

*Don Quixote's Penance in
Sierra Morena:
Structure and Intentionality*
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INTRODUCTION

Of the many plots and subplots of the narrative of Don Quixote in Sierra Morena (I, 23-29), one deserves more attention. This is the question of the Knight's penance as it unfolds in chapter 26 at the crucial time of Don Quixote's second sally, joined now by his *escudero* Sancho Panza. For the first time after the episodes of the first sally and now in the midst of the second one, Don Quixote, free from external circumstances in the vastness of the Sierra Morena landscape, pauses and ponders about his knightly call as a form of mimesis or imitation of his admired models Orlando the Furious and Amadís of Gaul as the penitent Beltenebros who withdrew to Peña Pobre to gain the favor of his lady Oriana. In this setting Don Quixote reveals the intent of his mimetic intentions as foundational for his chivalry. The penance is pivotal to his vocation and as such provides the structural basis for the unfolding novel. It is therefore unusual that a formative episode such as this has been mostly neglected in Cervantine historiography.

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The reasons for this may be various and often they are not spelled out. Frequently this penance is referred to as purely mimetic of its model and consequently undeserving of further analysis.¹ Others simply assume it to be an expression of Don Quixote's Counter-Reformation piety similar to that of Ignatius of Loyola;² still others by-pass it altogether without mention.³ But there are some who with candor recognize the appearance of a problem but dismiss it as unfounded and inconceivable of a mind like Cervantes.⁴ Finally there are those who, seeing some problem in such an episode but realizing that it does not quite fit within the models of Orlando or Amadís, shift its model to Cervantes' own interpolated novel of Cardenio and the goatherds in the *Quixote* (I, 23) in order to extract from such a model that which is not stated in Don Quixote's own penance, thus explaining a disturbing absence in it.⁵

These examples, although diverse, agree nevertheless in their lack of interest in tackling the issue of Cervantes' transformative intention or the model from which he borrowed. This transformation motif in the Cervantine narrative of the penance in Sierra Morena needs to be explored in order to gain some clue about Cervantes' intentionality in this episode so crucial to the *Quixote*.

THE TRANSFORMATION MOTIF

The mimetic motif of Don Quixote patterning himself after Amadís of Gaul as the penitent Beltenebros in the Peña Pobre has been noted by all. Indeed, it is hard to miss. But what has often been missed is Don Quixote's antimimetic or transformation motif of those models,⁶ in particular the one concerning Beltenebros. This is not because such a narrative is less obvious or more ambiguous in its antimimetic motifs. The reasons for this must lie somewhere else in the realm of perception and pre-understanding with regard to the texts themselves.

Don Quixote knows that Amadís as Beltenebros penitent in Peña Pobre was in the company of a monk hermit with whom he confessed. In the *Amadís de Gaula*⁷ (chapters 48-52) this is described in detail; in chapter 51 in particular Beltenebros attends Mass. But when Cervantes comes to this narrative, he introduces it with a twist: "But what worried him [Don Quixote] a great deal was

that there was no hermit to be found thereabouts to hear his confession and administer consolation.”⁸

Cervantes cunningly manipulates his world of make-believe as if such a world were real. The absence of a hermit at that site in Sierra Morena could have been altered by a simple stroke of his pen. This is clearly an antimimetic Cervantine motif which transforms the narrative of the *Amadís of Gaul* into a negative narrative. It unceremoniously evacuates the hermit from this Quixote narration, thus taking a pre-emptory strike at the meaning and function of a hermit in this episode. Don Quixote, while “lamenting” the absence of a confessor, enjoys the freedom of inventing his own devotions. Similarly, Cervantes tackles an even greater “unexpected” issue met suddenly by the Knight of La Mancha who, intending to imitate his model Beltenebros, evokes him saying: “Deeds of Amadís, come to my memory and teach me where I must begin if I am to imitate you. I remember now that most of the time he spent praying and commending his soul to God. But what shall I do for a rosary, for I have none (I, 26)?”⁹

In both cases we meet the same antimimetic transforming motif of Amadís’ deeds. Here the twist is even more daring. For one, it is obvious that even when Don Quixote had proleptically anticipated imitating Beltenebros (I, 15), he is now not prepared for such a task. Here Cervantes is also manipulating the narrative of the *Amadís of Gaul* since in the chapters mentioned above where Beltenebros attends Mass and is confessed by the hermit, no mention of the rosary is made at all. Cervantes would not have missed that. Rather, what he does is to transfer Amadís’ devotions to the setting of Don Quixote’s Spain and the prescribed use of rosary for the prayer or *rezos* of Ave Marias that the Knight would certainly need for such devotions. But now Don Quixote forgets to bring a rosary.

