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THE MANAGEMENT OF PRIVATIZATION

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Résumé de l'article

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THE MANAGEMENT OF PRIVATIZATION

Wlad Godzich

ABSTRACT

A study of the constitution of the modern subject at the end of the Middle Ages. Godzich argues that this is accomplished through the privatization of the collective memoria into a social imaginary made up of individual consciousnesses. This is traced with particular reference to the problem of genre and of fiction in Don Quijote.

RÉSUMÉ

Une étude de la constitution du sujet moderne à la fin du moyen âge. A travers une lecture du Don Quichotte, Godzich démontre la transformation d'une memoria collective en un ensemble de consciences individuelles. Sont adressées en particulier les questions de genre romanesque et de fictionnalité.

We all know that the modernity asserted in early modern times, that is in the Italian Renaissance, was proclaimed by its promulgators as a definite break with the immediate past and that the latter, variously labelled as the 'Dark Ages' or the 'middle ages' came to constitute the field of otherness against which all that was modern was to emerge. A simple set of dichotomies was then constructed in which all negative attributes were relegated to the epoch that was conceived as a hiatus in the course of civilization: blind faith,

unreflecting prejudice, stagnation, absence of learning and free inquiry, and so on. Even the rationalism of medieval schoolmen was overshadowed by their obedience to a Church authority that was viewed as arbitrary, mindful of its own political interests, and ultimately dedicated to holding knowledge and its pursuit under tight control. It is only with the first crisis of modernity, precipitated by the extravagance of reason in the course of the French revolution, that a reexamination of the middle ages appeared possible and desirable. The impetus may have come from the Romantic reassessment of reason and the distrust of its claims to universal application, but it was quickly taken over by the very sort of rationalism that the Romantics feared the most: instrumental reason in the service of the state. Much nineteenth century medieval scholarship was concerned with the legitimation of existing or emergent states as the culmination of national aspirations traced to their putative origins in the middle ages. Although philology was its method, a literary history in the service of nationalism was its ultimate motor. The rising vernacular societies and their cultures were privileged over the common font of Latin learning. Since interest was focused on the erection of boundaries within the latter, little attention was paid to the relations it maintained at its own boundaries with the rich cultures of Islam, Judaism and the Greek-speaking east.

Medieval scholarship in this century has corrected this process. It has become far more attentive to the inner complexities of medieval culture and, most recently, has pursued a line of inquiry that seems motivated by the following string of syllogisms: if indeed the culture of early modern times marks such an abrupt departure from what preceded it, then this rupture must have had its seeds in the culture of the middle ages. Yet, if that is the case, we do not have a break but a more or less orderly development from the middle ages to early modern times. Since however these two appellations can be maintained only if the notion of an abyss between the periods they designate is preserved, we either have to reposition the abyss at some earlier historical juncture than the conventional middle or end of the fifteenth century, or we must abandon the distinction altogether.

The second course is unpalatable for many reasons, not the least of which has to do with the rather considerable institutional investment in medievalism (institutes, conferences, grants, chairs, scholarships, journals, and so on). Even more importantly, to follow such a course would be to wreak havoc with the very basis of the organization of knowledge in the humanities, that is the ability to define historical constructs as territories of inquiry. And since this very mode of inquiry is characteristic of modernity, it would threaten the latter at a time when it is already coming under considerable pressure from postmodernism. There has thus slowly been emerging an unstated consensus that the boundaries of the middle ages should be reexamined in such a way as not to disturb the general edifice of which the middle ages turns out to be a keystone.

The location of the new boundary thus involves two sets of stakes: a renegotiation of the beginnings of modernity with respect to that which precedes it, and an alteration in the relation of the forces that determine the tracing of such a boundary. History, as a discipline, played the major role in the determination of the limits of the older construct: it pointed to 'historical' events such as the fall of Constantinople or the great discoveries for the purposes of distinguishing the periods at hand. It pointed, in other words, to the kind of evidence it had under control. The new boundary setting pushes this process to the extreme and sets the boundary precisely where history runs out of evidence: with *literacy*, prior to which the documentary evidence upon which the historian must rely is simply lacking. The emergent consensus has indeed been increasingly distinguishing between the oral middle ages and a literate one wherein the latter marks the preparation of, and anticipates, early modern times. The boundary is thus being set where history and literary scholarship both come against that which challenges their conceptual and methodological grasp. To say this, however, is to say that the boundary will be set where it is possible to detect the emergence of a discursive regime in which literary and historical functions can both be distinguished yet are inexorably intertwined. It is to presuppose further that we know the economy of the discursive order we are dealing with, yet this is far from certain. It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the discursive economy of orality. For our purposes it shall suffice to draw attention to a feature that proves to be a major source of problems to the emergent culture of literacy. I refer to the problem of privatization named in my title.

