

Versa et Manduca: the Timing of Ends*Julio Baena*

Time is money. Not as a trope. Not even as an illustration of a commodification, such as it would be if I say “you and I are money.” Time is *really* money, one could say, if reality were not incommensurable with both time and money, that is, if reality were not incommensurable with Reality; if *things* were not incommensurable with *the thing of things*, with that ultimate Reality of ours made entirely of time/money (or let’s say God, the most unreal being the only Real).

This assimilation of time with money is one that Agustín García Calvo realizes often in his work. *Contra el Tiempo (Against Time)* is the book in which he particularly attacks Time, this ultimate layer of the ultimate ghost (Reality with a capital R), from different perspectives. These are his words: “pero solo se consolida esa existencia o realidad [del tiempo] cuando la idea de ‘tiempo’ se acerca a adquirir una cierta netitud o certidumbre [. . .] por medio del establecimiento de su Nombre, *tiempo*, en las lenguas de la Cultura dominante, lo cual implica la facilidad de que se le maneje o nos maneje en los negocios y que venga a asimilarse a la cosa de las cosas, a saber, dinero” (but [time’s] existence or reality is only consolidated when the idea of ‘time’ comes close to acquiring somewhat of a neatness and a certainty [. . .] by the means of the establishment of its Name, *time* in the languages of the dominant Culture, which implies the easiness with which it is handled or it handles us in business and how it comes to be assimilated to the thing of things—money) (16).

The formulation “Time = Money” using the more abstract symbol “=” is mine—not García Calvo’s. He would never be so casual with mathematics to use its logical ties out of their realm. I, however, dare use the symbol, as a symbol of the very unreality of those “things of things”: as a quantifier, because García Calvo goes even further: “todo lo que se cuenta por números es dinero (también la edad de usted—dicho sea de paso)” (everything that is counted by numbers is money (even that age of yours, by the way) (*Noticias*

de abajo 44). Time is as empty of being as money is, or as any quantity has ever been, as any *individual* has ever been. Obsession with time, like obsession with money, is the ultimate paranoid fantasy.

Of course, the way to escape them would be to escape the theater in which those fantasies take place: to escape the matrix, but that matrix, as Castillo and Egginton have made abundantly clear is nowadays an inflated multimatrix. It is an inflation, however, that takes place over a primordial obsession, over the primordial soup from which *future* emerges, and we know about future because we know about death. Time is empty, like money, but as García Calvo puts it, animals don't get bored, perhaps impatient, but not bored (I will discuss this later on, when I speak of Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio's distinction between "acquisitive time" and "consumptive time"): "sólo los que saben su muerte son capaces de sentir ese vacío" (only those who know their death are capable of feeling this void) (*Contra el Tiempo*, 45).

Or perhaps the very generation of that matrix occurs not in a time/space continuum (the collusion of time with space might be the ultimate fantasy of science) but in a time/money continuum—now: there is something more tangible. As García Calvo puts it, "En el mundo EN que se habla, mientras no se hable de él, no hay desde luego Tiempo: ni momentos en que se dice lo que se diga (eso sólo sucede cuando a la conversación se la sitúa, "desde fuera", en un escenario, que evidentemente es ya real, como el de una novela)" (In the world IN which we speak, as long as we don't speak about it, there is of course no Time: nor moments in which what might be said is said (that only happens when the conversation is situated 'from the outside,' on a stage, which obviously is already real, like that of a novel) (*Contra el Tiempo*, 95). When *did* the world become a stage? If Egginton is right, then something happened at the time of the first inflation of medialogy that has time as a fundamental coordinate of illusion. But, as discussion goes about time as a Big Thing (Big Bang Theory), the ingredient to cause inflation must have been already there.

Contar is the verb that we use in Spanish for both "to count" and "to tell a story." *Contar/storytelling/el cuento*: Scheherazade, the postponement of death; *contar/computare/la cuenta*: numbers, counting; computers; death itself. As Sancho Panza abundantly shows in *Don Quixote*, *el cuento* comes incredibly close to *la cuenta*. When he and Don Quixote (Part I, Ch. 20) have to spend that terrible night in total darkness, Sancho tries to cheat fear telling his master this story in which counting goats (instead of sheep: one has to improvise) becomes the make-or-break of the story, and of the time-entertained: empty time of terror: wait for dawn. Storytelling *becomes* computation. One error in counting the goats and time is up. And, of course, Sancho colludes *cuento*, *cuenta*, and money again on Part II, Ch. 3, when asked about what happened to the 100 gold coins that he had found in Part I—never mentioned

again—, but this time, he says, in a hardly translatable pun, that “No estoy ahora para ponerme en cuentas ni cuentos” (he is not in the mood for accounts or stories). He will not become his own judge offering a *final tally*.

If time is money, can then the end of times be the end of money? Or perhaps that minimal difference between time and times (in Spanish we also speak of “los tiempos”—the times—as something subtly different from “el tiempo”—time) prevents this prayer of logic from being efficacious?