Cervantes places his hero facing such a dilemma as if that world of make-believe could not have been altered by the stroke of his own pen. The fiction world takes over the real world and “forces” Cervantes to cope with it by means of the ingenious invention of Don Quixote who adroitly tackles the problem with a freedom and daring unparalleled in the *Quixote* itself or in any other work in Spain before or after.

This is Don Quixote’s solution to the problem: “Then he thought of a way of making one [a rosary]. He tore a long strip of

his shirt, which was hanging down, and made eleven knots in it, one fatter than the rest, and this served him for a rosary, all the time he was there during which time he recited a million of Hail Marys (I, 26).”

The transformation of the received chivalry models has been accomplished by the “absence” of a hermit and “lack” of a rosary. Cervantes builds up his world of make-believe in these two cases by filling out such absences with his creative fiction after having created the absences as keys to the solution of his hero’s dilemmas, thus creating subversive antimimetic narrative.

Cervantes does not seem to frame these two episodes within a more plausible logical narrative for, as indicated, he first shows Don Quixote improvising a rosary from a rag of his hanging shirt, and only later, and as an afterthought, becoming aware that there is no hermit abiding in that spot. Would Don Quixote have improvised such a substitute as his rosary after having met a hermit in such surroundings? This would be most unlikely. Therefore, the invention of the filthy ragged rosary perforce pre-empted the presence of any hermit in that location in such a narrative development.

Cervantes’ leading motif in this episode is Don Quixote’s improvising of such an unexpected rosary. But soon he realized that only the absence of a hermit would justify it. Thus, the invention of the “rosary” is the forethought of this episode, and it places it structurally at the core of the Sierra Morena subplots. The further unfolding of this narrative brings this motif to its climatic point. When Sancho Panza returns with the Priest and the Barber and leads them to where he had left Don Quixote, Sancho, who had gone ahead to meet him, reports to them that he “had found him naked except for his shirt, lean, yellow, and half dead with hunger, sighing for his lady Dulcinea” (I, 29).

In this narrative Cervantes had gone as far as one could in Spain to grotesquely outline the excesses of fanatic religious devotions based on the use of the rosary and asceticism. The parallels are obvious, but Cervantes stopped short of making the point, not only because it was dangerous but also because it would aesthetically alter the nature of his novel. A hint has, or may have, aesthetic possibilities. Not so an inhibited description. Even so, Cervantes had gone too far.

THE PROBLEM

In the second edition of this First Part of *Don Quixote* published in Madrid by Juan de la Cuesta in the same year of the first edition (1605), a few lines were omitted from this critical text of the rosary made up from Don Quixote's lower parts of his dangling shirt. Instead, the Hidalgo of La Mancha's resourcefulness finds a substitute for his forgotten rosary, made now not out of his shirt but out of nature itself which mimetically yields him the right stuff, out of the "large gallnuts of a cork tree, which he strung up together..."¹⁰

How this change came about is still debated by some.¹¹ One thing seems clear though. The passage in question, along with others, had been censured and crossed out in ink by the Portuguese Inquisition in the first Portuguese edition appearing before the second Spanish one. Thus, these changes in the second Spanish edition anticipated steps that the Spanish Inquisition could have taken against such a passage. Who did it—Cervantes or the printer—is something that will never be known. Yet one cannot but suspect that such a clever nature-mimesis substitute is worthy of Cervantes' antimimetic cover up of his previous non-natural mimetic rosary out of the filthy rag.

Strange as it may seem, this rosary episode together with its Portuguese censure did not draw much attention from critical scholarship until recently. In fact the first that came to grips with this text in a self-conscious way was Américo Castro in *El pensamiento de Cervantes* (1st. ed. 1925, 2nd. ed. 1972). The date of the first edition is by itself significant since it was the same year in which Marcel Bataillon also published his facsimile edition of Juan de Valdés, *Diálogo de doctrina christiana*, with an extensive Introduction and Notes. The research motif or thesis of this work was the Spanish Erasmianism as exemplified in Valdés' first work. This is also one of the main themes of Castro's work as applied to Cervantes. Erasmianism was becoming the key to the understanding of Spanish Renaissance culture and these two scholars shared similar views and were friends.

