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The Liberation of the Galley Slaves and the Ethos of *Don Quijote*' Part I

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Within the essential continuity of the first Part of *Don Quixote* with the second, the two parts exhibit different characteristics, notably, the more polemical and robust nature of the comedy of the former, and the introverted, metafictional character of the latter. In this paper I wish to characterize the comic ethos of the first Part;[1] and for this purpose, propose to examine in some detail

1 In this respect, this article is aligned with others which, in recent years, have centred on the comic in *Don Quixote*' and characterised its ethos: Gorfkle, *Discovering the*' *Comic in* Don Quixote; Redondo, *Otra manera de*' *leer el* Quijote; Iffland, *De*' *fiestas y aguafiestas*…. All these studies consider the subject from the angle of Bakhtinian carnival, supplemented, in Gorfkle's case, by Bakhtin's dialogic concept of the novel. My own does not, because I find the Bakhtinian method of analysis unsatisfactory for a number of reasons: primarily, because it proceeds from the outside in. For example, it applies a standard grid of carnivalesque characteristics to *Don Quixote*: reversal, transgression of normal codes of propriety, the spirit of anti-authoritarian revelry, world-upside-down inversions, ritual death and rebirth, the celebration of the grotesque, sensuous body and frank avowal of base bodily functions, the language of the tavern and the market-place, in order to arrive at the conclusion that they fit perfectly. However, the same grid can be applied with equal success to *Lazarillo de*' *Tormes*, *El Buscón*, and *La pícara Justina*, whose comic systems and spirit are very different from each other and from those of Cervantes; with a little ingenuity, it can be applied to virtually any and every work of comedy, irrespective how tenuous its connection with carnival festivity. In *Don Quixote*'s case, the connection is indeed pretty tenuous, since, if 'carnival' is understood in a specific sense as the three days holiday before Ash Wednesday, or the winter holidays which could be deemed to prefigure it, then there is scarcely any mention of them in the novel. My concern here is to understand how comedy works specifically in *Don Quixote*', not to demonstrate its conformity to a universal archetype. Similar objections to the above can be made of Bakhtin's dialogic theory of the novel, widely applied as a method of analysis in Cervantine criticism and elsewhere.

one of the hero's famous adventures: his liberation of the galley-slaves in *Don Quixote* I, 22.

The comedy of Part I is generated by the recurrent conflicts between the hero and the world around him, designed to ridicule the popular genre of chivalric romances, which have driven him mad to the point of resolving to imitate them. A continuation of the Medieval Lancelot, the genre paints a legendary age of chivalry set typically in misty Breton or Celtic regions not long after the death of Christ, a phantasmagorical world somewhat similar to that of the Lord of the Rings, replete with monsters, bloodthirsty giants, beautiful princesses, damsels-in-distress, enchanters good and evil, castles, tourneys, battles, and in the foreground, heroic knights-errant, who ride through fields and forests in quest of adventure to prove their mettle and win fame.[2] The action of *Don Quixote* turns on the opposition of two juxtaposed perspectives: that of the hero, for whom all that befalls him is in principle a glorious epic like that unfolded by *Amadís de Gaula* and its progeny, and that of Cervantes, the reader, and the sane fictional characters, for whom it is just a series of ordinary events, ruled by natural causality, which cast ridicule on the hero's delusions and the literary genre which inspires them.[3]

Accompanied by a simple-minded peasant from his own village who serves him as squire, the self-styled Don Quijote de la Mancha rides along the highways and through the sierras of southern Castile in search of adventure, interpreting each of his encounters with wayfarers, animals, or mechanical objects as a marvelous adventure like those recounted in *Amadís*, and expecting these third parties to fulfil the imaginary role he has assigned to them. To this insane, arbitrary interruption of their pursuits, they react with rage, blind panic, obtuse non-compliance, or mischievous mockery, as the case may be, typically provoking the choleric madman to heated altercation, then to belligerent action, which results in farcical mayhem and another humiliating reverse for him. The frenetic

2 There is now a good general introduction to the genre, directed at the non-specialist reader: Sales Dasí, *La aventura caballeresca*, and for a more densely documented study, Roubaud-Bénichou, *Le 'Roman de' chevalerie' en Espagne*.

3 The first to pinpoint the dual perspective of the novel was Vicente de los Ríos, in his seminal "Análisis del Quijote," in the preliminaries to the Real Academia Española edition of *'Don Quijote'* (1780), I, 55.

dynamism of these encounters is typical of farce or kindred genres, and presupposes the overthrow of the norms, courtesies, and common-sense assumptions on which civilized co-existence depends.