The point has been made repeatedly that in an oral culture narratives are collective property, yet the consequences of this statement are rarely drawn out. To begin with, such a statement means that no storyteller presents himself or herself as the originator of a story but rather as a relay in a long chain of tellers, the earliest of whom, if they are known at all, are either mythical ancestors or divine emissaries. It means further that no new stories are elaborated, except at most as variants of older stories. We should expect then a waning of interest in stories which are fundamentally repetitive and rehashed over and over again, yet paradoxically all such human societies lay a great deal of stock in storytelling, so much so that we tend to think of them as narrative-bound. To tell a story under such circumstances entails a different attitude toward narrative from the one moderns bring to the same experience. The performance or the telling of stories in oral societies is essentially *commemorative*.

This term refers to the peculiar function of memory in oral societies. On the basis of empirical evidence, members of a literate culture have a far more limited mnemonic capability than their counterparts in an oral culture. This has led anthropologists and other students of literacy to overlook a crucial difference: far less is at stake in a literate society than in an oral one as far as memory is concerned. It would not be an exaggeration to say that oral societies experience a particular form of anxiety linked to the fear of losing

their memory that literate societies cannot even begin to imagine. For it is in this vast *memoria* that are contained all the sacred texts, all the foundational myths, all the explanatory regresses, that provide the members of a particular collectivity with a hold on their lived experience and distinguish them from their neighbors. In this type of mindset, a story told is not cognitively processed for the information it contains -- there are other ways of accomplishing such a utilitarian task; it is told in order to animate as many of the constitutive elements of *memoria* as possible. Since the audience is familiar with the narrative, be it an epic or a myth, it is not interested in its thread, structure, or even its thrust, as much as in the way in which the performance of the storyteller can achieve this function of animation in which large numbers of dormant memorial strands can be set into motion and vibrate together, thereby giving its meaning to the term commemorate. Commemoration in such a context does not have the modern meaning of an action whereby a number of individuals come together in order to recall some event or figure; it designates the process through which the latent powers of *memoria* are brought to life. There are no individuals here, for those who are gathered at such a storytelling do not conceive of themselves as autonomous entities that have the power or the right to associate freely among themselves. They are there as the necessary material correlatives of the *memoria* from which they derive their sense of identity and purpose. Rather than being individuals with inherently endowed rights and privileges, they are *persons* in the etymological sense of the term, that is material purports of roles which they do not write but accept, in the form of fate, from the power that resides in *memoria*, a power that is beyond human ken or control.

To be a person in this sense is to accept the fact that one's life does not obey a discernible order of coherence while maintaining a belief in the ultimate existence of such a coherence. In other words, if I perceive myself as playing roles that are handed down to me, I am aware of the fact that I am generally called upon to play more than one role and that there is no inherent link between two or more of the successive roles I play. At the same time, I believe firmly that all the roles being played simultaneously somehow make sense, but not necessarily to me who am but one player among many. Sense, in the form of the coherence of the global play, resides at a higher level, that of the *memoria* no longer conceived as a pure repository but as an animating force itself. By contrast, persons are largely heterogeneous since they do not necessarily achieve any coherence in the roles they play. Yet this heterogeneity does not give rise to any anxiety, quite the contrary: it reinforces the belief that one's sense transcends oneself and that such a sense resides in a transcendental dimension that is at the same time immanent.

To be a person in this sense, to see oneself as assuming roles that are cast upon one, requires a conception of language and of the larger semiotic system as a set of parts available to oneself. A part is a limited ordering of verbal and nonverbal behavior, endowed with internal coherence and designed to achieve specifiable effects. In contemporary semiolinguistic

terms, it is a discourse. Each discourse is organized in such a way as to place its utterer in the position of the subject of that discourse, which is what we call role playing. Since persons are heterogeneous insofar as they are called upon to play different roles, we can define a person as someone with the ability to assume different subject positions. Such a definition is overly voluntaristic however and presumes that one chooses, or has the right and the ability to choose, the roles one will play. It is, in other words, a definition of an individual assuming the function of a person. We have seen earlier that persons do not choose their roles but have them thrust upon them, and that they experience them as fate. It is more accurate then to define persons as the loci in which discourses intersect and produce subject positions. Persons are thus not defined ontologically but discursively, and their aggregate, the community of persons, is equally derived from *memoria* as the treasure trove of discourses.

