambiguous description, numerous creatures can fall under this umbrella: Ostling mentions the Scottish brownies, the Polish *skrzatowie*, the French *follets*, and to his proposals one can add many more, such as the Romanian *spiriduș*, the English Robin Goodfellow, and even the Spanish *duende*. Attempting to identify the common thread uniting all these beings is no mean feat, as they are heavily dependent on the context of appearance and on what liberties the spirits were allowed according to their cultural representations in history. For instance, the *duende* teeters between dismissal as a “vulgar” belief and outright condemnation as a demonic¹ spirit, depending on what aspects the author of a given text most wanted to underline.

Ostling presents two definitions of the “small god” proposed by other researchers. One such definition was given by Katherine Briggs, not for small gods, but for fairies: they are “a race of creatures, either superhuman or slightly sub-human who are neither gods nor, strictly speaking, ghosts and who have much in common with humanity, but who differ from men in their powers, properties and attributes” (Briggs 1978: 27). Another definition is proposed by Catherine Tucker, concerning the *angeles de tierra* (angels of the earth) of Honduras: they are “generous but easily annoyed spirits” (Tucker 2012: 115). Fundamentally, Ostling defines ‘small gods’ through two necessary but not sufficient conditions: contestation and demonization. This is because the small gods were found within the framework of a world religion that aims to “condemn, contest, or marginalize continued belief in ‘small gods’ among some adherents of the world religion in question” (Ostling 2018: 10). Thus, their survival is due to their nature as “minor preternatural beings,” (Ostling 2018: 15) and not as part of the major pre-Christian pantheons.

¹ A relevant mention concerns the use of the term “demon”, in the philological context of the era. The *duende* received traits of demons as seen in the Christian worldview, making it into an evil and dangerous creature. However, it is closer in nature to the etymologically-related Greek *daimon*, which were “figures of the middle realm, neither quite transcendent Gods nor quite physical humans” (Hillman 1983: 55). The *daimon* is understood as fate, as “a force that drives man forward where no agent can be named” (Burkert 1985: 180). It also makes an appearance in Plato’s Symposium, where Socrates learns from the priestess Diotima that Love is “is a great spirit (*daimon*) and like all spirits he is intermediate between the divine and the mortal,” mediating between gods and men (Plato Jowett 2013).

While the veneration of great gods was either forgotten or transformed into somewhat more orthodox practices aimed at an appropriate saintly figure, minor deities and nature spirits were not as easily removed (Ostling 2018: 16). They underwent several processes of “survival-in-vanishing” (Ostling 2018: 22) throughout their history. One of these is demonization, by way of gaining devilish traits or becoming closer in representation to devils and other evil spirits, even though they may originally have been ambivalent. What is important in demonization is that, by attributing these traits, they are unwittingly being given relevance, albeit a negative one. Another is neutralisation, a form of minimisation that ensures the small gods are not perceived as a danger, by attributing human traits such as eating, sleeping or marrying. Converting them into superstition is another such process, making the belief in small gods typical of the uneducated, rural masses (Ostling 2018: 22-43). In the case of the *duende*, such strategies are very common, both in lexicographic sources and in literary ones. The *duende* is a spirit defined by its presence in a dominant cultural environment that attempts to condemn and exclude it. Therefore, given the time period and the sociocultural idiosyncrasies of the Iberian Peninsula, I need to add another process that has aided in the survival of the *duende*, namely classicisation. The learned authors of the time focused on the Latin legacy of the spirit, and they portrayed it as a descendent, if not an outright vessel of Roman deities such as the *lares*. The literati responsible for the representation of the *duende* wrote “high-brow” texts, aimed at a learned audience that would easily understand even unspoken philological references. The fact that the texts not only depict but construct the entity is highly relevant. The discourse around a “low-brow”, popular spirit is fundamental in its representation because the spirit is volatile, not tethered to any one interpretation. The processes of demonization, humanisation, minimisation, or even classicisation are what determine the traits it receives.