Castro intuitively saw the essence of the critical "rosary text" in question. He identified it with Erasmian religious reform much more deeply and seriously than M. Menéndez Pelayo in his

Heterodoxos españoles. Castro clarifies that, “For me, Erasmus is much more than that, he represents a new religious conception, an ideology in agreement with the humanistic ideas.”¹² This is Castro’s research probe, and he applies it to Cervantes’ “*No conformismo*.” Castro pointed out the two readings of the first and second Spanish edition of *Don Quixote* printed in two parallel columns. Then, he added a brief and incisive comment which adroitly exposes the nature of such a text in terse colloquial language:

Here Cervantes’ pen betrayed itself (*se le fue la pluma*). If the filthy diaper (*pañal*) of Don Quixote is used to pray (*rezar*) a million Ave Marias, of little importance for the author are in this moment the rosary and the Avemarias. Neither Lope nor Quevedo would have dared such a profanation. Someone must have pointed it out, and Cuesta [the printer], or probably Cervantes himself, took out more than in a hurry the scandalous passage?¹³

Castro thus put his finger on a text which had been ignored or bypassed by most Quixote scholars. The blunt language of Castro forced this passage to the surface. Still, his analysis did not clarify its meaning other than to lump it together within the general scope of the Erasmian new religious conception as he had put it.

Bataillon, commenting on this passage and Castro’s remarks, leaves this problematic text untouched. He states simply that Cervantes in this case “had erased from the Quixote an irreverent joke about the rosary.”¹⁴ Furthermore, in his analysis of Erasmus’ *Modus Orandi*, although he often illustrates the Dutch humanist’s critique of the excessive devotions by means of the rosary, he nevertheless does not single out any sarcastic comments which might be the source or inspiration of Cervantes’ text in question.¹⁵ If this be Erasmianism, then Cervantes went beyond any plausible source found in Erasmus himself.

Cervantes’ intentionality cannot be simply subsumed under an Erasmian category unless one is willing to tackle the larger issue of the setting of this text itself within the episode of Sierra Morena. The fact that neither Castro nor Bataillon, or for that matter anybody else, paused to reflect on the structural meaning of the “rosary text” in the larger context of the episode of Sierra Morena

might be indeed rather telling. Castro himself years later in his *Hacia Cervantes* (1957) does not mention it. Silence, sometimes, is an eloquent way of stating a problem in its negative form for lack of meaningful words. But Bataillon perhaps unconsciously pointed out its problem by qualifying it as an “irreverent joke.” This meaning is also underlying Castro’s comments. Furthermore, it could even be said that it was this perception of such a problematic text that forced it from its crucial setting in the Sierra Morena episode to a very peripheral extraneous “bad joke” unworthy of any textual analysis for its own sake.

Thus understood, this tasteless jibe or embarrassing text unworthy even of Cervantes himself could be easily disposed of, and one could instead focus on other aspects of the Sierra Morena subplots which supposedly have in themselves more dynamic meaning and adventure.¹⁶ Yet any reading of this episode with its various subplots leads always to the rosary text. For it is *to do penance* for his lady Dulcinea that Don Quixote goes into Sierra Morena after the episode of the galley-slaves (I, 22), fleeing the Brotherhood or *Santa Hermandad* at the suggestion of his squire Sancho. More still can be added. The plotting of the Priest and the Barber to go to Sierra Morena led by Sancho had no other purpose than “rescuing your master from that useless penance you say he is doing,” as the Priest very pointedly says to Sancho (I, 26).