“End” is itself an ambiguous word. When attached to “History,” for instance, it has acquired, since even before Hegel, the edge of “finality”—a purpose, an accomplishment—that has even reversed the first meaning of “end,” which was “no more.” Such a deviation is clear when we analyze with García Calvo Fukuyama’s famous End of History. “El Fin de la Historia no es otra cosa que la finalidad de Capital y Estado, juntos los dos en uno: esa finalidad o ideal consiste en la reducción definitiva de la vida a Historia, es decir, la sustitución de la vida por la idea de la vida y su conversión en tiempo, un tiempo vacío y siempre futuro, donde nada pasa, puesto que todo lo que pase ya ha pasado: es Historia en el momento en que sucede” (The End of History is nothing but the finality of Capital and State, together as one: that finality or ideal consists on the definitive reduction of life to History, that is, the replacement of life by the idea of life and its transformation into time, an empty, always future time, where nothing happens, because all that may happen has already passed: it is History the moment it happens) (*Contra el Tiempo*, 297).

Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio can take us a step further into this double meaning of “end” and therefore into the core of the expression “end of time(s).” Time as finality (History’s only matrix) indeed proclaims Fukuyama’s invincibility, as shown in our despair, our gloom, our sensation of “having no future,” in spite of the strong evidence that future, i.e., death, is all we have. The end of time is, indeed, the end of History. Of course, Fukuyama was exultant (Finally! We made it!) where we are already mourning what once was (That’s it: no more). For Sánchez Ferlosio, following Hegel’s dictum that “periods of happiness are blank pages in History” (*Philosophy of History*, 26), and considering that happiness has never demanded to make sense (“¿Acaso pide la felicidad tener sentido? Niégate, pues a dárselo al dolor”—Has happiness ever demanded to make sense? Refuse, then, to give it to pain—*Mientras no cambien los dioses, nada ha cambiado*, 93), sense, i.e., finality, and domination are one and the same thing, and the only thing that History is all about (“no hay más Historia que la Historia de la dominación”—there is no other history than the history of domination) (69). Time can be understood as *tiempo consuntivo* (consumptive time), or *tiempo adquisitivo* (acquisitive time). Consumptive time is defined in the mentioned seminal essay, and redefined in the later *God and Gun*, as “el tiempo [. . .] no dirigido hacia ningún futuro, [. . .]

. .] el tiempo sin sentido de los bienes y la felicidad. [el tiempo] cuyo ahora se desliza por un *todavía* y cesa en un *ya no*” (time not addressed towards any future; senseless time of goods and happiness. Time whose now slides on a *still* and ceases in a *no more*). Acquisitive time, its opposite, “corre, sin ahora, por un *todavía no* y se cumple y corona en un *ya*” (runs, without now, through a *not yet* and is accomplished and crowned in a *finally*) (*God and Gun*, 102). The gods have not changed, for Ferlosio, because whatever the Gods’ names are (Huitzilopochtli, Jehova, Progress, The Market . . .) they have always adhered to a Divine “episteme”—my term, not Ferlosio’s—called by Ferlosio “*mentalidad expiatoria*” (*expiation mentality*), which “consiste en hacer de la felicidad y del dolor partidas mutuamente reductibles por relación de intercambio” (consists of making happiness and pain to be stocks mutually reducible through an exchange relation) (*Mientras no cambien* . . . 143). This is, for Ferlosio, the ethical question: to disassemble this accounting mentality. It brings with it the notion that there is a *bottom-line* (the line that comes at the end) which determines the validity of everything else, as in the books that all business must keep, with assets and liabilities. “No pain, no gain” becomes literal, literal for both words. I do not go to the gym. My belly reveals that the gain postponed by those who postpone it to pain is no “gain” at all; it is simply the moment of now in a life of eating and enjoying eating, which, of course, will end. When and if the gym-addict acquires his/her desired weight/six-pack, s/he may say “I did it.” When (not “if,” of course) I die, I will be entitled to say “no more.” To coin a phrase, “se acabó lo que se daba” (that’s it; no more).

We conceive of “end,” then, as the moment of fruition, as finality, as the sense associated with “making sense” and thus think of time as empty time, as a medium to accomplish that finality. Or we conceive of “end” as the opposite of “culmination”: as meaningless, simple death. It is strange how a text that speaks frequently about the end of times (the Judeo-Christian Bible) opts for varied terms to refer to those end-times. Let us take a famous passage (depending on what version of the Bible, it can be quoted as *Ecclesiasticus* 7: 36—*King James Bible*, for instance—or *Ecclesiasticus* 7: 40—*Biblia Nácar-Colunga* or *Vulgata*). “Remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss” (*KJB*). “Remember your end, and you will never sin” (*Bible Catholic online*). “Memorare novissima tua et in aeternum non peccabis” (*Vulgata*). “Acuérdate de tus postrimerías y no pecarás jamás” (*Biblia Nácar-Colunga*). “The end” or “your end” is indeed a curious variant. The end of things is not the same if we think of it as our own personal death or as “doomsday.” It is curious that the advice that *Ecclesiasticus* wants to give seems to be a personal one. Still, *KJB* prefers to speak of “the end,” and not “your end.” But it is in the Latin or Spanish versions where we find fascinating terms for “the end.” “Novissi-

mae,” in the *Vulgata*; the end is “the super-new.” In Spanish, the word used is “postrimerías.” A plurality of things (just like “the end of times” and “the end of time” defer from one another because of the tension singular/plural). Of course, a long Catholic tradition, from Catechism, teaches that there are *four* (no more, no less) *postrimerías*; the Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven.