2. Landmarks in Spanish lexicography

The lexicographic history of Spanish spans centuries, and it has its origins in Latin glossography and in manuscripts with explanatory marginalia. The first glosses appear, and for Spanish these are the *Glosas Emilianenses* and the *Glosas Silenses*, dating from approx. the tenth or eleventh century. They are the first written testimonies of Old Castilian (Medina Guerra 2020: 156), the early variant of Spanish spoken from the tenth century until the fifteenth century. They both emerged from convents, the former from the convent of San Millán de la Cogolla, and the latter from the Abbey of Santo Domingo de Silos, and accompanied religious texts.

There are four main stages that can be identified within Spanish lexicography. The first, tributary to the profound influence of Latin, is that of multilingual dictionaries of Latin, eventually allowing Spanish to take precedence. This period spans the late fifteenth century, and the dictionaries are marked by the desire to make Latin more understood by the readership. The second stage is that of multilingual dictionaries of common tongues, where vernacular languages were translated amongst themselves, with no Latin input. It is marked by an increase in trade and a decrease in the use of Latin as international language, therefore making the study of other languages necessary. This period has its

origins in the early sixteenth century, and peaks throughout the seventeenth century². The third stage is that of monolingual etymological dictionaries, which begins in the early seventeenth century. In this period, the authors attempted to justify the “noble” origin of Spanish in whichever way possible. They invented etymologies and connections with Latin, Greek, and eventually Hebrew, which was considered the original language from which all others had emerged. Even so, the first etymological dictionaries were a precursor to the fourth stage, that of monolingual explanatory dictionaries, which coincided with the dawn of the Spanish Royal Academy, in the first third of the eighteenth century (Medina Guerra 2020: 162-250). The *duende* is present all throughout the four lexicographic stages, registering entries even in the earliest dictionaries³.

3. The *duende* in dictionaries

The first stage begins with the first vocabulary of Latin and Spanish, the *Universal vocabulario en latín y romance*, written by the humanist lexicographer and court secretary Alfonso de Palencia (1423–1492) in 1490. Palencia’s dictionary was commissioned by the Catholic Monarchs, in particular Isabel I (1451–1504), as is said in the prologue of the work:

La muy excelente señora doña ysabel Reyna de Castilla: & de leon: de aragon: & de siçilia [...] que por ma[n]dado de su tan notable alteça Alfonso de Pale[n]cia cronista delos fechos de españa tomasse cargo de interp[re]tar los vocablos dela le[n]gua Latina segu[n]d la declaraçion del vulgar castellano (q[ue] se dize Romance).⁴ (De Palencia 1490: fol. Iv)

The prologue also gives explanations to the reasoning behind Palencia’s work, aside from having been commissioned by Queen Isabel. The author aims to improve the people’s knowledge of Latin, seeing as “la gra[n]d dificultad q[ue] incurre[n] los de españa mediana me[n]te p[ri]ncipiados en la latinidad⁵” (De Palencia 1490: fol. I), come when they try to understand unknown Latin words through other unknown Latin words, without having an equivalent in their mother tongue, Castilian. This reasoning explains the structure of the dictionary: it is made up of two columns, the left in Latin and the right

² This is not to say that there are no other multilingual dictionaries between vernacular languages, but for the purpose of this study, those published during the Early Modern period will be the focus.

³ The *duende*’s history in the language is anterior to the onset of lexicography. I have identified its first occurrence, in an anterior shortened form, *duen*, in a donation made to the Abbey of Santo Domingo de Silos, dating from 1056. Initially it bore the meaning of master/owner of the house, and only gathered the meaning of spirit in the mid-fifteenth century. For a more detailed view on the etymological evolution of the *duende*, see Ionescu (forthcoming).

⁴ Translation: The very excellent Lady Isabel Queen of Castile and of León of Aragón and of Sicily [...] that through commission of her notable Highness Alfonso de Palencia chronicler of the events of Spain take charge of interpreting words in Latin according to the statement of vulgar Castilian (which is called Romance). The transcription reflects the original spelling, punctuation and capital letters.

⁵ Translation: The great difficulty faced by those of Spain, halfway beginners in Latinity.

in Castilian. Effectively, it is a translated monolingual dictionary, where the Spanish column is a non-literal translation of the Latin one (Medina Guerra 2020: 165).