Historians and scholars of literature have known this in a more or less implicit way, but they have not asked themselves what happens when the culture of orality collapses. What happens to this vast 'memorial' universe? Let us put it in terms that are less medieval, more modern. In an oral culture, the imaginary is held centrally; it is collective property. It has considerable power over the collectivity as well as over its constitutive elements. It distinguishes the collectivity from other suchlike by virtue of the gods, the myths, the explanatory regresses that it contains. It animates the collectivity as well as its members. The question now is what happens when this economy collapses.

The most curious, and ultimately the weakest, feature of the economy of *memoria* is the strange coexistence of the acknowledgment of a discursive multiplicity and even heterogeneity with the belief in their ultimate, and yet unverifiable, coherence. One could readily view this admixture of experiential fact and belief as an ideological strategy for the suspension of societal antagonisms in view of real differences between groups and individuals. These antagonisms can be held in check as long as no one identifies with a given subject position, that is as long as there prevails a realm of persons in which no one seeks to erase the difference between a subject position and the material purport that assumes it. For as soon as this difference, and the arbitrariness that presides over its assignment are effaced, roles are taken to be entitlements and specific discourses are felt to be somehow natural to those who wield them, and they may not easily shed them in order to assume others. Furthermore, the entire universe of discourse is no longer conceivable as a general flux whose sense resides in its specific, yet unfathomable, economy, but must be hierarchized, that is must be brought under the control of a discourse that can account for the operations, and especially the localization of other discourses. There takes place thus a major reorganization in the economy of discourses. The period that we know as early modern times is devoted to this process and it will inevitably have to concern itself with the imposition of a new order and with the management of perturbances. It is one major such perturbation that I

wish to examine in some detail, and by means of it follow what happens to the imaginary as a collective *memoria* that is progressively replaced by individual consciousness.

The stakes should now be obvious; in very contemporary terms, we could put it thus: a collectively held imaginary is now up for privatization. Whoever appropriates it is likely to emerge most powerful given the very power that resides within it. As often happens in such cases of divestiture, a split in functions will take place: the organization of discourses will be separated from the power of animation, or agency, that resides in the *memoria*, thereby giving us the configuration that will be characteristic of modernity.

This problem of discursive organization, which will be devolved to genre theory as it is practiced by Renaissance poetics, encounters its biggest challenge in the novel, and the problem of one's relation to the imaginary is openly thematized in the most famous of novels, the *Don Quijote* of Cervantes.[\[1\]](#)

The most obvious place to start the discussion is where the problem is thematized most clearly: with Don Quijote's madness. And let us begin with a fact that is too often overlooked: Don Quijote's madness is not total or all-encompassing; it is limited to the field of chivalry. Numerous passages attest to this, as if Cervantes wanted to make sure that this detail would not escape observation. Here is one of them (I, xxx) in which the priest says:

If you talk to the good gentleman about anything that does not touch on his madness, far from talking nonsense, he speaks very rationally and shows a completely clear and calm understanding. In fact nobody would think him anything but a man of very sound judgment, unless he were to strike him on the subject of chivalries. (p. 267)

And a little later after having listened to Don Quijote's speech upon the respective advantages and the inherent difficulties of the professions of arms and letters, his audience expresses the following regret:

His hearers were moved once more to pity at seeing a man, apparently of such sound intelligence and with such understanding of everything he spoke of, lose it so entirely on the subject of his foul and accursed chivalry. (345)

Indeed, at the outset of the book, even before action begins, the chronicler who will relate the subsequent actions, observes (I,1):

He filled his mind with all that he read in them, with enchantments, quarrels, battles, challenges, wounds, wooings, loves, torments and other impossible nonsense; and so deeply did he steep his imagination in the belief that all the fanciful stuff he read was true, that to his mind no history in the world was more authentic. (32)