Subtly, the four “ends” have been amplified in art, literature, philosophy, but above all in the methods of ideological self-reproduction. Heaven and Hell, for instance, portray the corollary of the notion of time (i.e., the notion of “eternity”) as something in which “end” would be a welcome “no more” (i.e., if you are in Hell, you would prefer non-existence to eternity), or, conversely, the ultimate satisfying “now” for which there is no “no more.” Time-till-Judgment can be thought of as the ultimate test of wisdom/foolishness, as when Tirso de Molina’s Don Juan Tenorio answers “¡Qué largo me lo fiáis!” (What long-term credit you give me—translation by J. McCaw in his edition of *El burlador de Sevilla*—p. 61) in one of the clearest stagings of the expiation mentality. Death, of course, has had all kinds of representation, from a poetic object of desire, even a poetic “you” in the conventions and rules of courtly love, to the old Grim Reaper playing chess with the valiant knight at the seashore, to the silky thread-cum-long-braided hair from which the lover hangs and falls.

But it is perhaps Cervantes who has best captured the intimacy with which money, time, and numbering treat each other. Like García Calvo, he can see how death lurks at the end of the numbering (counting) process. Sancho Panza refused to give his would-be-judges *cuentos* and *cuentas*. He refused to be his own accountant giving a *final tally*. Because that final tally, that bottom-line is precisely what Jesus of Nazareth speaks about when speaking about how everything is written down in that *liber scriptus proferetur / in quo toto continentur / unde mundo iudicetur* of the *Dies Irae* (The written book will be brought forth in which everything is contained according to which the world will be judged): Says Jesus in *Matthew* 10: 30 “The very hairs of your head are all numbered.” (*King James Bible*) (“Aun los cabellos todos de vuestra cabeza están contados”—*Biblia Nácar-Colunga*; “Vestri autem capilli capitis omnes numerati sunt.”—*Vulgata*). Times are computed. If the notion of time, as García Calvo suspected elsewhere, is derived from the previous—and human—notion of *tempo/rhythm*, the passing of time is the perfect *algorithm*. Time “counted by numbers,” as García Calvo said. Time as money.¹

One could say, then, putting together the observations about time of both García Calvo and Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, that time can be *always* thought of as *money to spend* (i.e., money to waste—interesting commonality of roots in the words “waste” and “gastare”), in which case money is not money properly

speaking, because it is instantly converted into things, *goods*—not commodities.² Time thus understood is *consumptive time*. But time can also *always* be thought of as money to acquire, the thing of a thing, value (*valeo* = to stand for, to mean); money that always lives in a future, i.e., in a state of “distributed death”: capital proper; *acquisitive time*. Consumptive time, time wasted, could only enter the realm of value as use-value, i.e., as thing, as a good. Acquisitive time never leaves value proper (exchange value). Like money (it is money), time is the commodity of commodities.

One can also say, then, that the end of time could be the end of money, but that, given the lack of symmetry (in terms of power and power dynamics—power being one feature attached to time-as-money) between the users of consumptive time vs. the investors in acquisitive time, it may be of more primordial importance for *end* to become the end of History.

How does History end? Can I simply attach to it a bunch of blank pages, happy times (a History stopper for Hegel)? Is there always, even in blank pages, a bottom line, given that even the hairs on my head are numbered, as if God had a peculiar neurosis that forced Him to count them—perhaps because an even stronger God will make him responsible for any hair missing from the entries on the ledger? If I skip to the last page of the *historia* (story/History), to find out whodunit, am I cheating? “Caminante, no hay camino: / se hace camino al andar” (There is no road, oh, walking man: one makes a road as one walks), said—no: made into poetry—Antonio Machado (239). Will we simply stop walking?

Cervantes, as always, is the master of the terrifying irony subjacent to these issues. His straight Catholic face and his subtle undermining techniques are mapped, to give one crucial example, into his Don Quixote. Don Quixote dies a good Christian after having declared null and void all of his deeds as a knight errant. So aware is Cervantes of this contract-value of the end (of death), that he ostensibly has his narrator transcribe verbatim his will and testament, in the typical formal style of such documents. For many readers—even scholars—Alonso Quijano, el Bueno, that last self-interpellation of the hero, is “the real identity” of the character. He either “discovers it” or “recovers it.” Those readers miss Cervantes’ whole point, made since page 1 of Part I: that the hidalgo’s identity, that the hidalgo as an interpellated subject is not part of “the truth” of the story. These readers and critics even miss how everybody else—characters, narrator—keep calling Don Quixote Don Quixote dozens of times until the last line of the novel.