The *duende* appears thrice in the *Universal Vocabulario*, yet in all of them it is in close correlation with the Roman *lares*, the household deity of the Romans. The *duende* is portrayed as a direct inheritor of the *lares*, to such an extent that they seem to completely overlap in depictions. Palencia even says that “*lar* means *duende* among the pagans” (de Palencia 1490: fol. CCXXXVr), which summarises the extent to which the *duende* becomes a *lar*. This is the first instance of a classicising approach to the *duende*, by attributing all the characteristics of the *lares*: celebrations in honour of them, Compitalia, position in the community, as defence against enemies, and even role as household deity or god of the fatherland. However, that is not the only underlying process. By mention of the pagans which believed in the *duende*, Palencia is trying to minimise the hold this spirit may have had on people, by making it appear less dangerous, even distant.

The *lares* are however not the only Roman spirits that come into association with the *duende*. The two most relevant dictionaries of this first stage followed Palencia’s by only two years. Antonio de Nebrija (1444 –1522) first published the *Diccionario latino-español* in 1492, and the dictionary acted as a “manifest of Humanism” (Medina Guerra 2020: 168). In Nebrija’s interpretation, the *lares* are not *duendes*, but rather their own entities, familiar gods of the home and hearth (Nebrija 1492: fol. 89). That does not mean that there is no Latin legacy to be found. The *incubus* is defined “*por el duen de casa*” (Nebrija 1495: fol. 79). This is the first lexicographic instance of a demonic Latin legacy. The *incubus* is a demon that takes a male form to seduce women, that has deep roots in Christian demonology. However, unlike the *lares*, the *incubi* make up a very different register. While the *lares* are undoubtedly benign beings, within a high register, having festivals, celebrations, altars and worshippers, the *incubi* are far from that. Unlike the *lares*, which did not have many, if any, believers left at the end of the fifteenth century, the *incubi* were very present and constituted a danger. So much so, that in 1484 Pope Innocent VIII penned the bull *Summis desiderantes affectibus* (Desiring with Supreme Ardor), tackling the topic of witchcraft. Within it there is mention of how “many persons of both sexes, heedless of their own salvation and forsaking the catholic faith, give themselves over to devils male and female”, which caused the death of children, livestock, and of the harvest (Burr 1896). For such a bull to be emitted mere years before the publishing of Nebrija’s work shows that the cultural environment was tense, and the *incubi* were a very real danger.

This approach continues in Nebrija’s second dictionary, the *Vocabulario español-latino*, which was published approx. in 1495. The exact date is unknown but the inclusion of terms, such as *canoa*, originating from Native American languages suggests that the discovery of the New World had already happened (Medina Guerra 2020: 169). The true relevance of the *Vocabulario* is in the fact that it is the first dictionary to start from a vulgar language into Latin, unlike the *Diccionario* or the *Universal Vocabulario*. This meant that Spanish was given equal consideration as source language, sparking the first steps towards vernacular lexicography. The *duende* also makes an appearance in Nebrija’s second dictionary, following the tone set by the first. The first edition speaks of *drasgo de casa*, meaning *incubus*, while the 1516 edition expands on the definition, explaining the *duen de casa* through *incubus*, *succubus*, *dusius* (de Nebrija 1516). While the *incubus* and

succubus were to be expected, the *dusius* seems to be an unusual presence. However, it had made a previous appearance even in Palencia's *Universal Vocabulario*, within the entry for *incubus*. Here it is specified that *incubus* was what the French called *dusios*. (de Palencia 1490: fol. CCVIIIr) In fact, the *dusii* were Celtic minor divinities, a sort of small god, known to seek "the couches of women in order to satisfy their desires" (Macculloch 1911: 356).