At the same time, unlike what happens in farce, this anarchy has an archetypal, thought-provoking resonance, which has contributed to the novel's seemingly limitless virtuality of meaning, its capacity to signify different things to different readers and generations, and also to what we might call the postmodernist reading of *Don Quixote*. This has been formulated by the Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes, who claims that the novel begins by being a critique of reading, which then turns into a radical questioning of the ideological premises of its own age. I shall return to this opinion later, merely noting for the moment that it would have bewildered Cervantes, whose explicit pronouncements, so far from confirming it, do not remotely hint at it.[4]

The foregoing characterization of Don Quixote's adventures applies in particular to those of Part I, whose tone is established by the ones clustered in the first twenty two chapters. The adventure of the galley-slaves rounds off this series, and perfectly exemplifies its polemical brand of humor. It begins with a mock-heroic flourish typical of Cervantes's narrative strategy in the novel, a microcosm of his attitude to the subject-matter and to his fictitious chronicler:

> Cuenta Cide Hamete Benengeli, autor arábigo y manchego, en esta gravísima, altisonante, mínima, dulce e imaginada historia, que después que entre el famoso don Quijote de la Mancha y Sancho Panza, su escudero, pasaron aquellas razones que en el fin del capítulo veinte y uno quedan referidas, que don Quijote alzó los ojos y vio que por el camino que llevaba venían hasta doce hombre a pie, ensartados como cuentas en una gran cadena de hierro por los cuellos, y todos con esposas a las manos; venían ansimismo con ellos dos hombres de a caballo y dos de a pie; los de a caballo, con escopetas de rueda, y los de a pie, con dardos y espadas. (I, 22; 235-36)

4 See Fuentes, *Cervantes o la crítica de la lectura*. For a resumé of Cervantes's ideology, see my "Cervantes: pensamiento, personalidad, cultura" in the preliminaries to *Don Quijote*, ed. Rico, lxvii-lxxxvi. Subsequent quotations from the novel refer to this edition, unless otherwise specified.

Benengeli is a manifestly preposterous personage, and at the same time, Cervantes's double; the burlesque mask which he puts on to tell his story. The most plausible etymology of the Arabic name Benengeli is *aberenjenado*: "having the attributes of an aubergine,"[5] befitting the chronicler's Toledan origins, since *berenjenero* was nickname of the inhabitants of Toledo, and also the region of Toledo—specifically his wife's home town Esquivias—where it seems likely that Cervantes lived at the time when he composed this chapter of *Don Quixote* (1601-02?).[6] Intrinsic to Benengeli's absurdity is his contradictoriness: his supposedly truthful and laudatory attitude to his subject is belied by the widely held opinion of the false and disloyal character of the *moriscos*, a community despised by the old Christian majority. This is reflected in the style of the passage, which is at once ironically matched to the hero's assumption that a chronicle of his deeds must necessarily be "gravísima" and "altisonante,"[7] and at the same time, undermines it with flippant casualness, since the next three epithets: "mínima, dulce e imaginada" give the lie to the previous two, by alluding to the real nature of this chronicle, an entertaining work of fiction, full of amusing trifles.[8] Furthermore, the passage is typical of the impartiality with which Cervantes customarily presents the beginnings of the adventures: without identifying or explaining the phenomena, he simply limits himself to noting how the heroes perceive them, an ironic tactic generally designed to enhance the effect of the eventual puncturing of the knight's inflated expectations, and more particularly, in this case, to focus attention on the contrasted reactions of master and squire, leaving the reader to infer who is right and to savor the comic perversity of the

5 An etymology seemingly confirmed by Sancho in *Don Quijote* II, 2; 645, in announcing to his master that the recently published chronicle of his adventures has been published by a Moor named "Cide Hamete Berenjena." On this etymology, see *Don Quijote*, ed. Rodríguez Marín, I, 283.

6 On this, see Canavaggio, 217-19.

7 See the preamble to *Don Quijote* II, where he is reported as thinking "cuando fuese verdad que la tal historia hubiese, siendo de caballero andante, por fuerza había de ser grandílocua, alta, insigne, magnífica y verdadera," an assumption qualified by the fear that "de los moros no se podía esperar verdad alguna, porque todos son embelecadores, falsarios y quimeristas" (II, 3; 646).

8 On the significance of the concept of *menudencias* (or equivalent terms) in *Don Quixote*, see my *Cervantes and the Comic Mind of his Age*, 20, 152, 157-60.

Quixotic view.

As soon as Sancho sees the procession, he states the obvious straight off: "Esta es cadena de galeotes, gente forzada del rey, que va a las galeras" (236). To this Don Quijote replies: "¿Cómo gente forzada... es posible que el rey haga fuerza a ninguna gente?" The question twists the legal sense of "gente forzada del rey," galley-slaves, equivalent to the French *forçats*, into a literal, emotive channel which fits the Quixotic preconception of the chained men as unfortunate victims of duress. Sancho scrupulously corrects this perversion of meaning: "No digo eso... sino que es gente que por sus delitos va condenada a servir al rey en las galeras, de por fuerza». But the knight insists: "comoquiera que ello sea, esta gente, aunque los llevan, van de por fuerza, y no de su voluntad." The phrase "de por fuerza, no de su voluntad" recurs like a refrain later in the adventure, and constitutes the grounds for Don Quijote's intervention: a world-upside-down view of the relation of prisoners to the law underpinned by a casuistical pun.