One constant in Cervantes is that he always underlines what he considers to be an important point, especially when those points are points made by (to borrow a term from Egginton) his *minor strategy* of saying things (obvious in his frequent “Oh, by the way,” his constant discordances of text, his irony,

etc.). His Licenciado Vidriera also dies and ostensibly acquires fame (according to the narrator) “dejando fama en su muerte de prudente y valentísimo soldado” (leaving in his death the fame of a prudent and most valiant soldier) (74). One line of the entire novella is dedicated to this supposedly glorious death. But it is the last line: the bottom-line. This one last line, in which the ultra-ironic Cervantes even uses the adjective “prudent,” which would be the most preposterous adjective to describe the madman Vidriera, “balances the books.” His fame—contrary to what we just read, if we read the entire novella—comes from this last line, and not from his magnificent madness in believing to be made of glass, etc. It is Vidriera’s life, not his death, that is important for Cervantes, just like it is Don Quixote’s life what negates the bottom-line that Catholicism would like to impose on it.

How to end (a story)? Cervantes is the one—he had to be—to posit the “Pasamonte contradiction,” useful for judging men according to the *expiating mentality* and the notion of time as acquisition always in a future, but not necessarily good for judging characters in books . . . or even humans in our own matrices of development. In Part I, Ch. 22, Ginés de Pasamonte, one of the galley slaves freed by Don Quixote, tells him that he has written the story of his life, in the mode of *Lazarillo de Tormes*. Don Quixote asks him if it is finished, and Ginés answers with a rhetorical question: “¿Cómo puede estar acabado, [. . .] si aún no está acabada mi vida?” (How can it be finished, when my life isn’t?). The question is rhetorical for anyone who automatically equates “end of life” with “end of story,” i.e., with a *proper* ending. A story does not end properly if it simply stops, just as I would not end this paragraph properly if

Yet, the very improper ending to my previous paragraph (I just hope the copy editor allows me to keep it) is more often than not the way a life ends. Ginés’ question is rhetorical for all, because we have all been exposed to this illusion that life ends like story (or History) is supposed to. For any alert reader of Cervantes, though, the question is not necessarily rhetorical. And it goes beyond addressing a point of narratology—the shortcomings of auto-biography given that the “I” who writes is not the “I” that is written—. It is a *legitimate* literal question for which the very novel *Don Quixote de la Mancha* that he is writing is trying to provide an answer, or answers (to the question “how,” as opposed to yes/no questions, there may be many answers).

It might well be that in our culture we ask about the bottom line of the life of heroes because, before we had heroes, we had saints. Yes, heroes (Achilles, Aeneas) are older than saints are, but between the age of heroes and the age of saints, a veritable *end of times* occurred. The Pagan Ancient world was superseded by the Cristian Medieval world; civil society by Feudalism; slave work by serfdom . . . (Could I be speaking, in the anachronistic mode that

irritates my readers often, of us now as much as about them then? —Nah, you apocalyptic fool!). There was an end of times—that is for sure—back then. Afterwards, it was the saints rather than the heroes that dominated the ideological landscape. Heroes like Beowulf, Roland, or El Cid are relics of Pagan times, or mapping of sainthood into chivalry. And we have, of course, Ignatius Loyola, doing exactly the same thing that the good hidalgo of La Mancha did, but using a different genre. Don Quixote's *mimetic desire* follows chivalry romances; Loyola's follows the genre of hagiography.³ The lives of saints, especially the collections of lives of saints.⁴ Those saints win the day over their competitors—the heroes of chivalry romances, to the extent of having their respective genres pitted against one another in both the cases of Loyola and Don Quixote. In both cases, the antidote for reading too many books of heroes is not “do something else; don't read so much,” but “*read* something else.” When Don Quixote abominates his past readings, in the last chapter, what he literally says is that he wished he had more time left in order to . . . “leer otros que sean luz del alma” (read other books that can be light to the soul).

When we read the lives of the saints, to put it succinctly, we are reading the *deaths* of the saints. In direct opposition to the chivalry books, which are fundamentally endless, almost demanding a sequel, a sequel to the life of a saint is out of the question.⁵ I will be using for this essay one particular *Flos Sanctorum*: a baroque one; one that Father Ribadeneyra puts together in 1599, but keeps being used, updated, and given ecclesiastical permission until 1790. It is, then, a monument of steady ideological maintenance, of *major strategy*, from just about the time in which Cervantes is writing *Don Quixote* to the time of the French Revolution.

Reading the *Flos Sanctorum* in the shape that it acquired during the Baroque, one thinks that Foucault in *The Order of Things* could have given a better illustration of “odd” episteme than the one he gives based on Borges' sui-generis rendering of the “Chinese Encyclopedia.” Had Foucault simply given the example of how issues are grouped, emphasized, and silenced in the baroque *Flos Sanctorum* (precisely the *Flos Sanctorum* disseminated in obedience to the old episteme, but by necessity being active in the new), his point should have been less hypothetical, less of an invented thing.