The second stage of Spanish lexicography continues the tradition of 'translating' the *duende* into another entity that would highlight certain traits, only between vernacular languages instead of Latin and a common tongue. The main shift from the previous stage to this one may not be immediately noticeable due to the relatively short time difference, only a matter of decades, but it has to do with the "modernity" of the writings. The transition from the medieval period towards the Renaissance was marked by the need to renew the necessary materials to teach languages, Latin in particular. Antonio de Nebrija's works were essential in this transition, as they formed the base of the first dictionaries of common tongues (Medina Guerra 2020: 178). Of these, there is first dictionary of Andalusian Arabic-Spanish, the *Vocabulista arávigo en letra castellana*, written by Friar Pedro de Alcalá and published in 1505. The Castilian nomenclature is taken almost directly from Nebrija's (Medina Guerra 2020:178), but one significant aspect is that the Arabic terms are not represented in the Arabic alphabet but in the Latin alphabet. While this was mostly due to printing restraints, it is incredibly useful for identifying the real pronunciation of the Nasrid dialect, not of classical Arabic. However, the imperfect system of transliteration can give way to misinterpretations (Vidal Castro 2008: 331).

The *Vocabulista* registers both the headword *duendecasa* and the headword *drasgo de casa*⁶, translating them both as *vâmár a dár*, meaning house djinn (Corriente et al. 2017). This is an instance of cultural equivalence, where by the "translation" of a spirit into the target culture names and specific functions become less relevant. Instead, both participants in the equivalence come to occupy a middle ground where all relevant aspects overlap. This is the case in all dictionaries from this stage, regardless of linguistic combinations, and even reaching outside the European environment, as proven already by Alcalá. For instance, English Hispanist Richard Percival (1550–1620), in his 1591 dictionary of Spanish, English, and Latin, defines *drasgo de casa* as "Robin Goodfellow, Incubus" (Percival 1591). Aside from the *incubus*, Percival also mentions an English small god. Robin Goodfellow is a nature sprite associated with the hearth and home, occasionally helping with household chores, but having a deep mischievous streak. It also has a profound presence in the language, with the *OED* identifying its first occurrences in texts written by the biblical scholar William Tyndale (c. 1494–c. 1536), such as *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, in 1528. The context is that of the similarities between the Pope and Robin Goodfellow, saying that "The Pope is kin to Robin Goodfellow which sweepeth the house, washeth the dishes and purgeth all by night. But when day cometh

⁶ The term *drasgo de casa* seems to be a peculiarity of Nebrija's, who due to his relevance influenced other lexicographers such as Pedro de Alcalá, Richard Percyvall, and Juan Palet. It may have later become *trasgo*, another name for the duende, which has an unknown etymology, potentially connected to the serpentine *drago* (Corominas & Pascual 1983: 610).

there is nothing found clean” (Tyndale 2000: 174). The ambivalent nature of Robin Goodfellow makes for a perfect correspondent of the *duende*, allowing for a near one-to-one cultural transposition. Another similar type of ambivalent spirit appears in Juan Palet’s dictionary of Spanish and French from 1604, where the *duende* is defined as *luiton, esprit de nuit*. The *luiton* is none other than the French *lutin*, another type of goblin or house-spirit, from the mythology of Normandy (Brewer 1905).

However, not only ambivalent, mostly harmless spirits come into play in this stage. For instance, alongside the multiple references to *incubi* and *succubi*, as well as other Latin demonic spirits like the *larvae* and *lemures*, there are mentions of impure creatures from other cultures. One instance is the 1617 dictionary of Latin, Spanish, and English written by John Minsheu (1560–1627). While influenced by Richard Percival’s dictionary, which he even helped expand (Percival & Minsheu 1623), there are clear differences in approach. Here the *duende* is not defined as Robin Goodfellow, but as “a wicked spirit, a Hobgoblin” in English and “larva, lar, spiritus impurus” in Latin. (Minsheu 1617) However, even the hobgoblin is an ambiguous spirit: while the *goblin* is generally understood to be evil and malicious, even hostile towards people, the *hobs* and *lobs* are “on the whole friendly towards men and ready to be kind to those who treat them civilly” (Briggs 1978: 8). Hobgoblins seem to be another name for Robin Goodfellow, Robin Hood, and Puck, the half domestic fairy positioned between a Brownie and a Will o’ the Wisp (Briggs 1978: 199).

The third stage of Spanish lexicography is that of the first great monolingual repertoires, based on shorter glossaries of specialised terms, from subjects such as architecture, botany, law, engineering and more (Medina Guerra 2020: 208). Following the European push for the defence of national languages, a movement begins that tries to dignify the common languages by insisting on their “noble” origins. This meant forcing a Latin or Greek etymology, even when it could not be justified. Simultaneously, beyond the association with Latin and Greek, there was the underlying monogenetic hypothesis, of Hebrew’s position as original language of humanity. This was what Umberto Eco called “the etymological furore”⁷, the presumption of Hebrew’s purity as opposed to other languages, which allows for the interpretation of all existing languages as being derived from Hebrew roots (Eco 1995: 80-85).