The Quixotic adventures of Part I, including this one, are saturated with echoes of robustly comic species of previous literature and folklore: farcical interludes and other motifs of theater, *fabliaux* and novellas, popular jests, the picaresque novel. Don Quixote's interrogation of the galley-slaves, which occupies about two-thirds of chapter 22, and has the aim of eliciting from them evidence to confirm his a priori notion of their undeserved ill-fortune, is fundamentally indebted to the genre of farce, particularly to the species which has the form of a burlesque tribunal, such as Cervantes's own *El juez de los divorcios*.[9] But the indebtedness to farce doesn't end there. In the prologue to Cervantes's *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses*, published in 1615, he recalls having seen as a boy performances by Lope de Rueda, the famous dramatist and theater direc-

9 I take tribunal in a broad sense, as referring to any kind of burlesque cross-examination of criminals (e.g. the *paso* by Lope de Rueda quoted below in the text and mentioned in the next note, which ends with an *alguacil* interrogating the two personages), of cranks and misfits (e.g. the anonymous *El hospital de' los podridos*, sometimes attributed to Cervantes, or Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza's *Miser Palomo*), of petitioners and plaintiffs (e.g. the anonymous *Entremés de' Mazalquivir*, dating from the late sixteenth century), of candidates for an election (e.g. Cervantes's *La elección de' los alcaldes de' Daganzo*). On the reasons for the popularity of this kind of farce, see Asensio, 85-88 and 114-17.

tor active in the mid-sixteenth century, and remembers his excellence in several farcical roles: ruffian, negress, fool, Basque and others. In one of Lope's *pasos*, a thieving braggart (Madrigalejo) boasts about past exploits to a skeptical lackey (Molina), who challenges him to deny that he once suffered the ignominy of being given a hundred lashes as a thief. The dialogue proceeds thus:

> MADRIGALEJO: ¿Contaron vuestras mercedes los azotes que me dieron?
> MOLINA: ¿Para qué se habían de contar?
>
> [...]
>
> MADRIGALEJO: Pues voto a tal, que no daba vez vuelta o corcovo con el cuerpo que no le echase el verdugo un azote de clavo. Mire vuestra merced si es ciento si no fueron más de quince de menos.
> MOLINA: No hay duda de que es ansí.
> MADRIGALEJO: Pues ¿cómo se puede dezir que me dieron cien azotes, faltando al pie de veinte? Tampoco lo quel hombre no sufre por su voluntad no se puede llamar afrenta. Comparación: ¿qué se me da a mí que llamen a uno cornudo, si la bellaquería está en su mujer, sin ser él consentidor?
> MOLINA: Tenéis razón.
> MADRIGALEJO: Pues ¿qué afrenta recibo yo que me azoten, si es contra mi voluntad y por fuerza?[10]

This comic casuistry, and particularly the last few words, must have stuck in young Cervantes's mind because years later he adapted them to his own purposes in the galley-slaves adventure. He also exploits a kind of verbal humor which occurs in several *pasos* by Lope, arising either from the situation in which novice thieves ask an old lag to explain the meaning of criminal slang to them, or alternatively, that in which the fool

10 Rueda, *Pasos*, 174-75. This is the fourth *paso* of the *Registro de representantes*, which includes some authentically by Lope de Rueda, including this one, and others which are contemporary, without being his.

takes in a literal sense euphemistic allusions to shameful punishments to be inflicted on his nearest and dearest, like being pilloried, whipped, tortured, and assumes they refer to honors that will be conferred upon them.[11] Don Quixote's interrogation of the galley-slaves is based on both kinds of double-entendre. When he asks the first convict the reason for his punishment he is surprised to learn that it is merely because this individual was *enamorado*. The convict goes on to explain what the nature of this love was: "quise tanto a una canasta de colar, atestada de ropa blanca, que la abracé conmigo tan fuertemente, que a no quitármela la justicia por fuerza, aún hasta agora no la hubiera dejado de mi voluntad" (237). Note the mocking echo of the Don Quixote's dichotomy "de por fuerza" / "de su voluntad," and also the parody of his sentimental conception of the villains as unfortunate victims.

Another genre from which Cervantes draws inspiration is the newly established picaresque novel, effectively launched by the massively popular *Guzmán de Alfarache* by Mateo Alemán, published in two parts, in 1599 and 1604 respectively. To go into Cervantes's ambivalent relation to

11 See, in the same edition (295-303), the second *paso* of *Registro de representantes*, included in an appendix amongst those of doubtful authenticity. In it, the experienced thief Cazorla explains the meaning of criminal slang to two novices, Salinas and Buitrago: "Estad atentos, hijos míos. Nosotros los cursados ladrones, llamamos a los zapatos, calcurros, a las calzas, tirantes, al jubón, justo …," etcétera (298). See also the fifth *paso* of *El deleitoso* (146-53) where two thieves intercept a *bobo* carrying a pot of food for his wife in prison, «por cosas de aire, dicen malas lenguas que por alcahueta». The dialogue proceeds thus:

> Panarizo: Y decime, ¿vuestra mujer no tiene ningún favor?
> *Mendrugo*: Sí, señor; tiene muchos brazos y la Justicia que hará lo que fuere de razón; y agora han ordenado entre todos que, porque mi mujer es mujer de bien y mujer que lo puede llevar, que le den un obispado.
> Honzigera: ¡Obispado!
> Mendrugo: Sí, obispado, y an plega a Dios quella lo sepa bien regir, que según dicen ricos quedamos desta vez. Diga, señor: ¿sabe v.m. qué dan en estos obispados?
> Panarizo: ¿Sabes qué dan? Mucha miel, mucho zapato viejo, mucha borra y pluma y berenjena.
> Mendrugo: ¡Válame Dios! ¿Todo es dan? Yo deseo vella obispesa.
> Honzigera: ¿Para qué?
> Mendrugo: Para ser yo el obispeso. (149-50)

A similar comic effect can be observed in the *Coloquio de Tymbria* in which the simpleton, Leno, speaks of the sanctity of his grandmother, burnt as a witch in Cuenca. See Rueda, *Obras*, II, 84-87.

the picaresque, which oddly combines fascination and detachment, and into the sophisticated metafictional games that he plays in this chapter with *Guzmán de Alfarache* and its superb little precursor *Lazarillo de Tormes*, would take us too far from our track. Suffice to say that both here and in one of his most famous *novelas*, "Rinconete y Cortadillo," he alludes playfully to its conventions, and in a loose sense, parodies them, while using them as a trampoline to launch off in different directions. The most famous convict of the chain-gang, Ginés de Pasamonte, is, amongst other things, a personification of the arch-*pícaro*, Guzmán de Alfarache, since, like Guzmán, he has written his own memoirs, and intends to finish them on the galleys, which is where Guzmán writes his.[12]

In this adventure, the picaresque mainly serves Cervantes as a model of pedigree criminal traits: cynical contempt for the law, stoical defiance, truculence, and a characteristic style, including ruffian's slang and the already mentioned euphemisms. All this is intended as a mocking antithesis of Don Quixote's idealistic altruism, and can be exemplified by convict number five, who has much in common with Guzmán de Alfarache, since he is a student, a glib talker and a competent Latinist. Let us recall that Guzmán, besides having the fluency and wit of an ex-court jester, also studied theology at the university of Alcalá de Henares where he displayed considerable ability until he gave up his studies in order to pursue his passion for an innkeeper's daughter. Moreover, the crime of the Cervantine convict—promiscuity with two female cousins of his, and simultaneously, with two sisters who weren't related to him, such that the resulting illegitimate brood thoroughly muddied the genealogical trees of the families in question—brings to mind the serial infidelities of Guzmán's grandmother, who managed to tangle up a hundred lineages by persuading each one of her swarms of lovers that her illegitimate

12 Traditionally, the well-known passage of dialogue in which Ginés de Pasamonte refers to his memoirs, destined, according to him, to eclipse *Lazarillo* and "todos cuantos de aquel género se han escrito o escribieren" (243), has been interpreted as implying Cervantes's negative attitude towards the new genre, and a deliberate rejection of its autobiographical form, incapable of shaping human experience in an artistically coherent way and presenting it with the necessary objectivity. As I see it, this interpretation attributes excessive subtlety and density to a casual and jocular allusion to what was then perceived as one of the genre's novel and prominent features. For a concise survey of these readings, with relevant bibliography, see Dunn, 214-15.

daughter, Guzmán's mother, was his and his alone.[13]

The unabashed *donjuanismo* of convict number five is compounded by the laid back, laconic style of his account of his trial and sentence, with its nonchalant assumption that had he been able to pull strings and grease palms, he would have got off scot-free: "Probóseme todo, faltó favor, no tuve dineros, víame a pique de perder los tragaderos, sentenciáronme a galeras por seis años, consentí; castigo es de mi culpa, mozo soy: dure la vida, que con ella todo se alcanza" (241). Guzmán de Alfarache, Cervantes's Rinconete and Cortadillo, and Pablos de Segovia exhibit the same staccato succinctness, and the same shoulder-shrugging cynicism and stoicism, in similar circumstances.[14] Cervantes clearly saw these qualities as intrinsic to the *pícaro*'s brand image.

The Don Quixote of Part I is a loose cannon; one never knows into what he will crash next. One aspect of this is his blind tenacity. When involved in an imaginary chivalric adventure, he becomes madly impervious to dissuasion; the least aggravation inflames his choler and provokes aggression. Apart from one major lucid interval—the Arms and Letters speech—his immersion in chivalric fantasy is total, and precludes the affable discretion that will mark much of his dealings with others in Part II. To all intents, the only character with whom he establishes human contact in Part I—a bond of sympathy, the frank exchange of confidences, the slippage of the chivalric mask, a wavelength of colloquial familiarity—is Sancho. With marvelous insight, Cervantes grounds the intimacy between them, which remains immune to the friction between their opposed temperaments, on a shared attitude of childish make-believe, stemming from the Don's dreams of endless conquests, fame, romance with