In 1790, one year after the start of the French Revolution, the *Flos Sanctorum* of old is re-published, re-furbished, and it keeps, at the same time, a strange association with time: it is a calendar, an order of *dates* as opposed to *days* (day belongs to consumptive time; date to acquisitive time). The saints are made to fit a calendar. They keep time. Their lives are the timepiece of some other duration, or waiting period. In 1790, the new episteme is already centuries old, but the *Flos Sanctorum* pays no attention to a method of classification of the saints according to genus, species, or any other modern epis-

temological order (martyrs on one section, confessors on the next one. . .) It pays attention, though, to the calendar. It actually provides for an *alternate* calendar in which the profane, simply conventional “June 29th” becomes “St. Peter’s Day.” Many people in rural Europe still count time in this manner (“I remember neatly because it was La Virgen de los Dolores . . .”). Even non-religious commemorations retain this substitution of names of saints for simple numbers: “Grito de Dolores” over-means September 15th, Independence Day for Mexico. It is noticeable how the French revolutionaries were adamant to change the names of the months in the calendar, giving them some “content” in the manner in which Catholics gave the dates “content.” To the Revolution, “April” or “November” needed the content that names such as “Germinal” or “Brumaire” had.

But aside from the very strong fact that the *Flos Sanctorum* is a calendar, it is striking to see the super-abundance of martyrs and virgins as the preferred type of sainthood. Of course, that super-abundance has to do with the fact that it was the early Christian era, the era of persecution, that provided *massive* canonizations, the outstanding example of which are the Eleven-Thousand Virgins (October 21st) that supposedly accompanied St. Ursula—Patron-Saint of Universities, by the way—in her martyrdom. For many days of the year, there isn’t a non-massified saint to commemorate, but since the date has to be sanctified anyway, any saint in the group of massive martyrs fills in the blank (just like, in a newspaper, the number of pages is pre-ordained, and therefore each day has the same number of news a priori).

It is very revealing that the *Flos Sanctorum* has a preliminary and lengthy explanation of the methods of torture used in the thousands of cases of martyrdom. In an explicit, almost obscene way, the case is made for each martyr obtaining his/her last objective (salvation) in a proportional scale to the gruesomeness and cruelty of the method of torture. No other method of sanctity is given an explanation. Just “De los tormentos de los mártires.” (Of the tortures of the martyrs). The expiation mentality is the dominant background. The more a saint suffers, the more capital s/he has acquired. Compared to the torments described for some saints, the crucifixion of Christ pales in terms of suffering. Can it be helped if one reads this as the absolute contemporary reading—especially in 1790—to the works of the Marquis de Sade? The care with which every possible mode of hurt to every part of the body is delineated reminds us of—indeed—the attention to detail of Ribadeneyra’s superior, Loyola, and it confirms the old suspicion of Roland Barthes that Loyola and Sade (with the utopic-socialist Fourier) are birds of the same epistemological feather: *logothetes*, as he put it. Excess, as with the multiplication of the gory photograph in our own inflationary medialogy, is the norm in the *Flos Sanctorum*. Eleven virgins are not enough, so an old “misreading” multiplies the

already massive sacrifice of eleven virgins a thousand-fold. To be a hermit in the desert is not enough: St. Simeon the Stylite lives on a pillar for 37 years. To be burned alive is not enough: St. Lawrence will be grilled *slowly*.

I will leave aside the issue of virginity. It seems to me the ultimate negation of being. Not only the concept itself is a negative concept (virginity is to not have sex), but also it seems to constitute the ultimate asset for women (*virgo et martyr* is applied only to women in the lists of saints). The acquisitive aspect of time as cumulative virginity is a particularly twisted case of expiation. But the issue is complex enough to merit a study as long as this one, or longer.

I will focus, though, on two particularly excessive saints: St. Simeon the Stylite, and St. Lawrence.

What makes Saint Lawrence special are the words put in his mouth by hagiographers since his story began to be told. Put to slow death by the Roman tyrant, literally grilled in a slow fire, he is supposed to have said to the tyrant (I will use Ribadeneyra's *Flos Sanctorum* rendition): "Mira, miserable, que ya está assada una parte de mi cuerpo; buélvela, para que se asse la otra; y tú puedas comer de mis carnes sazonadas." (See, you miserable, how one side of my body is already roasted; flip it over so the other side can roast, and you can eat of my [well]seasoned flesh). (Vol. II, p. 463).

