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BETWEEN LAUGHTER AND WEEPING: JUSTO MEDIO IN THE CARTAS MARRUECAS OF JOSÉ CADALSO

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES, LITERATURES, AND LINGUISTICS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT v

INTRODUCTION: JOSÉ CADALSO, ENLIGHTENED ROMANTIC 1

"MORDANT AND SUPERFICIAL LITTLE SATIRE" 17

THE GENRE OF THE MOROCCAN LETTERS 21

PERSPECTIVISMO IN THE MOROCCAN LETTERS 28

NARRATIVE FRAMING IN THE MOROCCAN LETTERS 37

FICTIVE AUTONOMY AND THE UNSTABLE NARRATOR 43

QUESTIONING THE ENLIGHTENMENT 49

THE TERTULIA AND THE SALON 54

CENSORSHIP OF THE MOROCCAN LETTERS 57

RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT IN THE MOROCCAN LETTERS 61

HUMOR IN THE MOROCCAN LETTERS: 65

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS 98

WORKS CONSULTED 103

APPENDIX 112

"PRIMITIVE VERSION" OF LETTER 7 113

EXAMPLE OF CENSORSHIP 117

"PRIMITIVE VERSION" OF LETTER 45 120

MOROCCAN LETTERS: ENGLISH TRANSLATION 123

INDEX 414

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the genre, narrativity and use of humor in Colonel José Cadalso's1774 work Cartas marruecas (Moroccan Letters). The Moroccan Letters consists of a fictitious correspondence carried on between three people: Gazel Ben-Aly, a Moroccan youth traveling in Spain; Gazel's mentor Ben-Beley in Africa; and Gazel's Spanish friend, the military officer Nuño Núñez. The relationship of the Moroccan Letters to other works in which an author criticized his own country through the guise of a supposedly impartial foreign observer is analyzed, works such as: Giovanni Paolo Marana's L'Espion du Grand Seigneur (Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy, 1684-86)), Montesquieu's Lettres persanes (Persian Letters, 1721), and Oliver Goldsmith's Chinese Letters (Citizen of the World, 1760-61). Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America (1835) is a well-known example from the nineteenth century of the observations of a foreigner visiting another country

Cadalso used three main techniques to impart a humorous aspect to what is a serious work: satire, irony and parody. The main target of Cadalso's humor is the character known as the petimetre, a French-influenced dandy who flourished in eighteenth-century Spain. Censorship, perspectivismo (use of different points of view) and costumbrismo (focus upon folk customs) are also discussed. In addition, attention is given to Cadalso's concern with luxury and the bad effects of the frivolous upon Spanish society.

INTRODUCTION: JOSÉ CADALSO: ENLIGHTENED ROMANTIC

José de Cadalso y Vásquez, author of the Cartas marruecas (Moroccan Letters), a sentimental rationalist, a profoundly Spanish enlightened thinker, a neo-classicist through culture and learning, but a Romantic in the way he lived (Helman, Noches lúgubres 51), and an exponent of "sentimental neoclassicism" (Aguilar Piñal 476), was born 8 October 1741, in Cádiz (Ximénez de Sandoval 42), the second child of José Cadalso y Vizcarra and Josefina Vásquez de Andrade. His father, says Russell Sebold in Colonel Don José Cadalso, was a merchant who dealt in foreign trade (13). After his mother died when he was two years old, he was raised in the home of his maternal grandfather until 1750, when he was nine; at this time he was sent to Paris to join his father. While there, he spent a few years at the school of Louis-le-Grand, a Jesuit college on the outskirts of the city, where Voltaire had once studied (Demerson 101). At the age of fourteen, he traveled with his father to England, where he learned English at a Catholic school in Kingston (Dowling 127). Cadalso himself, in his Escritos autobiográficos y epistolario (EA), said of this period in his life that in Paris and London he occupied himself with buying the best books that he could find, until his father's death in 1761, after which he determined to return to Spain to serve in the cavalry (9). In December of that year, he received the military habit of Santiago, one of the military orders of monk-soldiers, and served in the short war against Portugal as the Count of Aranda's aide-de-camp (Cotarelo y Mori, Iriarte y su época (89).

This rather long period of time (eleven years) spent in France and England

during his youth may explain the fact that, in addition to being able to write in Latin, Cadalso also wrote in English and French (Suárez-Galbán 113), and was exposed to a number of important European works. It is known for certain that he read Le Droit des gens by Emer de Vatel (1758) and at least one work of Montesquieu (EA 142). He also read La Nouvelle Héloïse by the Swiss author Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1761), the leading work in the new lachrymose style which became known as sentimentalism. Cadalso not only read the influential work by Rousseau, but also included veiled allusions to it in his own work, Noches lúgubres (Sebold, El rapto de la mente 163). Cadalso and his nephew, the poet Juan Meléndez Valdés, also read John Locke's Essay on Human Understanding (164).

Cadalso demonstrated his linguistic skills in an area other than that of reading, for he translated parts of Milton's Paradise Lost into Spanish for his friends, and even tutored Meléndez Valdés in reading the English version of the poem, according to Edith Helman in "Caprichos and Monstruos of Cadalso and Goya" (212). He was also a Latinist familiar with the works of Horace and Ovid, as well as a translator for the Spanish king of some Copernican texts in English (Bermúdez-Cañete 264).