13 See *Guzmán de Alfarache*, Part I, Book I, Chapter 2 (Vol. I 98).

14 This is how Guzmán relates the sinister turn taken by his trial: "Mi pleito anduvo. El dinero faltó para la buena defensa. No tuve para cohechar a el escribano. Estaba el juez enojado y echóse a dormir el procurador," *Guzmán de Alfarache* II, iii, 7; v, 126. See the style in which Rinconete tells of the whipping and sentence of exile imposed on him as a thief: "Prendiéronme; tuve poco favor, aunque viendo aquellos señores mi poca edad, se contentaron con que me arrimasen al aldabilla y me mosqueasen las espaldas por un rato, y con que saliese desterrado por cuatro años de la corte. Tuve paciencia, encogí los hombros, sufrí la tanda y mosqueo, y salí a cumplir mi destierro, con tanta priesa, que no tuve lugar de buscar cabalgaduras" (*Novelas ejemplares*, 166). See also Quevedo, *El Buscón* libro III, chapter iv, where Pablos relates what happened to him and his underworld fraternity in jail.

Dulcinea, and a kingdom, and Sancho's of governorship of an island.

The knight is a loose cannon in the further sense of being psychologically unpredictable. While his character derives a basic consistency from his attempt to imitate on a real-life stage the chivalric heroism of Amadís and Company, his madness serves Cervantes as an alibi for ascribing to him arbitrary shifts of attitude. The unqualified devotion that he professes to Dulcinea in I, 13, 25, and 31 does not prevent him from fantasizing opportunistically about marrying some beautiful *infanta* and by this means inheriting her father's kingdom (I, 21); his stiff and solemn identification with a haughty stereotype of knightly behavior, and the imitation of the corresponding style, yields disconcertingly to witty badinage with the first innkeeper about the prospect of *truchuela* (salt cod) for supper (I, 2), and soon after, with Juan Haldudo (I, 4), to whom he alleges that the lashes inflicted on his servant's hide cancel out what is owed for broken shoe-leather and a bleeding by the barber. So, in the galley-slaves adventure, his ingenuous idealism is disconcertingly belied by his perversely witty and satirical apology for the social utility of the shameful office of *alcahuete*, go-between, this being one of the crimes of which convict number four—a tearful, self-pitying ancient with a long white beard—has been found guilty.

According to Don Quixote, it is not a criminal activity at all, but rather an

> oficio de discretos y necesarísimo en la república bien ordenada, y que no le debía ejercer sino gente bien nacida; y aun había de haber veedor y examinador de los tales, como le hay de los demás oficios, con número deputado y conocido, como corredores de lonja, y desta manera se escusarían muchos males que se causan por andar este oficio y ejercicio entre gente idiota y de poco entendimiento, como son mujercillas de poco más a menos, pajecillos y truhanes de pocos años y de poca experiencia. (239-40)

The Spanish Golden Age, with its fixation on keeping up appearances, derived endless amusement from the burlesque eulogy of vile occupations, or from the portrayal of characters who exercise them and, despite that, impudently lay claim to honour and nobility. The praise or

self-praise of the *alcahuete* or pimp was a topic of the tradition of comedies-in-prose deriving from *La Celestina*,[15] with their richly diversified cast of ruffians, bawds and whores, and then becomes popular in seventeenth-century theatre and poetry.[16] In making Don Quixote articulate it, Cervantes poses us with the problem of interpreting his motives. Innocently misplaced compassion? Scarcely. Caustic wit? But how would that square with the innocent idealism shown elsewhere in the adventure. Clearly, for Cervantes, madness cuts the Gordian knot of such dilemmas.

A similarly disconcerting impression is caused, after the interrogation is over, by the speech with which our self-appointed attorney for the defense pleads with the guards to let their captives go free (244-45). It is, like the praise of the *alcahuete*, a world-upside-down defense of the indefensible; though here the comic inversion of rational normality isn't an effect of wit, but of an incongruous mix of unctuous compassion, naive casuistry, messianic arrogance, supplication, threat, and emotive maxims. The latter, in particular, contribute to the speech's ambivalence, which led the essayist Ángel Ganivet is his *Idearium español* (68-69)and the philosopher Miguel de Unamuno in his *Vida de don Quijote y Sancho* (187-93), to see it as upholding ideal justice against the cold, institutionalised process of the law. So, for Unamuno, Don Quixote's liberation of the galley-slaves is consistent with his—also God's, nature's, and the

15 It is launched by Celestina herself, who in Act III of Rojas's tragi-comedy, in talking of her mastery of her profession, boasts of the honorable reputation it has won her: "En esta cibdad nascida, en ella criada, manteniendo honrra, como todo el mundo sabe, ¿conoscida pues no soy?" (I, 133). The terms in which Don Quixote praises the office of go-between resembles in various aspects the interventions of the pimp Galterio and the bawd Franquila, in the anonymous *La Thebayda* (1521), 92-95, 113, y 124. For example, Galterio praises the usefulness of criminal informers, indignantly rejecting the unfavorable estimation in which they are held: "Pero, ¿por qué dixiste malsines? No quiero consentir esso: antes es oficio de hombres justos y zelosos de concordia. ¿Y qué otro oficio es el del regidor o jurado, salvo mirar que las cosas de su república estén bien governadas, y poner espuelas al corregidor en que castigue los excesos feos y abominables al bien popular, y hazer que con todo rigor se executen?" (93). In the same work, Franquila boasts of her skill, comparing herself to "los temerosos y no esperimentados, como son las donzellas y personas semejantes, que siempre sus respuestas son cargadas de mil recelos y acompañadas de mil género de temores" (124). On the figure of the go-between, see Redondo, 251-63 and 347-61. Redondo's reading of the galley-slaves adventure, granted the different angles of interpretation that we adopt (see n. 1), is similar to mine in his emphasis on its world-upside-down comedy and paradoxical violation of common sense.