Saint Lawrence's martyrdom has enough baroque resonances to make him a favorite saint of Baroque Spain. Just to mention one, Phillip the Second's signature monument is the monastery of St. Lawrence at El Escorial (yes, he decided on that saint because his troops had obtained a great victory on his festivity—timing; calendars, the tit-for-tat of acquisition, and of expiation: you did this for me, I'll do this for you). I will mention a second one (this source will be my last ingredient to this article): in a world in which torture and violent, gory death was very much an everyday issue for many people, from *pícaros* to the highest nobility, the torture of the saints acquires a familiar tone, and a twisted subtext. Anyone who is subjected to torture can claim a not-so-preposterous affinity with the Saints. Even with Christ. A perverted and subversive *Imitatio Christi* (*imitatio sanctorum*), of a different kind of perversion from that of the devotions of prostitutes to Mary Magdalene, or of Negro slaves in Cuba to "Santa Barbara"-Yemaya, becomes normal behavior. Diego Duque de Estrada offers the proof, when, having been tortured in a manner not unlike St. Lawrence's, he *jokes* (or he as autobiographer says that he did), first offering a picaresque/baroque version of St. Lawrence's irony: "lo que digo es que no hay carne para tantos gatos" (57) (what I say is that there isn't enough meat for so many "cats" [thieves]), and then quoting St. Lawrence's words in a summarized form, in Latin: "*versa et manduca*" (Flip [me] over and eat). This means that the ultimate irony at the end of life ex-

pressed by this extreme saint becomes common linguistic currency, if not in the reality of a seventeenth-century Spaniard (Duque de Estrada, as I will say later, is far from being trustworthy when he writes), at least in the imaginary person that he wants to portray to/in his fully theatrical world.

We must complicate Ferlosio's duality. It is excellent as a point of departure, but if it is taken as an either/or state of affairs, we could be doomed to impasse. Irony, the Cervantine tool *par excellence*, is a finer instrument for dismounting certainties and for actually putting the *finishing touch* on any human subject in such way that is made into a work of art.

Saint Lawrence's irony rests on the projection of consumptive time into acquisitive time. The existence in the present (in a "still" that goes on to a "no more") discovers pleasure in postponing. Good things are worth waiting for (good food, good sex, the *denouement*—the strip tease, that is—of a good story). We sacrifice the absolute present, using time as a tool of postponement, of deferment. We introduce a measure of sado-masochism in the waiting for a meal to be properly prepared (yes: we make a pleasure of the passage from the raw to the cooked, from the necessary castration that comes as the prize of civilization. The passage is not an innocent one).⁶ Music, as Lévi-Strauss saw clearly, is essentially waiting for the right moment. The same happens in storytelling, or in cooking. We wait for the strip-teaser (tease is always sado-masochistic). We wait until the very last moment for the hero to come to the rescue, or to be rescued. Only at the last moment, at the end of time, at second 001 (or 007), will James Bond deactivate the nuclear device.

It is at that precise moment, then, that Saint Lawrence, maintaining his own sado-masochistic tempo, tells the tyrant to turn him over. He was being grilled slowly (the speed of the grilling carefully controlled by the tyrant's servants). The irony rests on how this tempo of slow cooking becomes attached to the moment of consumption ("eat [me]!") but according to the logic of acquisitive time (hanging on a "not yet" that culminates in a "finally") that stands for both the imagined pleasure of the tyrant in eating at the right moment, and for the pleasure of the saint of finally acquiring his prize (death as salvation). For Saint Lawrence, time has come to fruition. His bonds have matured. His, like all saints', is acquisitive time. Heaven is often expressed as the metaphor/metonymy of "a treasure." Losses in life are investments. "I'm done," he says: "time of finality for me; time of eating for you." For the tyrant, who wanted to prolong St. Lawrence's suffering as much as possible, his death, his "being done" is an unwanted "no more" typical of consumptive time. His aim was that the torment is prolonged indefinitely, that the time of suffering of the victim is consumptive time (still, still, still . . .), in other words, hell.

One particularly grotesque way in which Saint Lawrence's martyrdom accentuates its character of competitive challenge when disseminated as story is the way in which an author/character beyond definition, Diego Duque de Estrada, appropriates it to his torment as a rogue in jail, as I mentioned before. It is a commonplace in the Picaresque, from *Lazarillo de Tormes* to *El Buscón*, to make a joke about the infamous (rogue, thief, prostitute, or witch) as someone "persecuted" in relation to "justicia" (which in Spanish stands for both "righteousness" and "justice"). The joke in its variations offers a rich matrix for meditation on how close, indeed, the world in which the martyrs lived and died remains in relation to the world in which every-day Europeans of the *Ancien Regime* were subjected to persecution, jail, and—yes—torture. "Bienaventurados los que padecen persecución por la justicia" (Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake) (*Matthew* 5:10) is the catch phrase that calls for this impious collusion of the martyr and the damned, the saint and the heretic, the deserving of Heaven and the scum of Hell. That's how Lázaro de Tormes describes his father's infamy, adding to the usual joke of "padesció persecución por justicia" (he endured persecution by/for justice/righteousness) the supplement of being holier than . . . well, St. Peter, because Peter denies Jesus (*Luke* 22: 54–62) but Lázaro's father, upon being put to torment, "confesó y no negó" (confessed and did not deny) (92). In *El Buscón*, Quevedo puts in direct contact the protagonist, his father (the persecuted one: publicly hanged), and his uncle, who happens to be the executioner. The contact is a letter, in which the uncle writes Pablos telling him how "honorably" his father had died—honor being, as I will emphasize with Duque de Estrada, the ultimate commodity to which time-as-acquisition is applied—, a veritable "testimony" of "sainthood" offered by the most reliable of eyewitnesses: "Dígolo como quien lo guindó" (I say this as the one who hanged him) (146). On that same letter, the grotesque "communion" (the consumption of the martyr's body) is alluded to, and re-emphasized in Book 2, Ch. 4: a hellish beggar's banquet, an unholy supper in which they pray for *pasteles* (meat pies) because they never know *who* they are eating.