On 4 August 1762, the young Cadalso enrolled as a cadet in the prestigious Bourbon Cavalry Regiment (Ximénez de Sandoval 134), and embarked upon the military career which was to remain his profession for the rest of his life. In 1764, the year in which he was promoted to captain, he carried on a correspondence with the Jesuit Isidro López, who would later be one of those implicated in the

provocation of the Motín de Esquilache in Madrid, in 1766 (protests against reform programs instituted by the Marqués de Squillaci, an Italian, who had come with Carlos III from Naples to Madrid, where he was appointed a government minister). And yet, during the insurrection, Cadalso saved the life of Count O'Reilly, one of his military superiors. Cadalso's account of the incident was succinct:

> Salvé la vida al Conde de O'Reilly, cuando el populacho en la Puerta del Sol iba a dar fin de él. Cuatro dichos andaluces de mi boca templaron toda aquella furia, y aquél día conocí el verdadero carácter del pueblo. O'Reilly no lo ha sabido: ni lo diré.
>
> I saved the life of Count O'Reilly, when the mob in the Puerta del Sol was going to put an end to him. Four Andalusian curses from me mitigated all that fury, and on that day I became acquainted with the true character of the people. O'Reilly has not discerned it, nor shall I tell him. (EA12)

Shortly thereafter, Cadalso received knighthood in the order of Santiago (Sebold, Colonel 13).

The Esquilache tumult was one of the strangest civil disorders in Spanish history. The Marqués de Squillaci (called "Esquilache" by Spaniards) had zealously begun a reform program which included a campaign to make the identification of criminals easier. Thus, on 22 January 1766, urged on by Squillaci, Carlos III issued a royal decree prohibiting the wearing of the traditional long

Spanish cape and broad-brimmed hat. Protests broke out in the capital, and on 23 March they became a full-fledged rebellion which lasted for three days. Squillaci's home was attacked, Grimaldi (the Spanish ambassador to France) was stoned, rioters released inmates from the prisons, and several infantrymen were killed. In the end, the order against traditional Spanish clothing was rescinded, foreign ministers were replaced by Spaniards, the Jesuits (who were blamed in part for the disorders) were banished temporarily from the country, and the Conde de Aranda, one of Cadalso's friends and benefactors (as well as one of the supposed key players in the making of the legend of Cadalso, the real-life Romantic), was named Premier. In an amusing epilogue to the Esquilache story, the Conde de Aranda attempted to achieve Squillaci's goal of clothing reform by simply making the long cape and broad-brimmed hat the official uniform of public executioners, a fashion statement which many citizens henceforth avoided (Altamira 443-44).

Giacomo Casanova, in his Histoire de Ma Vie (left uncompleted at his death in 1798) gives a vibrant but somewhat unflattering portrait of the Conde de Aranda, whom he met during a visit to Spain in the 1770s:

> A man of profound intelligence, a great politician, bold, determined, reasoning correctly, a great epicurean, maintaining appearances, doing in his house everything that he forbade in other houses, and not caring if people said so. This rather ugly nobleman, who squinted to the point of deformity, received me rather coolly. (312)

Throughout the 1760s, as Cadalso gradually turned to writing when not involved in military business, he also found himself engaged in a series of amorous affairs with ladies of distinction in Madrid society. During his relationship with the

Marquesa de Escalona, his friend the Conde de Aranda served as his confidant and liaison (Sebold, Colonel 37).

In 1768, Cadalso was exiled from Madrid to Aragón for six months on the suspicion of having authored the highly satirical Kalendario manual y Guía de Forasteros para el carnaval de 1768 (Foreigners' Calendar Handbook and Guide for the Carnival of 1768), a work which offended many of the ladies of Madrid society (13). However, the young captain appears to have enjoyed his punishment immensely. He dined regularly with either the Conde de Aranda (now in effect the head of the Spanish government) or at the home of the Captain General of Aragón, formed new friendships with influential people such as the Marqués de Hermosilla, and became a local celebrity and the main subject of conversation because of the scandal attached to his exile (36).

Cadalso remained in Aragón for two years, until 1770, where he wrote most of the poems included in the collection called Ocios de mi juventud (Pastimes of My Youth, 1773). The importance of these poems, according to Russell Sebold, is that they provided a bridge between the great poetry of the Spanish Golden Age and that of the eighteenth century, and that they indicated new directions for poets who came later (47). Cadalso was the first to show other Spanish poets the "exquisite art" of enjoying one's own dolor ("pain" and "sorrow") in a Romantic manner, a pleasure which Sebold says (Cadalso: el primer romántico "europeo" de España 152) is rooted in the ideas of Shaftesbury (Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, 1671-1713).