16 *Don Quijote*, ed. Rodríguez Marín (1947-49), iii, 173-74 (note).

Spanish people's—preference for hot-blooded, spontaneous punishment followed by forgiveness. Unamuno's idealized conception of Don Quixote as a modern version of Christ is, as he well knew, quite un-Cervantine; the partly burlesque effect of the knight's speech is clearly signalled by the unctuous "hermanos carísimos" with which it begins, grotesquely inappropriate to the villains whom he has just interviewed.

Yet Unamuno's reading isn't wholly off beam. Don Quixote's maxims, which Unamuno quotes extensively and are the basis of the knight's plea, would be moving and persuasive if only the application took account of the circumstances. In pleading for the prisoners' freedom he invokes the principle of natural law which was cited in the famous mid-sixteenth century theological polemic about whether it was right to enslave the colonized Indians of Latin America: "me parece duro caso hacer esclavos a los que Dios y la naturaleza hizo libres."[17] He further invokes Christ's "Judge not that ye be not judged," or a Spanish proverb which expresses basically the same idea: "Allá se lo haya cada uno con su pecado; Dios hay en el cielo que no se descuida de castigar al malo, ni de premiar al bueno." He asks the guards, what's in it for you?, or, to put it in his words: "No es bien que los hombres honrados sean verdugos de los otros hombres, no yéndoles nada en ello."

This is a principle of clemency that Don Quixote will enjoin on governor-elect Sancho in his precepts of government in Part II, Chapters 42 and 43, in these terms: "Cuando pudiere y debiere tener lugar la equidad, no cargues todo el rigor de la ley al delincuente, que no es mejor la fama del juez riguroso que la del compasivo" (II, 42; 971); "[a]l culpado que cayere debajo de tu juridición, considérale hombre miserable, sujeto a las condiciones de la depravada naturaleza nuestra, y en todo cuanto fuere de tu parte, sin hacer agravio a la contraria, muéstratele piadoso y clemente, porque aunque los atributos de Dios todos son iguales, más resplandece y campea a nuestro ver el de la misericordia que el de la justicia" (II, 42: 972). As can be seen, in that largely lucid discourse, the injunctions to be merciful carry significantly qualifications about taking account of the circumstances and the rights of the other party. By contrast, the exhortation

17 See Hamilton, 35 and ff.

to the guards to show clemency to the impenitent scoundrels in their custody is ridiculous. So, when Don Quixote, after having assaulted the guards and released the prisoners more by luck than by his own efforts, gathers them in a circle around him and arrogantly orders them to go loaded in chains to pay homage to Dulcinea, he gets what he deserves: instead of admiring gratitude, an ignominious pelting with stones.

The chapter ends with a brilliantly evocative image of two vertical figures and two horizontal ones in the now deserted sierra: Don Quijote and Rocinante stretched on the ground side by side; Sancho stripped of his cloak beside his ass, which stands pensive, with head lowered, its ears still twitching in reflex response to the now ended shower of stones. Those ears are the nearest thing to a comment on the moral of the affair, since Cervantes, characteristically, offers none, save to describe Don Quixote as "mohinísimo de verse tan malparado por los mismos a quien tanto bien había hecho." That phrase, I think, carries an echo of the moral of the Aesopic fable about the man who nurtured a snake and then complained when it bit him. In the Spanish versions available to Cervantes it reads: "El que faze bien y ayuda al malo ingrato sepa que sera del desagradecido y en lugar de le responder con buena obra le contrariara."[18]

So, one can read the adventure as a right-wing fable about the folly of doing good to the undeserving, an idea which the Spanish proverb expresses with succinct savagery: "Cría cuervos y te sacarán los ojos." Or, with Unamuno, you can read it as a Christian fable about charity being its own reward, sole consolation for its inevitable defeat in a mean and nasty world. Or, with the author of *Moby Dick*, you could take it as yet another example of Don Quixote's defense of the oppressed and down-and-out, hence as a heart-warming affirmation of the democratic ideal of the brotherhood of man.[19] This open-ended virtuality of meaning, characteristic of myth, is typical of *Don Quixote* and is furthered by Cervantes's playfully ironic detachment.

In this respect it's instructive to compare the galley-slaves adventure in his novel with its imitation in Avellaneda's sequel to Cervantes's Part I. In Chapter 8 of Avellaneda's *Don Quijote*, the hero, in Zaragoza, sees a

18 *Fábulas de Esopo*, fols. xxix-xxx, "del ombre y de la culuebra."