What is then the nature of Don Quijote's madness? It resides in the fact that he does not distinguish between the space proper to the deeds of his favorite heroes and the space of daily activity. More precisely: Quijote's madness consists in the confusion between the world of the imaginary and the thematization of the perceptual, in not drawing boundaries between the two, in not controlling the imaginary. But to say this is to presuppose that Quijote operates according to a conception of the imaginary that makes the latter a faculty of the individual subject, whereas that is precisely not the case. Quijote's dysfunction comes from the fact that he abides by the economy of the older discursive universe in which *memoria*, or the imaginary, ruled over, and determined the realm of sense-perception. In that universe, to prefer the evidence of one's senses to the knowledge originating in *memoria*, was blasphemy and sacrilege, crimes far worse than madness. Quijote remains faithful to the old memorial universe and refuses to draw boundaries between the realm of the imaginary and that of sense perception. He takes the products of the nascent culture of literacy, the novels of chivalry, and gives them the same status as that of the materials held in *memoria*, not realizing that they were meant for a different symbolic economy and a different mode of consumption. I shall return to the mode of this consumption at the end of the paper.

Quijote's madness does not originate in an inability to determine the nature of reality as much as in knowing what to appeal to in order to effect such a determination. Sancho Panza is counterposed to him precisely for this reason, not because he is the embodiment of common-sense as is frequently argued [common-sense is residually 'memorial,' as Sancho's reliance upon oral proverbs attests], but because he knows the economy of verisimilitude so foreign to Quijote. Let us recall briefly the famous episode of feigned madness in the Sierra Morena (Chapter XXV). Split between the model of Roland (a model that is itself split between its French, Spanish and Italian versions as variations in the name of the eponymous hero attest), who is the paragon of military prowess, and Amadis, an equal paragon of lovestruck knighthood, Don Quijote opts for the Amadis model (or role), and he asks Sancho Panza to witness the ravages of love upon him before Sancho sets out to deliver Quijote's letter to Dulcinea. This scene produces maximal cognitive disorientation for Sancho Panza. For him, Quijote is a madman who now plans to play a madman. Consider the possibilities from Sancho's

point of view. If a madman offers to play a madman, and succeeds in doing so, then it can hardly be said that he is mad since he must have an external, that is a sane, knowledge of madness in order to play it. But Quijote's general behavior is mad, as far as Sancho is concerned, so this possibility cannot be seriously entertained [this is, of course, the possibility that Quijote is actualizing: in his memorial universe he can play madness without any problems. His only failure is that he does not know that the memorial universe has collapsed]. For Sancho the problem remains whole: one madness is quite enough for him. A madness within a madness raises not only epistemological questions but logical ones as well, such as: if madness is the reverse of reason, then a madness within a madness is the reverse of a reverse. Is such reversal of a reversal tantamount to the recovery of the original position? in other words, of reason? Is this a possible definition of reason? This does not bear thinking about, Sancho decides. That is the way of madness. Sancho attempts to put an end to this extravagance by bringing Quijote under some form of control: Amadis, he asserts, had some reason, some cause to engage in extravagant behavior, to act mad, since he thought he had truly been forsaken by his beloved, whereas Dulcinea has not furnished Don Quijote with any such reasons. (I,xxv)

'It seems to me', said Sancho, 'that the knights who did things like that were provoked and had a reason for their follies and penances. But what reason has your worship for going mad? What lady has scorned you, or what evidence have you found that the lady Dulcinea del Toloso has done anything she shouldn't with Moor or Christian?' (203)

Faithful to his common sense reasoning based upon perception (though modulated by memorial proverbs) Sancho attempts to prevent this raising of madness to the second power by directing his master toward a regulation upon principles of verisimilitude. This could be tantamount to getting him to act in conformity with a certain logic, and thus bring him within the new discursive economy. He could then act in his madness, and regulate it, according to the parameters of the causality of common sense instead of what Sancho sees as the fact that for Don Quijote *el toque está en desatinar sin ocasión* .

We must recall, however, that this is a course of behavior advocated by Sancho Panza, and Sancho is a character who is not spared ridicule. His apparent reasonableness in this case must be viewed with some suspicion.