Diego Duque de Estrada is an unbearable author/narrator of an unbearable precursor of great European classics such as *Baron Munchausen* or the memoirs of Casanova. He is part *picaro*; the name "Duque" is simply a last name, but he toys with whoever listens to him leaving in ambiguity the possibility that it is a title of nobility, and he makes up—with proper documentation—the story that his family descends from *both* Roman emperors and Germanic nobility. But he is a *desengañado* (disillusioned one; un-duped one): the moment of writing, following Guzmán de Alfarache's mode, is that of the retirement from the world. In Duque de Estrada's case, there is no true *desengaño* (disillusion) because his *comentarios* (memoirs) have simply been

augmented time and time again, so that the *desengaño* is both visible and comically absent. The author/character depicts himself as being the best in everything. His grotesque collection of baroque exploits and “Guinness records” reminds one of “the most interesting man in the world” present in the ads of a famous Mexican beer. Duque de Estrada is the best swordsman, the best rider, the best lover, and, of course the best-dressed man in Europe (yes, he travels as a soldier/ambassador all over Europe). To that baroque commodity of commodities—honor—he sacrifices his entire life. Even after his *desengaño* (he becomes a friar) he boasts of being the best in the business. When he quotes the Latin words from the martyrdom of Saint Lawrence (“*versa et manduca*”), he is not just using the perverse picaresque trick: he really thinks that his torment is unequalled. He amplifies the scene of his torture, so that the reader can experience—almost as in a Mel Gibson movie, or in Loyola’s *Exercises*, or in a Sade novel—each blow, each variety of torment, and, most of all, how time passes. The entire scene seems surreal to a modern reader, because it encapsulates the Baroque in all its deviation from any reality. It is because this text is not well known among Hispanists that I bring it to this essay with the hope that anyone who is minimally interested in the Baroque reads it. I use the older edition by the Academia de la Historia, the newer edition by Castalia being out of print. Duque de Estrada’s autobiographical narrative informs the reader of how he kills his loved one, in a cloak-and-dagger episode worthy of a cheap Hollywood movie with Rudolph Valentino. He goes on to kill several more people, always in the competitive mode that his *honra* (honor) demands of him. *Honra* feeding on *honra*, he finally is apprehended. This is the tone he sets (let us remember that the moment of writing is supposed to be *after* his *desengaño* and renunciation of the world): “y por crueldad no vista diré que la madre del muerto, el día que llegué, siendo viuda y habiendo tenido siempre la casa colgada de luto, aquel día se le quitó ella, y colgó la casa de damascos, é hizo un convite á sus parientes; cosa indigna no solo de su nobleza, pero aun de Cristiana” (52) (and as a never-seen cruelty I will say that the deceased’s mother, the day I [was apprehended], being a widow and having always kept the house in mourning drapes, that day she took them off herself, and hung fine drapes, and organized a banquet for her relatives, which is improper not only to her nobility, but even to a Christian). The game of torture-as-asset works only if the tortured one can exchange his suffering as “good.” To do this, the suffering must be made to oppose “bad.” One of the saints most amplified in Ribadeneyra’s *Flos Sanctorum* is San Hermenegildo, the patron saint of the Spanish Monarchy. Historically, he was a traitor to his father, king Leovigildo, and any State would have put him to death as such. But his treason was made joining the pro-Catholic party of Spanish Visigoths and prominent Hispano-Romans, and therefore his suffering is *coined* as an

asset, to the point of making a saint out of an enemy of the State. Duque de Estrada, thus, has to make clear that he suffers as a “good” man (actually: as the *best* man that ever lived). “Díxome el Corregidor: ‘la conclusión será que os haré pedazos ó me diréis la verdad.’ Oíme tratar de vos y respondí con extraña cólera: ‘vos sois el vos.’ (53) (the Sheriff told me: in conclusion, I will turn you [vos: informal] to pieces or you [vos: informal] will tell me the truth.) I heard how I was being called ‘vos’ and I replied angrily: ‘you are the vos.’ His worse suffering is to be naked—obsessed as he is with clothing—, and during the entire ordeal, described hour by hour, he calls his jailers “Jews,” even “tyrant Jews,” to make clear what the roles are. This is how he comes to repeat St. Lawrence’s last irony. On p. 60, after the ordeal is over, the old gallows joke about being “martyr or confessor”—two of the most prominent kinds of sainthood, together with “virgin” in the *Flos Sanctorum*—, that is: to be or not to be a “rat,” is repeated.

