

of which were blackened by the east wind, were enclosed by dilapidated fences, and were inhabited by lonely spinsters; and (2) that Hawthorne had in mind a particular dwelling, the old Turner house with its armchair and its spinster. I would suggest that one cannot have it both ways.

Hawthorne's interest in a variety of old homes is clear, but as Hubert H. Hoeltje (*Inward Sky: The Mind and Heart of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, Durham, N. C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1962, pp. 344–45) notes: "Nowhere, however, does Hawthorne make any specific reference to the seventeenth-century house on Turner Street, now popularly called the House of the Seven Gables, though he was probably in it often enough to visit his cousin, Susy Ingersoll, and her foster son, H. L. Conolly. . . . Neither the structure nor the location of the Turner Street house at all matches Pyncheon Street or the once elegant Gothic building of Hawthorne's imagination." It would appear, therefore, that Hawthorne created from a number of houses rather than copied from a single house.

My contention for the Byles house, a plain clapboard affair, as a "probable source" for the House of the Seven Gables with its fancifully decorated plaster walls rests on the suggestive value of Miss Leslie's essay. Both the essay and the romance have black old houses surrounded by collapsing fences and unpleasant tenements in unfashionable quarters of the town and shaded by giant trees. Both houses are referred to as having human qualities, and both are called "venerable mansions." Moreover, although von Frank's remarks on the similarity of seventeenth-century furniture are valid, it is important, I think, to note that Miss Leslie and Hawthorne call attention to the *same* pieces of furniture in their respective parlors. Both carved chairs are called an "easy seat." Both are also family pieces with much personal history, whereas the chair of *Grandfather's Chair* was purchased by Grandfather himself at an auction and hence has no intimate family tales. Of the gateleg table, it would seem a very short imagistic step from Miss Leslie's table with "a hundred legs" to Hawthorne's with "as many feet as a centipede," whereas one with "a forest of legs" conveys not at all the unusual image of the hundred legs or feet of a centipede. Further and unfortunately, von Frank ignores the relationship between the "poor table" of the Misses Byles and the cent shop of Hepzibah.

It would appear to me very injudicious to abandon the Misses Byles as a probable source for Hepzibah. To be sure, all three are to a degree conventional figures; but because the real and the fictional women—with the same reverence for old portraits and the past, with the same church attendance and reading habits, with the same longing for an absent kinsman, with the

same reclusive ways—are so remarkably alike, it seems best to conclude that Hawthorne did indeed find matter assimilated in the essay for his own romantic imagination.

JOHN R. BYERS, JR.

*Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University*

### Cervantes, Grisóstomo, Marcela, and Suicide

To the Editor:

The recent article on "Cervantes and Courtly Love: The Grisóstomo-Marcela Episode of *Don Quixote*" (*PMLA*, 89, 1974, 64–76) by Herman Iventosch seems more aimed at the obliteration of my 1961 interpretation of that episode than at the elucidation of Cervantes. This implies a hopeless confusion of critical aims compounded, in this case, by some serious lacunae in Spanish literary history.

The main point of my 1961 interpretation of the episode (*Don Quixote*, Bk. I, Ch. xii) was that Cervantes proposed to the reader almost as many testimonies that Grisóstomo had committed suicide as that he had died a natural death of a broken heart. According to my interpretation, this was Cervantes' way of presenting *la verdad problemática*. Iventosch frankly opts for suicide since he views the episode as a "parody of courtly love" (p. 65). Let me observe that Grisóstomo effectively dies, and his death causes almost general mourning. His death is tragic, not parodic; the real *parody* of the courtly lover is Calisto in *La Celestina*, whose death even parodies the *casus Fortunae*, and if Melibea commits suicide, as she does, these are the obvious wages of sin, as Rojas sees them. Before discoursing erroneously any further about "parody of courtly love" Iventosch would be well advised to read June Hall Martin's book *Love's Fools: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto and the Parody of the Courtly Lover* (London: Tamesis, 1972).

Iventosch opens his attack on my interpretation of the episode with the following words: "He has forced the evidence to conform to an (apparently) Roman Catholic point of view which would reject any possibility of suicide in Catholic Cervantes' novel" (p. 65). I recommend to Iventosch the reading of the decrees of the Council of Trent. Opening the decrees almost at random, I read in Session XIV: "Si quix dixerit extremam-unctionem non esse vere et proprie sacramentum a Christo Domino nostro institutum et a beato Jacobo Apostolo promulgatum, sed ritum tantum acceptum a Patribus aut figmentum humanum: anathema sit" (*De Sacramento Extremae-Uctionis*, Canon 1). That this and similar *anathemae* of the Council on suicide were not empty words in Cervantes' Spain, as Iventosch seems to think, is amply documented by the

*cédula* of Philip II, signed Madrid, 12 July 1564, where he says in part: “Aceptamos y recibimos el dicho sacrosanto Concilio, y queremos que en estos nuestros reinos sea guardado, cumplido y ejecutado, y daremos . . . para conservación y defensa de lo en él ordenado nuestra ayuda y favor.” Let me point out to Iventosch that Session III of the Council of Trent begins with a long invocation, in which these words are referred to every Christian: “Atque galeam spei salutis accipiant.” This denies flatly Iventosch’s statement: “First, let me state baldly that I can discover no theological undertones whatever (or almost none) in this term [*desesperada*]” (p. 66). Could it be that Iventosch does not know that Hope (*Esperanza*) is a theological virtue? And that to this extent all words of the same family cannot help but be tinged by “theological undertones”? Has Iventosch ever seen the two volumes of Pedro Laín Entralgo’s *La espera y la esperanza*?