Don Quixote’s penance and hence the rosary, for without it such a penance would be impossible, constitute the dynamic magnetic center which pulls all the subplots in its direction. This shows that the text is neither peripheral nor a crude joke, but rather the leading thought around which all the Sierra Morena episode and subplots evolve. Thematically it is completed by the arrival of the party from El Toboso with the Priest, the Barber, and Sancho to rescue the Knight of La Mancha from his madness and useless penance tied up together by the filthy, ragged rosary. This structural place cannot be displaced without upsetting the whole level of meaning of the episode of Sierra Morena, and indeed of the whole novel.¹⁷

The transformation motif of the potential chivalry sources shows clearly that Cervantes, while reducing the Orlando the Furious model to a sketchy subplot, elevates and transforms the Amadís-Beltenebros one to its maximum literary possibilities. Out of it, and unexpectedly so, the rosary-shirt emerges as the main

novelty point of the recast story leaving out the hermit, and thus pre-empting any possibility of Don Quixote's confessing himself.¹⁸ With the arrival of the party from El Toboso, Don Quixote begins his return or regress home, thus signaling the end of his second sally (I, 52), and also the end of the first part of the *Quixote*.

To look at the problem of Cervantes' transformation of the Amadís motif not so much as a mimetic or *imitatio* but rather as emulation or *aemulatio*, as distinctions made in Erasmus' *Ciceronianus*, might be useful.¹⁹ According to this distinction *imitatio* aims at similarity while *aemulatio* at victory. That is to say the model should not be simply reproduced but surpassed and left behind. Such then is a transformation motif. But this is a literary and rhetorical device well known to all the *Quixote* critics and scholars. Therefore, one would assume that such a technique would have been readily applied to this narrative in question. However, this does not seem to be the case since scholars apparently rest satisfied by pointing out the sources rather than their transformation. There seems to be then some inhibitory process by which this passage, somehow, is either glossed over or bypassed by simply referring to it or quoting it in full, but without attempting to offer either an explanation of the text itself or the process of its transformation. And this after Castro had forced to the surface the problem of this text. He, however, did not apply this technique either.

The problem of mimesis and transformation would have been an apropos one for Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* (1st. ed. 1946). But he was not particularly interested in *Don Quixote*, per se, and simply touched on the subject briefly twice: one in the chapter on chivalric romance and the other at the end of the chapter on Shakespeare. Later, Auerbach at the suggestion of some Spanish scholars prepared a separate chapter on *Don Quixote* for the Spanish translation published in 1951 in Mexico, included in the subsequent editions of his *Mimesis*. This chapter's theme is "The Enchanted Dulcinea."

Auerbach finds very little in the *Quixote* that can be qualified as either tragic or problematic. Don Quixote acts in accordance with the rules of knight-errantry, and so he is justified.²⁰ For this author, the *Quixote* is a work whose dominant mood is one of merry play even of a "noncritical and nonproblematic gaiety" and his

adventures never go beyond a harmless form of make-believe marked by a childlike innocence of the “everyday reality.”²¹

This judgment is not limited only to the theme of the “Enchanted Dulcinea” but rather to the whole of the *Quixote*. This view is partly shaped by his polemic against romanticist interpretations of the *Quixote*. Contrary to them he believes that Don Quixote “is a conservative, or at least essentially in accordance with the order of things as it is.”²² This is said even after having commented on the “galley slaves.”²³ Auerbach’s pen, however, seems to have betrayed itself when at the end of this chapter it writes:

Elsewhere in Europe men had long since begun to question and to doubt, and even to begin building anew with their own materials. But that was in keeping neither with the spirit of his country nor with his own temperament, nor finally with his conception of the office of a writer.²⁴

Such a judgment seems to ignore not only the long tradition of heresy and dissent in Spain, but it also tends to identify individual writers with the “spirit” of their country, which is also a very romantic hermeneutics which Auerbach himself was so aware of it. In any case, this chapter of *Mimesis* is not only an afterthought but also not one of the best in such a seminal work.

With such a hermeneutical approach to the *Quixote* as an unproblematic and childlike work, the “mimesis” motif of Auerbach’s *Mimesis* missed the mimetic transforming which often appears in Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, of which a case in point is the *Amadís* model here under scrutiny.

While the examples already illustrated cannot be acceptable as any sort of answer to this problem, neither can the others surveyed up to this point. The reason is because all of them either avoid the issue altogether, or simply when one would expect that the several erudite explanations regarding Cervantes’ source of *Amadís of Gaul* would lead them into the topic of the ragged rosary, suddenly they gloss over this very topic.