19 See Harry Levin,, 260, 263-66.

prisoner being paraded through the streets on an ass while being subjected to a public whipping. Imagining some fantastic story about a knight abducted by wicked enemies, he tries to rescue the felon, is overcome by a crowd of guards and bystanders, and is clapped into prison with the imminent prospect of suffering the same fate as the man he tried to liberate. He only avoids this thanks to the intervention of his aristocratic protector, Don Álvaro Tarfe, who persuades the magistrate to release him on grounds of insanity. That is to say, Avellaneda treats Don Quijote's intervention as chimerically ineffectual from a perspective of law-abiding common sense, and quite suppresses the subversive and thought-provoking implications of the Cervantine adventure. In Cervantes's version, these arise from a combination of factors: Don Quixote's appeal to principles of clemency and forgiveness; the passing allusions, however tendentious, to the arbitrariness and corruption of the law; the brutal disproportion between the prisoners' retaliation and Don Quixote's offense; above all, the fact that, however mad his intervention, it succeeds. Avellaneda upholds conventional poetic justice; Cervantes turns it upside down, and in so doing, appears to be trying to tell us something.

But what precisely? In trying to answer that question, we mustn't exaggerate the novel's subversiveness. The Quixotic adventures of Part I are rooted in farce, or in neighboring genres, and partake of farce's license to turn the normal, respectable world topsy-turvy. When Cervantes, in his prose-epic *Persiles y Sigismunda*, handles situations similar to the galley-slaves adventure, as he does on two or three occasions, the treatment is more serious and less out of tune with conventional proprieties. The same consideration applies to Don Quixote's lucid precepts of government to Sancho in Part II, chapters 42 and 43, where some of the edifying principles that are madly misapplied by the liberator of the galley-slaves—particularly those about tempering justice with mercy—are re-affirmed in an ideological context which no contemporary reader would have considered revolutionary.[20] The merry chaos unleashed by Don Quixote's

20 Apart from the precept about clemency, the reproof of judicial venality and harshness. With respect to the latter, the precept: "Al que has de castigar con obras no trates mal con palabras, pues le basta al desdichado la pena del suplicio, sin la añadidura de las malas rezones" (II, 42; 972) is similar in spirit to Don Quixote's plea for tolerance to be shown to Pasamonte's defiant threats:

madness permits Cervantes to provide a denouement which, while castigating his error, satisfies various impulses of his own which are at variance with Avellaneda's conventional solution: his characteristically Spanish suspicion, still alive and kicking today, of the corruption of the law, with accompanying sympathy for astute outwitting of the legal apparatus;[21] his habitual preference, well exemplified by Sancho's governorship in Part II, for justice of a humane, informal, commonsensical kind which cuts through legalities and tempers harshness with mercy.[22]

So, the galley-slaves adventure can't plausibly be cited as corroboration of the postmodernist view of *Don Quixote*. All the same, one must avoid minimizing this adventure's, and the novel's, potential suggestiveness, similar to the effect of a heavy stone being cast into a deep pool, with ripples of implication spreading out in ever-widening circles from the point of impact. Ever since Baltasar Gracián, in his mid-seventeenth-century prose-allegory of man's pilgrimage through life, *El Criticón*, took Don Quixote and Sancho as archetypes of two contrasted moral failings, vain self-importance and selfish pusillanimity, or too much ambition and too little,[23] Cervantes's story, and particularly its central character, have appeared to each succeeding age as symbols of the human condition, which that age interprets in terms of its own leading preoccupations. For the Enlightenment, Don Quixote embodied any kind of bigoted fanaticism or conservative adherence to outdated ideas; for the nineteenth century, the Ideal in conflict with the Real; for the twentieth, a lesson in epistemological relativism; for postmodernism, the deconstruction of language, history, monocentrism.[24] What, we ask in bewilderment, gives

"Alzó la vara en alto el comisario para dar a Pasamonte, en respuesta de sus amenazas, mas don Quijote se puso en medio y le rogó que no le maltratase, pues no era mucho que quien llevaba tan atadas las manos tuviese algún tanto suelta la lengua" (244).

21 See "El licenciado Vidriera" (188-89); "La ilustre fregona," (397); see also the denouement of the interrogation of the two false ex-captives in *Persiles y Sigismunda* (Book III, Chapter10).

22 See, apart from the precepts of government to Sancho and his performance as governor in Barataria, *Don Quijote* (II, 32; 900); "El amante liberal" (*Novelas*, 128); Periandro's advice to the vengeful husband Ortel Banedre in *Persiles y Sigismunda* (Book III, Chapter 6).

23 See my «Gracián lee a Cervantes," 181-82.

24 Here I sum up the broad outlines of the history of the interpretation of *Don Quixote* since the seventeenth century, as described in my *The Romantic Approach to Don Quixote*. See especially the recently published Spanish translation of it, with numerous revisions, 36, 66, 242,

this now very old book, product of an age very remote from the modern one, its amazing power of self-renewal?