Next, Iventosch turns to dialectics: “Avalle has fallen into that fatal and familiar critical trap of attributing literary and human matters to the influence of philosophical systems, whereas life and literature at best skirt and mostly transpire quite outside of such abstract systems” (p. 65). Some well-known examples, gleefully skirted by Iventosch, will restore things to their proper perspective: Aristophanes’ *The Clouds* is firmly rooted in the teachings of Socrates and the Sophists; the suicide of Seneca is inseparable from his Stoicism; and Nietzsche was the philosophical foundation of the Third Reich.

And now I will turn to Iventosch the literary historian. He creates a big stir about the fact that Gutierre de Cetina, before Cervantes, wrote a *Cancion desesperada*, and in footnote six he implies strongly that Cervantes followed Cetina. At this point Iventosch would do well to ponder the following caveat of Antonio Rodríguez-Moñino: “Doctas monografías sobre temas muy concretos se construyen sin que, al parecer, sus autores se planteen el problema de una diferencia posible entre la realidad por ellos arquitecturada y la realidad histórica” (*Construcción crítica y realidad histórica en la poesía española de los siglos XVI y XVII*, Madrid: Castalia, 1965, p. 16). The truth of the matter is that Gutierre de Cetina died an obscure death in Mexico, when Cervantes was probably about ten years old, and his poetry was not published until three hundred years after his murder. It is well-nigh impossible that Cervantes had any acquaintance with it.

Iventosch further invents an edition of *Tirant lo Blanc* in the first paragraph of his *docta monografía*: Catalonia, 1492, for which I suppose he means Barcelona, 1492. The first edition of *Tirant* is Valencia, 1490, and the second is Barcelona, 1497. All the rest of the editions of the original text are modern; the first

Castilian translation is Valladolid, 1511 (see Martin de Riquer, ed., *Tirant lo Blanc*, I, Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1969, 95–97).

But the most saddening aspect of Iventosch’s *docta monografía* is his lack of concern for the literary and sociological histories of suicide in the Spain of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. His unconcern for the topic is rooted, possibly, in the pseudotheological orientation of some of his statements. But then a perusal of J. Corominas, *Diccionario Crítico Etimológico de la Lengua Castellana*, IV, 211a, brings up two interesting results. First, the Spanish word *suicidio* is a neologism, dating from 1817. As to the second result, I will quote Corominas, who writes that the English word “*suicide* es neologismo documentado en Inglaterra desde 1651, donde esta plaga es muy común, como observaba Moratín, y de donde debieron de tomar el vocablo las demás naciones europeas.”

Of course, in his uncritical list “Addendum: Bucolic Suicides,” Iventosch displays prominently Juan del Encina’s *Egloga de Plácida y Victoriano*, where Plácida’s suicide is a parody, for she is brought back to life by Venus. And, furthermore, a matter that Iventosch does not care to consider or even mention: Encina’s *Egloga* was prohibited in the *Catalogus* of D. Fernando de Valdés (Valladolid: Sebastián Martínez, 1559, p. 40).

Let me add that Iventosch is blissfully ignorant of all recent bibliography on suicide in the Spanish letters of the Golden Age. Iventosch can now see such bibliography in an article by Keith Whinnom, “Nicolás Núñez’s Continuation of the *Cárcel de amor* (Burgos, 1496),” in *Studies in Spanish Literature of the Golden Age Presented to Edward M. Wilson*, ed. R. O. Jones (London: Tamesis, 1973), pp. 357–66. But the most astonishing aspect of this *docta monografía* is that Iventosch quotes in his first paragraph Otis H. Green’s study *Courtly Love in Quevedo* (Boulder: Univ. of Colorado Press, 1952), guardedly followed by the phrase “among other writings” (p. 64). Iventosch carefully refrains, however, from mentioning by title Green’s *Spain and the Western Tradition*, III (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1965), 204–24, the most thorough study, to date, of suicide in Spanish letters of the Golden Age. This is very interesting, because Green finishes his study with the following words “Only some very few works—the *Cárcel de amor* and the *Siervo libre de amor*, both prior to the full tide of the Renaissance, and the 1547 imitation of Rojas’ *Celestina*, the *Tragedia Policiana*—present suicide without condemnation or extenuation” (p. 224). Is either one the lesson derived from the Grisóstomo-Marcela episode? *Risum teneatis*?

JUAN BAUTISTA AVALLE-ARCE  
University of North Carolina