Diego Clemencín (1765-1834), in his pioneering *Comentarios al Quijote* (1833-1839), not only avoids this topic but also keeps the reading of the second Spanish edition with its substitute of the “gallnuts” for the ragged shirt rosary. The other standard Spanish

commentary is *Don Quijote* by Francisco Rodríguez Marín.²⁵ Yet, in coming to this crucial text (I, 26) and to correspondent critical notes, Rodríguez rests satisfied acknowledging only that he keeps the original text of the first Spanish edition followed only by very few modern editions. Later on in an erudite extensive note with regard to Amadís of Gaul in the *Apéndices*,²⁶ Rodríguez keeps silent about both the ragged rosary and the *absence* of the hermit in Cervantes' text. As for the most recent commentary by Vicente Gaos (1987),²⁷ neither in the text itself nor in the *Apéndices* where he deals with "Cervantes and the Church," a subtopic of which is the "Inquisition," does he do any thing other than acknowledge the original reading of the first edition.²⁸

L. A. Murillo, editor of a standard edition of *Don Quixote* (1987),²⁹ acknowledges the two versions of this text in the corresponding notes and says nothing about the absence of the hermit. As for his *A Critical Introduction to Don Quixote* (1988),³⁰ in the section corresponding to this episode as part of "the Exemplary Story: the Penitent Knight," he does not add anything else.³¹ Suffice then to mention two other works which by their topic should at least say something on this subject.

Antonio Vilanova, *Erasmus y Cervantes* (1989),³² although touching upon the Orlando motif,³³ omits references to Amadís which are woven within the same text as the Orlando motif in the Quixote. Eric J. Ziolkowski, *The Sanctification of Don Quixote* (1997),³⁴ while aware of Cervantes' Erasmianism and Castro's pointed critique of the "filthy diaper" rosary,³⁵ does not attempt to explain such an episode within the "sanctification" process "of the Knight of La Mancha from Hidalgo to Priest" as the subtitle states it.

Finally Angelo J. DiSalvo, *Cervantes and the Augustinian Religious Tradition* (1989),³⁶ prudently averts this whole issue in the chapter:

Cervantes' Christianity and the Concept of Christian Knighthood," while affirming at the same time that "the fact that the Catholic religion permeated Spanish society to such an extent, helps to explain why a patriot Spaniard such as Cervantes' would be so firmly established within the

ideological mainstream of Orthodox Catholicism during the height of the Counter-Reformation.³⁷

In this case rhetoric is a substitute for coming to grips with problematic texts like the ones in question here. Yet such rhetoric is nothing new in Cervantes research, for it is the one which Castro was up against in his critical studies on Cervantes.

TOWARD A SOLUTION

We have been following the *via negativa* to arrive at some knowledge or solution to this problem. There is nothing wrong with such a method. For to know what is not known and what so many have missed either wittingly or unwittingly is already to restate its parameters in hope of a solution. To attempt to solve a problem, it is necessary first to know that there is one.

Credit must be given then to Américo Castro for having intuitively perceived what others before and after him had not apparently noticed. But this is not to say that Castro himself stated such a problem. Rather, he seized upon something that he could glimpse only darkly; having done that, he had no more to add.

If there is a Cervantes scholar who at least tried to cope with Castro's hit at that text it is Rodríguez Marín. But this he did out of its proper context,³⁸ and as if there were something bothering him that had at least to be mentioned. Retracting what he had said before regarding the ragged rosary as his apology for the Inquisition, he now adds that there were in fact faithful Roman Catholic authors who had made similar mistakes to that one of Cervantes, but the Inquisition did not order the suppression of their texts. Yet, the illustrations he offers do not bear the slightest similarity to the text in question in the *Quixote*. Somehow Rodríguez Marín shifts from a baffling text of Cervantes about which he cannot offer any clue to those texts which are in line with a certain ambiguous spirituality traceable to the Apostle Paul, and thus labeled by many as "Erasmian" in its religious leanings. By making such an apparently unconscious shift in fact strips Cervantes' text from its offensive "jibe" and sublimates it as Pauline spirituality. Furthermore, the fact that Castro himself never questioned such a subtle shift indicates

that, at least, he did not object to it. This brings us to the heart of the matter: Is this Erasmian-Paulinism or something else until now unforeseen and unsuspected?