During the early seventeenth century, the literati began to show interest in the vulgar language, not only in an attempt to understand the words, but also to know and prove its origin. This is precisely why the first monolingual dictionaries in Spain were etymological in nature (Medina Guerra 2020: 216). There are two etymological dictionaries of Spanish, published between a year of each other (1610 and 1611), and they both reflect on multiple facets of the *duende*, while also presenting their own differences that will influence lexicography in the following centuries.

The first is an etymological dictionary written in 1610 by the medic and humanist lexicographer Francisco del Rosal (c. 1537 – c. 1613). Rosal does not register a separate entry for *duende*, but it does register one for *duenda*, the adjective meaning ‘tame’, defining it as “cosa casera o de casa y palomas duendas y Duende o Trasgo Demonio

⁷ The citation of Eco’s concept is also briefly referenced in Medina Guerra 2020: 216, but without the subsequent explanation.

Casero, de Dua, q[ue] es la casa”⁸ (del Rosal 1610: fol. 243) The proposed etymology is the Arabic root *dua*, indicating a connection of the *duenda*, and implicitly of the *duende*, to the space of the house.

The second, and arguably the most relevant dictionary in what concerned the development of late modern dictionaries and of the Spanish Royal Academy, is the *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* written by Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco (1539–1613) in 1611. As can be deduced from the year of publishing, the *Tesoro* was written during Covarrubias’ last years, and that is the reason why the entries corresponding to the first three letters of the alphabet are much more ample than the rest of the work, leading to an imbalance. The dictionary is encyclopaedic and anecdotic in nature and represents the earliest intents of true monolingual lexicography in Spain and in Europe. Despite being written with the purpose of establishing noteworthy etymologies for Spanish words, the value of the etymologies pales in comparison to the external value of the work as recompilation of words, phrases, idioms, and corresponding explanations (Medina Guerra 2020: 221).

As such, given the *duende*’s proximity to the beginning of the alphabet, its ample entry should not come as a surprise. It is portrayed as a spirit of those that fell alongside Lucifer, spirits which took up residence in the elements, in the air and on earth. The *duende* inhabited caves and mountains, taking fantastical forms to scare people. He goes on to add that, during the last days of this world, the *duende* would join the Antichrist in war, luring the avaricious with the promise of great treasures, only for the treasures to turn to coal when discovered, thus ensuring the Devil’s possession of their soul. Covarrubias comments that the name of the *duende* is close to the Latin *genii*, *larvae*, *lemures*, *lares*, each of these names competing for different aspects of the spirit. For this reason, he adds, it is that the word *duende* is used, as it is a truncated form of the phrase *duendes de casa*, in turn coming from *dueños de casa*, meaning master or owner of the house (Covarrubias 1611: 329-330).

For each of the many aspects described, there is a correspondent in the philological culture typical of the literati, of learned authors with a shared background that would allow even obscure references to shine clear. The fallen angels and the end days of the world are clearly biblical in nature, the Latin spirits underline Covarrubias’ ample philological culture, while the mention of different natural elements within which the angels stopped may well be connected to works by philosophers such as Paracelsus (1493–1531). The alchemist’s treatise on “Nymphs, Sylphs, Pygmies and Salamanders, and on the Other Spirits” was published posthumously in 1566, and details the nature of elemental beings and their position in the Christian worldview, representing pygmies as related to the element of earth and as the category the *duende* belongs to. Paracelsus even has a proposal for how elemental spirits may have survived, which rings especially true in the context of small gods and their adaptations to fit within a Christian framework:

Christianity had a difficult task in overcoming the ancient gods. Its monotheism was too austere for the common man, and soon the Christian heaven was populated

⁸ Translation: Homely thing or of the home and tame doves and *duende* or *trasgo* house demon, from *dua*, which is the home.