There are passages in the *Don Quijote* that show that the incapacity to thematize the sense data of perception independently of the imaginary is not a problem peculiar to, or exclusive to, Don Quijote. Let us recall the discussion with Juan de Palomeque, the innkeeper, in chapter xxxii. The priest is condemning the books of chivalry and speaking of the auto-da-fé he

committed upon Quijote's books, but the innkeeper shows he derives so much pleasure from such tales, and he lends them so much credence that Cardenio observes that he is like another Quijote:

To judge by what he says, he takes everything in those books for gospel truth, and the barefoot friars themselves wouldn't make him believe otherwise. (280)

Quijote's illusion is thus not, on the face of it, properly his own. Simple souls, such as the innkeeper, are equally prey to the same delusion (from the modern point of view). Yet, the innkeeper makes a distinction that Quijote, far more attached to the reality of the fictions in his imaginary, cannot make. The priest exhorts him to "never limp on the same foot as your guest, Don Quijote."

'I shan't do that,' replied the innkeeper. 'I shall never be fool enough to turn knight errant. For I see quite well that it's not the fashion now to do as they did in the older days when they say those famous knights roamed the world.' (p. 281)

Although the innkeeper defends his belief in the truth of the books of chivalry with the explanation that they are published *con licencia de los señores del Consejo Real* [an explanation that, by the way, would carry no weight for Quijote], he defends himself from Quijote's madness by means of a temporal difference: that was then, this is now. Mores have changed and today such practices are no longer conceivable. We should note though that this historicist argument is used by Quijote as well, although he gives it a rather different coloring and interpretation. When he is taken back to his home by the barber and the priest, Quijote, believing himself to be the victim of the evil enchanters that pursue him, nonetheless marvels at the fact that he is being carried away in such a slow and cumbersome conveyance pulled by oxen of all animals. But such may be the new customs of the day, he tells Sancho. (I, xlvi):

Perhaps the chivalry and the enchantments of these times of ours must follow a different way from that followed by the ancients.

Historicism provides no certain way out of the dilemma of determining the boundary between the imaginary and the perceptual. The question must be posed anew not only in relation to the character of Quijote, but in relation to the economy of the work itself. Within a memorial universe, the data of

sense perception is either vouched for by memoria or it is not. If it is, it is in conformity with the known and is therefore true. If not, it is most likely the work of evil enchanters. It is fictitious. Such a universe does not treat the truth of the imaginary as one of the poles of an axis in which the fictitious could be the other. It treats the memorial as a center of certainty -- and it will be recalled that Quijote's assurance is unshakable, because it is uncritical. Cervantes will break up this economy of a central truth with peripheral fictitiousness by introducing a critical dimension into the very act of creation. In this way a different space is opened up, the space of fiction. In fiction, critical activity does not appear as a mere supplement to creation but as a constituting and activating part. Cervantes is not the originator of this approach. In fact one of the best examples I know of is to be found in Hartman von Aue's *Ywein*. Shortly after relating the battle between Ywein and Esklavon, Hartman adds a passage that has no counterpart in Chrétien de Troyes, whose text he otherwise follows slavishly. In effect he adds the following remark: I cannot vouchsafe for the accuracy of this battle since neither I nor anyone else was there to observe it and witness the high deeds. And as far as the two participants are concerned, one did not survive the encounter and the other is far too noble and courteous to ever boast of what had transpired. Thus with one stroke of critical attention, Hartman undercuts the status not only of his own narrative of the battle but Chrétien's as well. Yet this narrative is not thereby invalidated or rejected. It is not fictitious; it is simply undecidable in relation to truth, and yet it does not deter the common reader from continuing to read. It is fictional. Whereas the fictitious presupposes an ingenuity that feeds upon the indiscriminate illusion of its territory in relation to truth, fiction feeds upon irony, distancing, and the constitution of a complexity that does not offer itself as a form of illusionism.

Piccolomini would not have been flustered the way Sancho was by the episode of the feigned madness in the Sierra Morena, for he viewed such things through the prism of imitation. And he thought there was no problem in having an imitation of an imitation as long as the imitation imitated was truthful. The imitating imitation would then be truthful as well. Piccolomini, in other words, permits such a situation because he still has a clear and graspable conception of truth and because he knows where to locate it. But Cervantes's practice of fiction starts from the assumption that the location of truth is undecidable. Imitatio as the norm of the discursive universe proves unworkable then. If imitatio, following Piccolomini's assertion -- an assertion foundational of Renaissance poetics -- presupposes the truth as center and as model, what kind of truth is being imitated in *Don Quijote*? Cervantes's critical attitude shows that he is aware that classical poetics domesticates authors, whereas fiction lives off the interrogation of communitarian values, something that certainly cannot be said of the fictitious. Such a critical potentiality, carried out at the level of creation, would hardly be conceivable without a change of horizons. The fictitious presupposes the horizon of orality, which is covered by the general principle of truth, whereas fictional discourse bears the mark of written form, of private reading and of demystification. The fictional will be far more attentive than the fictitious to the everyday, yet it will not bring it under its control. Indeed the latter will