Such an identification, I think, misses the point of Cervantes' rosary invention as the solution to Don Quixote's lack of it; for it deprives it of its obvious offensive description which Castro himself put bluntly and without any attempt at sublimating it. These are Castro's words: "*pañal astroso*" (filthy diaper).³⁹ What is this that Castro sensed but did not state as the problem?

The key to this puzzle may be found in the word "*pañal*" used by Castro. But is such a term semantically correct in its usage here? It is obvious that Cervantes did not use it although it was known in the Castilian language since about 1400 and had been used by Antonio Nebrija as "*pañales para criar los niños,*" or diapers to rear children.⁴⁰ *Pañal* is etymologically derived from *pano* (cloth), and may be used as *faldón* or *folde* in a man's shirt. Castro used the term correctly to paraphrase Cervantes' "*faldas de la camisa, que andaban colgando*" ("folds of his shirt which were hanging"). But Castro qualifies these "*faldas*" in singular as "*pañal astroso.*" Obviously he made use of the semantically ambiguous meaning of this term to develop further his point which can be paraphrased as follows: The fold or shirttail of Don Quixote was so filthy because tucked under his pants and armor, it served him as a diaper. It would be consequently at least stained with the normal physiological functions but also polluted by semen, since Don Quixote's love for Dulcinea would have been a potential cause for this as well. And this in turn could be also what Cervantes had in mind but stopped short of saying.

Thus understood, Don Quixote's improvised rosary gains a meaning which until now, as far as I know, never was brought to bear upon the text in question. Pressing on then, the hermeneutical question of what Cervantes might have had in mind is not out of the question. Was it merely a crude joke as some have imagined it, thus such a silence, the exception being Castro; or was it something more subtle and sophisticated worthy of the mind of Cervantes? And furthermore, what would the Portuguese Inquisition have seen in it?

Granted that such an improvised rosary would have been filthy indeed, one question must be asked now: What sort of "filth" was

that? This is a question nobody thought of, and even Castro did not put forth. However, to the inquisitorial mind trained and at home with biblical language in its Latin Vulgate text, this would have been otherwise. Let us then review the potential sources of the rosary text in some of its most obvious *Vulgate* passages: “*Vir qui patitur fluxum seminis, immundus erit*” (Leviticus 15:12). Meaning that any man who is affected by semen *fluxum* is, *ipso facto*, considered “*immundus*,” or ritually unclean. Thus, Don Quixote’s rosary was not simply filthy as Castro saw, but rather it was biblically “unclean” and thus ritually unfit to serve as a means to approach God and offer prayer or *rezos*. The whole chapter of Leviticus, above mentioned, makes clear the significance of these laws and the forbidden nature of its negative religious meaning as well as the need for priestly purification in order to become clean again. But there is another text in prophetic literature which, taking as its theological basis the Levitical ritual laws, at the same time uses them as a prophetic critique.

One cannot help but seeing the inner theological connection of this text: “*Et facti sumus ut immundus omnes nos, et quasi pannus menstruata, universae justitiae nostrae*” (Isaiah 64:6), with the one in Leviticus. But the prophetic one by equating all our “own justices,” or righteousness, with the “*pannus menstruata*” of a woman’s period makes it clear that all devotional forms of religion based on our own means of achieving “*justitiae nostrae*,” or good works, as it was then understood in the Reformation theology, within which the rosary devotions were included, were as good as “filthy rags.”⁴¹ And Don Quixote’s rosary, whatever else it could have been, was also that.⁴²

It seems rather plausible that the Portuguese Inquisition would have noticed the potentially deeper meaning embedded in this Cervantes’ text which on the surface might be for most readers simply a joke of bad taste. Had Cervantes gone as far as the Inquisitor apparently thought?

CONCLUSION

It might seem that with this unexpected hermeneutical turn I would now be claiming Cervantes’ text as a hidden Reformation manifesto. Far from it. It is not my intent to propose such a solution. Yet one cannot bypass this text lightly and claim him as a

Counter-Reformation writer as some interpreters have done. But what about interpreting this text as Erasmian?

Much has been made of Erasmianism in Spain. It has been used as a hermeneutical panacea. As such, it served its purpose, but it also became an easy way to explain the otherwise unexplainable forms of heterodoxy. Américo Castro's explanation of the rosary text does so within its larger scope. This explains why Rodríguez Marín in attempting to offer some similar evidence shifted to other passages identified by him of Erasmian tendencies. But if all these arguments disconnect this text in particular from the Reformation as well as from Erasmianism and Counter-Reformation, then to what does it belong?