with angels and saints, many of whom had taken over the functions and attributes of ancient gods. [...] Christianity succeeded in dethroning the major gods of paganism or in filling their place with its own saints, but it had no substitute to offer for the elemental spirits, for all those minor deities and demons that were so close to man in his everyday life. [...] If you dropped a piece of buttered bread, why was it that it usually fell to the ground with the buttered side down? Was it not logical to assume that this was a practical joke of some goblin? And so, the ancient spirits of nature survived the twilight of paganism. (Sigerist 1941: 217-218)

Covarrubias' dictionary was undoubtedly significant for its era, but its great relevance may lie in its legacy. Based on the framework established in the *Tesoro*, the fourth stage of Spanish lexicography of explanatory monolingual dictionaries could begin. The Spanish Royal Academy had its first registered meeting in 1713, and that is also when they began planning the first dictionary of the Spanish language, the *Diccionario de Autoridades* [= Dictionary of Authorities] (García de la Concha 2014). Even from the dictionaries prologue, the homage brought to Covarrubias is clear:

Es evidente que à este Autor se le debe la glória de haver dado principio à obra tan grande, que ha servido à la Académia de clara luz en la confusa obscuridad de empresa tan insigne; pero à este sabio Escritor no le fué facil agotar el dilatado Océano de la Léngua Española, por la multitud de sus voces.⁹ (*Aut.* 1726-1739)

However, more than just mentioning the *Tesoro*, the prologue also gives a clear depiction of the aims of the dictionary. The *Autoridades* was to be a “copious and exact” dictionary that would restore “the grandeur and power of the language,” seen as a means by which one could express themselves as equally well as in “the principal languages in which the arts and sciences had flourished” (*Aut.* 1726-1739), referring to Italian or French, which already had dictionaries published by their own national Academies. Moreover, the Prologue speaks to the purpose of the Royal Academy, which was to “cultivate and settle the purity and elegance of the Castilian language, dismissing all errors which were introduced in its words [...] by ignorance, vain affectation, carelessness and the excessive freedom to innovate” (*Aut.* 1726-1739). The Academy's solution for these aims lies in the very title of the dictionary – the *autoridades* in the dictionary are to be authorities in the language, renowned authors who embellished the language with their work, and which are cited in each dictionary entry. By having authoritative figures to rely on, the dictionary completes its purpose as judge of correctness in the language, validating use (Lara 196: 252). The quotes from the authorities also act as real proof and instance of usage in the language. This may lead us to think that the *Autoridades* is fundamentally a prescriptivist work, but in fact it is more of a descriptive dictionary. This is because it includes terms from non-standard

⁹ Translation: It is obvious that to this Author we owe the glory of having begun such a vast work, that has served as clear light to the Academy in the confusing darkness of such an illustrious undertaking; but this wise Writer did not with ease exhaust the expansive Ocean of the Spanish Language, due to its multitude of words.

vocabulary, such as dialectal words, terms under some sociolinguistic restriction, specialised or antiquated vocabulary, etc. (Medina Guerra 2020: 238-243).

As such, one can easily draw parallels between the prologues and aims of Palencia and of Nebrija centuries prior, except that the humanist scholars turned their attention towards Latin, not the common tongue. Nevertheless, the desire to polish and restore to former glory a language is as common in the fifteenth century as it is in the seventeenth. What these aspects mean for the issue of the *duende* is that the entry attempts to be as rigorous as possible, identifying usage in context, etymology, and even phraseological usages.

The definition of the first entry for the *duende* states that it is “a species of *trasgo* or demon, which due to normally infesting houses, is called this way. It may be derived from the word *Duar*, which in Arabic means house”. It specifies that the Latin equivalent is *larvae*, *lemures*, and gives two contexts of appearance. The first is in *Guzmán de Alfarache*, a picaresque novel written by Mateo Alemán and published in two parts, in 1599 and 1604. The quote is “Me dixo que era tierra de muchos duendes, y que eran amigos de la luz, y en los aposentos obscúros algunas veces eran perjudiciales” (He told me this was land of many *duendes*, and they were enemies of the light and in darkened chambers they were sometimes dangerous.). The second quote is a 1624 sonnet written by Lope de Vega entitled “Había duende en una casa y amaneció preñada una doncella” [= There was a duende in a house and a damsel awoke pregnant]. The exact quote is “Dispútase por hombres entendidos/Si fue de los caídos este duende”¹⁰ (*Aut.* III 1732).