fall to the control of the moralists. Actually fiction has no interest in controlling the everyday; rather it wishes to propose a different relation to it. In the *Don Quijote*, the fictitious is not related to the everyday in order to make readers laugh at the first and, by the same token, corroborate the sense data necessary to the second. If it did that, it would effectively bar the door to the fictional. On the other hand, it does maintain a link between the fantastic and attempts at verisimilitude (as Sancho would have liked), which seems to be characteristic of the symbolic economy of the romances of chivalry.

We are now in a better position to characterize the way in which Cervantes remaps the fictitious into the fictional: he proceeds by rejecting equally the basis of the romances of chivalry, that is indiscriminate fantasy, and the basis of their criticism, that is, the matter-of-factness of the everyday, the fact that the everyday is beyond question, inviolable, untouchable. Both of these are negated, and negated equally. And by negating them thus Cervantes opens the space of modern fiction which is neither that of Quijote nor of Sancho. In this space the fictitious (as fantastic) and the everyday (the real taken as unquestionable) are maintained, preserved, but only as poles in relation to both of which one must distance oneself. Both must be ironized, questioned, and relativized; for both, as well as their opposition, belong to a symbolic economy that is no longer adequate to a situation in which the most urgent task is to figure out one's relation to that ruin of *memoria*, the imaginary. We will need to examine a little more closely the *Quijote's* relation to Renaissance genre theory.

It will be recalled that Michel Foucault, in *Les Mots et les Choses*, situates Cervantes at the edge of the old Renaissance order of things. Don Quijote, he says, is "the hero of the same". Still according to Foucault, there occurs then a radical epistemological discontinuity between this old order and a new one. The old order is one of similitude, while the new one is that of representation. This is not wrong but I do feel that Foucault failed to appreciate the position of the *Quijote* in relation to the world of similitude and, as a result, may have given too narrow and too exclusively an epistemological meaning to representation. I will argue instead that the *Quijote* pushes to its limits the regimes of mimesis or imitation that regulate similitude and in that process opens up a space for representation that has immediate sociopolitical correlatives. Foucault organizes his developmental narrative around the gap between Cervantes and Descartes where the latter supplies the philosophy of representation made necessary by the collapse of the old order. I will argue that the field is a little more crowded and that a subject-grounded theory of representation rests upon a prior conception of the field of representation as the field of activity of the State, and I will claim further that it is this field that dictates the emergence of the subject in its modern form, wherein the latter is called upon to *understand* activity more than master agency.

In the Prologue to Part one, Cervantes writes: "No he podido yo contravenir a la orden de la Naturaleza; que en ella cada cosa engendra su semejante." Nature, Cervantes says, engenders only likeness; the 'natural' is thus the principle by which the world is a self-generating succession of sameness. If this is truly the case, then the *Don Quijote* would on almost any account have to be considered the most *un-natural* of kinds. The principle requires that a kind (a genre) generate something like itself. Yet even a cursory inspection of the *Don Quijote* shows that this principle of Nature, this law of Nature, is violated in the *Don Quijote* since the *Don Quijote* mixes a large diversity of kinds. It includes the majority of generic possibilities available in Cervantes's day: pastoral, chivalresque, novela morisca, self-portraiture, comedia (in puppet form!); lyric, narrative and burlesque verse, an italianate novella, picaresque, Ciceronian-style dialogue, Erasmian adages, political prose, letters, epigrams, adventures modelled on classical epic as well as Byzantine romance.

Some of these genres are distinguished on the basis of form, others on the basis of theme or of subject matter, others yet by a combination of aspects of these. This means that any conception of genre capable of assimilating all of them would have to work on a principle of heterogeneity, and this in turn would prompt us to ask whether the novel was a form capable of generic distinction at all. The multiplicity of genres is a challenge to the idea of genre (that is to the idea that there is an order of *kindness* to things), and it is thus a threat to Nature since the latter must be thought of as the essential kinship of things.