Before this can be answered it must be said first that the implicitly Erasmian interpretation of this text is based on the knowledge of Erasmus as a critic of the rosary as a lesser spirituality mixed with superstition and routine forms of prayer. And yet, Cervantes' point goes further, for it centers in the ritual impurity of the rosary as made up of a polluted rag. It is not then superstition or a lesser form of piety but rather *defilement* in the Levitical as well as in the prophetic sense. What Cervantes implies is that if prayers ought to be aided by the rosary, then in such an extreme situation as that of Don Quixote's being alone without other means, the sacred is transformed into its opposite, the unholy. Man is thus trapped within a scheme of things in which he is bound to be unholy and ridiculous.

This may sound like Erasmus, but it is prior to him because it has the theological barb of Isaiah, now critically attributed to Second Isaiah. Such a message goes actually against Erasmus himself since he never would agree that all our justices, or good works, are as good as filthy rags. All this is echoed in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians (3:9) and has affinities to Pauline Lutheranism rather than Erasmian, although Cervantes would not be using such a narrative as a Reformation point but rather as a literary theme of transformation for which the Old Testament is subtly used with that purpose.

One could argue that such intentionality would be farfetched, for it presupposes too much interest and knowledge of the Old Testament in Cervantes' case. But if he were a *converso*, or of Jewish background, as Castro himself proposed,⁴³ his knowledge of the

Law or Torah must be assumed as well as that of Isaiah. But this knowledge cannot be excluded either from an educated “Old Christian” of non-Jewish background. In such a case the biblical motif of transformation applied to the *Amadís*’ lack of rosary would be both a critique and a parody of the whole episode which nevertheless is placed at the center of the Sierra Morena narrative and its subplots without allowing it to be degraded into a simple peripheral joke.

Perhaps it was this subtle transformation motif which flashed into the mind of the Portuguese inquisitor as he would recall subconsciously the Leviticus text and even the Isaiah one. In so doing, he crossed it out, and Cervantes quickly understood. Not only did he make the text more palatable to the Inquisition but also in a stroke of ironic genius in the *Second Part* (1516) he says flatly that Don Quixote “picking up a large rosary, which he always carried with him, he strutted along with great pomp and solemnity (II, 46).”

Those who take this last text as a “repentance” of Cervantes and a proof of Don Quixote’s Counter-Reformation ideals miss Cervantes as the great recaster and transformer of texts not at the service of a religious doctrine but of art itself.



NOTES

¹ Martin de Riquer, *Aproximación al Quijote* (Barcelona: Editorial Teide, 1986), 118-120.

² A classic example is Miguel de Unamuno, *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho* (1905). See ch. XXVI: “Esta penitencia de Don Quijote en Sierra Morena nos trae a la memoria aquella otra de Iñigo de Loyola en la cueva de Manresa.”

³ Paul Descouzis, *Cervantes, A Nueva Luz* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1966). Its thesis being Don Quixote and the Council of Trent, it is curious that the Knight’s penance is not dealt with in ch. VI under the “Decreto de la Penitencia” at Trent, 61-64.

⁴ Helmut Hatzfeld, *El ‘Quijote’ como obra de arte del lenguaje*, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1972). He comments on the Knight’s rosary: “Solamente un ánima cándida y no un hipócrita refinado podría atreverse a presentar tales frases a la censura de aquel tiempo,” 156, n. 119. Hatzfeld has in mind A. Castro’s thesis of Cervantes as “hypocrite.”

⁵ Howard Mancing, *The Chivalric World of Don Quijote* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982), 84. It is the lack of the Knight’s sense of sin which is the disturbing element. Mancing follows Luis Rosales, *Cervantes y la libertad* (Madrid: SEP, 1960), II, 305-307.