From the very beginning the demonic nature of the *duende* is highlighted, as well as its connection to the space of the house, as specified by Covarrubias. However, the *Autoridades* presents the same etymology as Rosal, connecting the *duende* to Arabic. The choice of Latin equivalents is also distinctly demonic, as while there is mention of *larvae* and *lemures*, there is none of *lares* or other more benign spirits. The demonic interpretation continues in the first quote, as the more ample context of Alemán’s novel speaks of enormous and dangerous bats swooping in at night, only deterred by the light. This also seems to be the case of the *duende*, that inhabits darkened corners and prefers to stay out of the light. The second authoritative use of the language, Lope de Vega’s poem, tackles the same issue as presented by Antonio de Nebrija in his dictionaries, namely the *duende*’s actions of seducing women, who then fall pregnant. While Nebrija took the matter of the *incubus* quite seriously, as did highly relevant figures such as the Pope, Lope de Vega makes light of the situation. In the poem, it is the cutting voice of a disbelieving man, speaking of a woman, Filena, who awoke pregnant, citing night-time visits from a *duende*. In this case, it cannot be said that it is an instance of demonization, but rather that it is minimisation by complete disregard of any supernatural abilities the *duende* may have.

A significant aspect, however, is that at no point in the definition do the lexicographers try to give any characteristics of those who might believe in the *duende*. There is no mention of pagans or of superstitious believers, but this will be changed in the subsequent editions. In fact, the *Diccionario de Autoridades*, while being the perfect springboard for modern lexicography, gave way to the first “true” dictionaries of the

¹⁰ Translation: It is disputed amongst wise men/ If this *duende* was of the fallen.

Spanish language, the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española (DRAE)*. The 1780 edition is the first to be published, but it is a reduced form of the *Autoridades*, with the authoritative citations removed for easier consulting. The edition from 1791, however, changes the lack of terms defining believers, by starting the definition of the *duende* in the following manner: “espíritu que el vulgo cree que infesta las casas y travesea, causando en ellas ruidos y estruendos”¹¹ (*DRAE*₃ 1791). Starting from this point, the *duende* is associated with a specific category of people, the uneducated masses, effectively ensuring that the spirit would become nothing more than another old wives’ tale, and removing any latent power it may have had. What is interesting is that the *vulgo* will remain a part of the definition of the *duende* until the *DRAE*’s 1992 edition, when it is finally removed, leaving behind “espíritu fantástico del que se dice que habita en algunas casa y que travesea. Aparece con figura de viejo o de niño en las narraciones tradicionales”¹² (*DRAE*₂₁ 1992) At this point, the *vulgo* is removed because it had already fulfilled its role – the *duende* had become a fantastical spirit known only in folk stories, a being in which not even the uneducated masses believed.

4. Conclusions

Overall, throughout the lexicographic history of the *duende*, a certain circularity prevails. In 1490 Palencia warned of the pagans who believed in the *duendes*, only for the late 1800s to find the Spanish Royal Academy making those same claims, not of pagan believers but of uneducated masses. Throughout its history, the *duende* has seen demonization under many guises and in many languages, and minimisation in equally as many forms. As such, it survived its depiction as a small god, evolving with the ages and taking whichever shape was assigned to it. One could say that the path of the *duende* is essentially that of lexicography itself, the two running parallel across the history of the Spanish language. From the earliest stages of multilingual Latin dictionaries, through those of vernacular languages, to monolingual etymological and explanatory dictionaries, the different facets of the *duende* are revealed so as to reflect upon what was culturally relevant. Histories of word representations such as that of the *duende* are meant to show that the dictionary truly acts as a repository of language, transcending both prescriptivism and descriptivism and becoming in itself a culturally significant artefact.

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¹¹ Translation: Spirit that the masses believe infests houses and causes mischief, making loud noises.

¹² Translation: Fantastical spirit which is said to inhabit certain homes and cause mischief. Takes the form of an old man or of a boy in traditional stories.

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