What does the *Quijote* do to such an idea of genre? Whatever we may say of it, it is itself of a single kind, a vast panoply of natural and literary kindness drawn into a single kind. One could try to see it as an instance of Renaissance "inclusionism". If one looks at its diversity rather than its singularity it could legitimately be compared to an encyclopedia, to a miscellany or to the *Wunderkammer* so popular at the time. But this "inclusionism" is a problem for a theory of genre.

The guiding assumption of all genre theory, from the past to the present, has been that generic combinations and mixtures are not acceptable, and when they do happen, one must find a new generic label for that kind, thus preserving the law of genre [which is the idea that kinds are naturally simple-this is the ideological horizon of genre theory] or as Cervantes puts it, that Nature engenders only likeness and things must not be mixed. This classical requirement, partially totalitarian, remained in force in the Renaissance in spite of more and more genres. In fact Renaissance writers seem to specialize in hybrid genres and generic mixtures (cf. the emblem book [icons and adages], the florilegium [different types of verse] the book of essay [Montaigne] or the anatomy [Burton]).

The *Quijote* represents a testing of the limits of the Renaissance in accepting mixed genres since it is not content with mixing literary kinds. The order of natural species is violated as well, both in the realm of material objects (*baciyelmo*) and in that of the sexes (the bearded women in Part two). It would be better to say then that the Renaissance, rather than find genre mixing inadmissible, found it frightening for it thought them as going against nature and that it feared the outcome, the products, which had to be either monstrous or ridiculous. That is why unheard of combinations can be proposed only if it is clearly indicated that it is something new. This is how Lope de Vega defends the unity of mixed genre in his "Arte nuevo de hacer comedias". The label of new, novel, announces a violation of the strictures of genre theory but it does so in such a way as not to challenge the legitimacy of the latter. But there is a division of labor that sets in: genre theory and poetics inherit the memorial task of organizing discourses, while all that appeals to the category of the new, the novel, must be concerned with the power of animation, with agency, which we had seen in the memorial universe to produce heterogeneity at the level of persons. Now that individuals attempt to be homogeneous, this heterogeneity, which is the inevitable outcome and correlate of agency, is apprehended under the category of the new.

The *Don Quijote* pushes this step further by attempting to turn this category into a genre of the new, the novel. It would be a genre that would constantly contravene the principles of literary mimesis, according to which Nature is an order of self-generating similitude, the essential idea of which is reproduced by the artist in his work. In this way the *Don Quijote* brings to the fore a conception of genre that Renaissance conceptions of imitation and mimesis could not produce. It actually exhausts the classical notions upon which genre theory was built (Aristotelian genres, Platonic *eidos*). To simplify somewhat: if *eidos*, idea, is also a term for species or form, then the phenomenal objects of Nature can be thought of as imitations of their ideas (or images of them: eidolon) -- or this mode of mimesis can be thought of as a form of animation: Ginés de Pasamonte, being of the species 'picaro' could be thought of then as animated by the picaresque genre or ideas. But ideas, in this sense, are necessarily simple (Pascal). How could one tell then of what idea the *Don Quichote*, in all of its multiplicity, would be the imitation. There are imitations in the Don Quichote, but the Don Quichote as such is not an imitation for it is inconceivable that there should exist a simple idea so heterogeneous available for imitation.

The *Don Quijote* is not the only place where the Renaissance came upon the limits of the Platonic-Aristotelian inheritance. The Renaissance began to progressively doubt that it was possible to understand Nature in terms of categories or ideas that are independent of it. This trend results in a new empiricism, or more properly in a new description, as we see it in the *Essays* of Francis Bacon or in the natural philosophy of Telesio (*De rerum natura juxta propria principia*), but also in the Spanish picaresque or in the new Flemish and Spanish painting. The principles of Nature are no longer to be

found in the Aristotelian/Platonic notion of form, matter, actuality, potentiality, but as Telesio puts it, "juxta propria principia". And these principles must be sought in its "constant, concrete, and universally uniform phenomena".

The task that would emerge, and which neither Bacon nor Telesio would accomplish, would be to provide a totalizing perspective to this empiricism, and to produce a theoretical order capable of accounting for Nature as something "concrete" "constant" and "universally uniform", that is as something that obeys laws while admitting of diversity. But to see Nature as a single and unique realm that embraces a diversity of species and genres, one must no longer view it as an object of and for imitation. One must view it as an object of and for representation. Representation here means a technique by means of which an object is fixed and placed in front of us and from which we distance ourselves in order to posit it mentally so that we may, by means of the frame, the lense, or more simply, our sight, see this object as a whole, as an ensemble of structured parts.