⁶ See Thomas R. Hart, *Cervantes and Ariosto* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

- ⁷ Garcí Rodríguez de Montalvo, *Amadís de Gaula* (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1991). For an English translation, see *Amadís de Gaule*, ed. by Helen Moore, trans. by Anthony Munday (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).
- ⁸ *Don Quixote*, trans. by Walter Starkie (New York: Signet Classic, 1979), I, 26.
- ⁹ Internal citations are to the Starkie translation. See Note 8.
- ¹⁰ Not in Starkie's text or notes. Translation by the author.
- ¹¹ *Don Quijote* (Nueva edición crítica de Francisco Rodríguez Marín) (Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1949 [reprinted from 1928 edition]), 59-60. See also Ludovik Osterc Berlan, *El Quijote, la Iglesia y la Inquisición* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma, 1972), 37-38.
- ¹² Américo Castro, *El pensamiento de Cervantes* (Barcelona-Madrid: Editorial Noguer, 1972), 261.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 262.
- ¹⁴ Marcel Bataillon, *Érasme et l'Espagne*, 3 vols. (Genève: Droz, 1991), "nous surprenons Cervantès a effacer du Quichotte une plaisanterie irrévérencieuse pour le rosaire," I, 826. No change from the text of *Erasmus y España* (2nd Spanish ed.) (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1966), 784.
- ¹⁵ *Érasme et l'Espagne*, I, 613-629.
- ¹⁶ Joaquín Casaldueiro, *Sentido y forma del 'Quijote'* (Madrid: Insula, 1966 [1st. ed. 1949]), side steps the central episode to comment instead on the subplot of Sancho finding a suitcase, 121-123.
- ¹⁷ That is the chivalry motif of Don Quixote's imitation of Beltenebros and his undying love for his lady Oriana as *exemplum* for the Spanish Knight's love for Dulcinea.
- ¹⁸ Not all commentators glossed over this daring transformation. Vicente Gaos in his edition and commentary of *Don Quijote*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1987), remarks that Pellicer noticed that Cervantes did not want to mix the sacred with the profane, and thus he made Don Quixote "*no confesase ni oyese misa.*" *Ad locus* (I, 26) I, 527, note 51. Gaos does not comment on this point himself. As for Pellicer's explanation, it does not do much other than raise the problem. (Juan Antonio Pellicer's *Don Quijote* ed., 1797-1798, 5 vols.)
- ¹⁹ G.W. Pigman, "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 33 (1980): 1-32.
- ²⁰ Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 346.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 354, 347, 350, 358.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 349, 353.
- ²³ Of this episode he says, "It never goes to the root of things and is moderate in attitude. Above all, Don Quijote's adventures never reveal any of the basic problems of the society of the time." *Ibid.*, 345.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 538.
- ²⁵ See above. His 1st ed. was published in 1916. The 2nd ed. is a 10 vol. set.
- ²⁶ See above, IX, 170-178.
- ²⁷ See above note 17.
- ²⁸ *Don Quijote*, Gaos' ed. III, 122-161; 135-138. Castro's comments are just echoed in 135-136.
- ²⁹ *Don Quijote*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Editorial Castalia [5th ed.], 1978).
- ³⁰ L. A. Murillo, *A Critical Introduction to Don Quixote* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988).
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 75-81.
- ³² Antonio Vilanova, *Erasmus y Cervantes* (Barcelona: Editorial Lumen, 1989).
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 29-33.
- ³⁴ Eric J. Ziolkowski, *The Sanctification of Don Quixote* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.
- ³⁶ Angelo J. DiSalvo, *Cervantes and the Augustinian Religious Tradition* (York, SC: Spanish Literature Publication Company, 1989).

³⁷ Ibid., 62.

³⁸ Not within the *Amadís* context but as a note to “Cervantes y la Inquisición,” X, 57-62.

³⁹ See above note 12 and context.

⁴⁰ Joan Corominas, *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana*, 4 vols. (Bern: A. Francke A.G., 1954), III, 647.

⁴¹ The Latin term “*pannus*” is the equivalent of the Spanish “*pañño*” from where “*pañal*” is derived. Castro thus was very close etymologically to the biblical meaning but unaware of such significance.

⁴² It is clear that Don Quixote’s praying (*rezando*) a “million of Ave Mariás” would be a way of trying to accumulate good works by means of his improvised “unholy” rosary.

⁴³ Américo Castro, *Cervantes y los casticismos españoles* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1974 (1st ed. 1966), 130-143. For a photocopy of the original text, 1st ed., of *Don Quixote*’s “penance” see Nieto, *Consideraciones del Quijote. Crítica. Estética. Sociedad* (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2002), 60.