To attempt to answer that question is a Quixotic enterprise, since it entails enquiry not just into the nature of the book that Cervantes wrote, but into the complex reasons for modernity's mythic recreation of it. So I shall give a merely partial answer by concentrating, within the limitations of a final paragraph, on the former of those two aspects. The first reason—and here lies *Don Quixote*'s revolutionary novelty in relation to the prose-narrative of its age—has to do with its fundamental ambivalence, due to its alternation between the modes of heroic or romantic adventure and critical parody of them, which often results in the fusion of these two things. This hybrid condition stems from the nature of Cervantes's mockery of Don Quixote and of the chivalric genre that he personifies; it is implicitly governed by the standard of an ideal prose-epic which he eventually fulfilled in his Byzantine romance *Persiles y Sigismunda*, and anticipated in numerous *novelas* previous to that, including some of the interpolations of *Don Quixote* Parts I and II. Precisely because of his internal, empathetic relation to the genre of romance, he creates a hero who, instead of being a merely ridiculous caricature of it, enacts a version which has, potentially, many of the requisite ingredients, including seriousness and stylistic elegance, but botches them by adherence to a fabulous model. So, in Don Quixote, liberator of the galley-slaves, one perceives a frustrated and abortive version of Cervantes's epic hero, Periandro, much more interesting to us than Periandro because, unlike that priggish paragon of virtue, he, and the novel about him, are not set in the plaster cast could of the neo-classical epic and courtly decorum; rather, he is an individualized, quirkily deluded personality, absurdly at odds with respectable, common sense behavior, who nonetheless violates these norms from a standpoint that strikes a chord with rational ethical principles. From that paradoxical blend of contraries derives the thought-provoking resonance of the galley-slaves adventure, giving it simultaneously the stark exemplariness of a moral fable and the open-ended virtuality of myth.

265. With regard to the postmodernist interpretation of it, see the reference to Carlos Fuentes (n. 4 above), Carroll Johnson, "Cómo se lee hoy el *Quijote*" (335-48) and *Cervantes and the Material World*; also, Diana de Armas Wilson, *Cervantes, the Novel and the New World*.

The second reason, which compounds that original ambivalence, stems from the original strategy adopted by Cervantes to deal with a dilemma posed by Spanish Counter-Reformation didacticism. The age's literature of entertainment, *Guzmán de Alfarache* being a major example, either emphatically identified with it or felt obliged to justify its failure to do so. However, turning a work of light fiction into a pulpit was an infraction of decorum, as much for post-Tridentine piety as for Classical aesthetics; and that kind of pretentiousness comes in for wittily malicious satire in the prologue to *Don Quixote* Part I. Cervantes solved the dilemma of how to avoid frivolity without sermonizing by incorporating in his novel the learned topics and moral wisdom of his age, while treating them in a manner which is light, humourous and idiosyncratic. So, the liberator of the galley-slaves invokes Christian forgiveness, scholastic natural law, the Classical definition of prudence, and the juridical principle of equity—all in support of a comically crazy case. As a result, ever since about 1700, when temporal distance began to blur the cultural premises that Cervantes's contemporaries took for granted, readers have been asking themselves what he is getting at and whose side he is on.

The third, and related reason for *Don Quixote's* suggestiveness is its archetypal quality, deriving mainly from the way in which the hero's and Sancho's characters are conceived as a concentrated, seamless synthesis of literary and folkloric types. If Baltasar Gracián in the mid-seventeenth century perceived Don Quixote as the personification of vain self-importance, this was because Cervantes smoothly blends into the character, without advertising the quotations, traits taken from well-known models of boasting and bravado: the *miles gloriosus* of Latin comedy, the braggart lackeys and ruffians of its Spanish Renaissance continuations, the hectoring paladins of the Ariostan tradition, the pathologically snobbish squire of *Lazarillo de Tormes*. If Erich Auerbach in the twentieth century considers Don Quixote's conception of Dulcinea as embodying "Plato's idea of beauty, courtly love, the *donna gentile* of the *dolce stil nuovo* school, [Dante's] Beatrice, *la gloriosa donna della mia mente*" (108), then this is no accident, since Cervantes combines in it at least the first two precedents, and some others that Auerbach doesn't mention, including Petrarchist hyperbole, pastoral preciosity and tearfulness, the mad effu-

sions of Calisto and his like, Roland's frenzied antics, the soulful introspection of Amadís. Wide-ranging eclecticism is intrinsic to Don Quixote's make-up, since his imitation of the chivalric genre freely embroiders and enriches it with all kinds of topics, styles and registers, some more or less akin to it, others much less so: the ballad-tradition, Italian heroic romances, Classical epic, Spanish chronicles, pastoral prose and poetry, the Bible, the favorite themes of Renaissance humanism, Spanish and Italian lyric poetry, legal and commercial jargon, colloquial idioms, and so on *ad infinitum*. Cervantes's novel is like a giant sponge passed over preceding literature and folklore, absorbing its motifs almost imperceptibly; posterity, in squeezing out the sponge's contents, detects the allusiveness but no longer perceives the specific references, and so supplies any that takes its fancy. Madame de Pompadour's «Après nous, le déluge» might be Cervantes's fitting epitaph.

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