Actualizations of consumptive time tend to acquire the mode of acquisitive time the moment we “civilize” them. We make them ludic. We know and want foreplay to be over. We know and want that Bond will disarm the bomb. We conceive of hell, that ultimate acquisition, in terms of consumption (still, still, still . . .) but it is an empty ludic, i.e., make-believe, consumption because we must pretend that it doesn’t end, that there isn’t a “no more” moment.

For Saint Simeon, the rules of the time game are also ironically intertwined. His, like Duque de Estrada’s, is the logic of the athlete, or of the record-breaker. How long can I stay on top of my pillar. Every day that passes from the point of view of acquisitive time is a point not yet the last; from the point of view of consumptive time, it is a “still here.” But Simeon’s logic is flawless. He knows that he is de-living his life (*se desvive*), just as any Olympic athlete does, by staying on a pillar. His price: the afterlife. Even if there seems not to be an existential contradiction in St. Simeon’s peculiar sport, like in the gym-driven idea of life, there is still an *operational* contradiction: as means to acquisition, Simeon wants his life to be long; as an impediment to his goal, he wants it to be short. His pillar is an unavoidable *memento moris*. It must be the ruined remains of some old building, even temple to the eternal gods, but Simeon gives it immortality, defeating the purpose of the image of decay.

Timing the ends: converting them into non-ends. The horrendous timing of the cooking that Lawrence introduces as a monkey wrench in the tyrant’s timing of the torture is a *supplementary* clock. A future is invented the moment a clock is put to use. Simeon lives on a pillar, but why a pillar? What kind of a desert has pillars as its central points, as its *foci*? A pillar that stands alone in such a place is either a remnant of a ruin, of something that was, or an

absurd object left there by accident, maybe on the way to a construction site. A pillar such as Simeon's short-circuits the idea of *duration* (between "instant" and "eternity"). But so does Lawrence's irony. The plural of "times" calls for the plural of "ends" depriving that empty non-thing called "time" of its divine, i.e., money-like, qualities. That "s," introduced by Saint Lawrence's supplementary "oven clock" and by the "other time" in which Saint Simeon's pillar was not a ruin, undermines the interchangeability, the emptiness of time. Or, put in another manner, taking the "s" out of "time" and of "end" commodifies them, makes them analogous to "the individual"—the commodified human being—the "unit."

Saint Simeon does nothing on his pillar (yes, everyone came to see him, to pray with him, to hear him preach . . . but that was not the point). Saint Lawrence finds an unexpected activity at the end of his life (let's eat). Both of them, subtly, have something in common. They have both *invested* in the one future they believe in. The problem with us is that, having no future to believe in any longer, fully knowing that our only future is death, we decide to consume time in the mode of acquisition: it cannot be wasted. Recently I saw on TV the total opposite preaching from that of St. Simeon. It was an ad for a brand of ginger ale. The slogan, advice, or sales-pitch was "relax harder." Obviously, the problem is not that we have no future, that we have no time. The problem is that it appears that time is *all* we have. Consumerism, or inflated medialogy, are consumption in acquisitive timing mode: never accomplished except in "the future." Never an "at last"; product before need; medium as message; death distributed in advance, as a *mort-gage*.

In memoriam Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio 1927–2019

Notes

1. See his *Del ritmo del lenguaje*. In it, AGC studies how dance and poetry precede any abstract notion of time in any culture. On how many cultures do not even have a word for "time", even on how the Greek and Latin words for it are not quite what the modern word/idea of time would like them to be, AGC starts the discussion in the 1970s, in books like *Del ritmo . . .*, and follows the threads into his later work, such as *Contra el Tiempo*. As to how music is "an instrument for the obliteration of time" see Lévi-Strauss's *The Raw and the Cooked*, 16.
2. García Calvo and Sánchez Ferlosio belong to the same generation of young intellectuals under the Franco regime. They collaborated often, in the 1960s and 1970s, but never to the extent of—say—Deleuze-Guattari or Castillo-Egginton. Very different

and very similar, they probably constitute the best example of how critical thinking home-grew in Spain parallel to, but independent from the great generations of French or American thinkers.

- 3 René Girard's insight in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, followed by Cesáreo Bandera's still seminal *Mimesis conflictiva* are must-go-to references for any reader interested in the two-way relation between reality and fiction.
- 4 So tell us Loyola's biographers in unison, such as Ribadeneyra. The biographies of Loyola also emphasize the contrariness of the "good" books to that of the "bad" books, namely chivalry romances.
- 5 On how chivalry romances are endless, and on how Cervantes reflects upon this problem, and solves it in his *Quixote*, Edward Dudley's *The Endless Text* is still invaluable.
- 6 Based on this ludic property of "waiting," music, or myth—or story, one might add, remembering Sheharazade—fight time, specifically overcoming "the contradiction between historical, enacted time, and a permanent constant." (Lévi-Strauss, 16).

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