In this way the novel moves toward an economy of representation; genre can then be thought of as a mind-set, a mental framework. The generic multiplicity of the novel (the multiple voices, the competing perspectives, etc.) are unified by a directing viewpoint. This is what various theorists of the novel tell us but they do not tell us *how* it happens. Spitzer can even lead us into error when he presents the resolution of perspectivism as a sort of act of god, who manifests himself, and operates, through his surrogate, the artist.

We have been led from a plethora of names, words, languages, from polynomasia, polyetymologia, and poly|glottism, to the perspectivism of the artist Cervantes who knows that the transparence of language is a fact for god alone. . . The hero is Cervantes, the artist himself, who combines a critical and illusionistic art according to his free will.

Spitzer thus sets into place the hermeneutic mechanism of modern reading: If God alone has the capacity to see the articulation of the totality of things, and the artist gives us a representation of that view, the reader must penetrate the interiority of the artist and identify with it in order to participate in this divine vision. The various phenomenologies of reading pursue this project.

Was this Cervantes's notion of reading as well? Let us return once more to the famous passage on the reading of novels of chivalry in the inn of Juan de Palomeque (I, xxxii. The innkeeper begins:

' . . . really I think there is no better reading in the world. I have two or three of them here and some other writings. They've truly put life into me, and not only in me but into plenty of others. For at harvest time a lot of the reapers come in here in the mid-day heat. There's always one of them who can read, and he takes up one of those books. Then as many as thirty of us sit round him, and we enjoy listening so much that it saves us countless grey hairs. At least I can say for myself that when I hear about these furious, terrible blows the knights deal one another, I get the fancy to strike a few myself. And I could go on listening night and day. '

'I agree absolutely,' said the landlady,' for I never get any peace in my house except when you are listening to the reading. You're so fascinated then that you forget to scold for once. '

'That's right ,' said Maritornes. 'I tell you I enjoy hearing them all too. They 're very pretty, particularly the parts when some lady or other is lying in her knight's embraces under some orange-trees, and there's a damsel keeping watch for them, dying of envy and frightened to death. It's all as sweet as honey, I say. '

'And you, what do you think about it, young lady?' the prizes asked the innkeeper's daughter.

'I don't know, sir, truly I don't,' she answered. 'I listen too, and really, though I don't understand it, I do enjoy it. But I don't like the fighting that pleases my father so much. I prefer the complains the knights make when they are away from their ladies. . . '

This is reception aesthetics *avant la lettre*. Chivalric romances that had been initially written for a homogeneous audience of nobles, have now fallen, thanks to printing and literacy, into the hands of a heterogeneous group of readers who read it quite at variance with the original reading or indeed with each other. Heterogeneity is now everywhere. Everyone now reads according to his or her situation -- and we ought to note the specific thematization of reading by women in this passage -- interests or preoccupations.

If such is the case, there can only be a multiplicity of readings that never intersect, it would appear. But this very heterogeneity is given to us to be read, and we must ask ourselves who can read this? Where does Cervantes locate his reader so that this reader can read these heterogeneous readings without succumbing to them? How must this reader conceive of herself or

himself in order to be able to see the articulation of these simultaneous heterogeneities. It will have been recognized that the reader must occupy a locus like that of the *memoria* which comprehended heterogeneity. But this locus is not an empty one, for who manages social heterogeneity at his stage if not the state, the new figuration of the agency formerly held within the *memoria*. Cervantes's reader is thus placed in the abstract, overseeing position of the state, and this reader now comprehends, that is understands, the state's view of things, thereby identifying with this view and becoming the subject of this state. The modern subject is the subject of a state, not in the material sense of subjection still to be found in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, but in that of the abstract knowing subject characteristic of modernity. Such a subject understands the agency of the state and grants it monopoly over it. It suffices for such modern subjects to have their share of the imaginary to leave to the state the sphere of activity.

The novel will serve then a dual function: like the old *memoria* it will place readers in subject positions, but it will not plunge them into heterogeneity, for such heterogeneity is now too dangerous in the absence of metasocial guarantors. It will give a representation of the prevalent heterogeneity in the smooth surface of the mirroring representation it will contrive, so that we will have the heterogeneity without any of its disruptive power. The imaginary will have been privatized.

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[1] Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *The Adventures of Don Quixote* (New York: Penguin, 1987)