Cadalso, by now a friend of the author Nicolás Fernández de Moratín, regularly attended the tertulia ("informal social gathering") held in the Fonda de San Sebastián in Madrid, behind which was the cemetery of the church of San Sebastián, where Lope de Vega is buried. The proprietor of the fonda ("inn") was an Italian named Juan Antonio Gippini (Cotarelo y Mori, Iriarte 111). Each spring cadavers which had been buried for two years would be exhumed and cleaned before moving the remains to a common grave. From the balconies of Gippini's cheap hotel, the fellow members of the tertulia observed the grotesque spectacle (Rojas 279). The café on the ground floor served as the place of the main action in the play later written by Moratín's son, Leandro, in 1792: La comedia nueva ó el Cafè (Cotarelo y Mori 111).

In addition to Cadalso and the elder Moratín, the tertulia included the Italians Count Juan Bautista Conti, a law professor from the University of Padua; Pedro Napoli-Signorelli, a theatrical historian from Naples; and Mariano Pizzi y Frangeschi, a naturalized Spanish citizen. Others among the noteworthy Spaniards who attended were Ignacio López de Ayala, a poet and author of the tragedy Numancia destruida (Numantia Destroyed, 1775); José de Guevara y Vasconcelos, an abbot; two Valencian scholars, Francisco Cerdá and Juan Bautista Muñoz; the corpulent druggist and gastronome Casimiro Gómez Ortega (nicknamed "Botelio" by Juan Pablo Forner because of his rotund shape); and Cadalso's good friend, the poet and fabulist Tomás de Iriarte, as well as Iriarte's brothers (Cotarelo y Mori 112-19).

Also in 1770, one of the youngest attendees of the tertulia left for a trip to study in Italy: the twenty-four-year-old painter Francisco de Goya y Lucientes. By 1769, Goya had accumulated sufficient funds to pay for the journey and, according to Carlos Rojas, in "La crisis de la razón ilustrada":

> En Madrid frecuentó la tertulia de la fonda de San Sebastián, adonde concurrían algunas de las mejores cabezas del país y presidían informalmente Nicolás Fernández de Moratín y José Cadalso. Allí Goya, el futuro genio sordo, callaba y aprendía.

> In Madrid he frequented the tertulia at the Fonda de San Sebastián, where some of the best thinkers of the country assembled and Nicolás Fernándes de Moratín and José Cadalso informally presided. There Goya, the future deaf genius, kept silent and learned. (278)

Another important friend of Cadalso's, whom he met in about the year 1768, was the Condesa-Duquesa de Benavente (Doña María Josefa de la Soledad Alonso Pimentel Téllez Girón). She was married to the Marqués de Peñafiel, the Duque de Osuna. At her home, she entertained the likes of Cadalso, Tomás de Iriarte (who took pleasure in playing the music of Haydn for her on the violin), Nicolás Fernández de Moratín (who borrowed rare books from the Osuna library for research material when writing his history of the Spanish theater), and Ramón de la Cruz (who wrote plays for performance in her house). The Osuna home was a place where enlightened conversation reigned, much like in the famous tertulia at

the Fonda de San Sebastián (Sebold, Colonel 15-16).

Of importance for the history of the Moroccan Letters is the fact that the oldest surviving complete manuscript copy of the work (OS) appears to have been for years in the possession of the Osuna family. According to Russell Sebold:

> Iriarte tells us that the Countess-Duchess regularly had the unpublished literary works of her friends copied, and it is almost certain that a manuscript copy of the Moroccan Letters that was located in the library of the Dukes of Osuna until1866 can be considered another testimony of María Josefa's admiration for Cadalso's ideas (19).

Cadalso and his literary friends often visited the Condesa-Duquesa de Benavente at her country villa about six miles outside Madrid, which was landscaped with grottoes, artificial but inhabitable islands, granite temples, statues of Greek and Roman gods, and even a hermitage that was actually inhabited by two priests for several decades. She and her husband, the Duque de Osuna, were also Goya's chief patrons, aside from the royal family, for several years (Robert Hughes, Goya 117), and Goya was a frequent and welcomed guest at their rustic retreat, the romantic and classical place which they called El Capricho (Sebold, Colonel 16).

The year 1770 was as important in Cadalso's life as it was in Goya's. He fell in love with the celebrated twenty-five-year-old actress María Ignacia Ibáñez (13). It was a love affair which would have far-reaching consequences for the future of Spanish literature. Immediately after being introduced to the young actress by Moratín, the impassioned Cadalso wasted no time in declaring his love for her. Thereafter, he visited her every day at her house in the Calle de Santa

María, and began writing verses to her in which he called her "Filis" and himself "Dalmiro" (Ximénez de Sandoval 230).

From 21 January 1771 to 25 January, María Ignacia played the role of Doña Ana in Cadalso's unsuccessful tragedy Don Sancho García, but fell ill in March, and died on April 22. The cause of death was from a cold, which was possibly complicated by an incipient case of tuberculosis (Sebold, Colonel 13-14). During her fatal illness, Cadalso never left her side (Ximénez de Sandoval 244).

At this point in the telling of Cadalso's life, there occurs a blurring of reality and fiction which would indelibly attach itself to him. María Ignacia Ibáñez was buried in the San Sebastián cemetery, next to the church of the same name. The debilitated Cadalso, notes Ximénez de Sandoval, was contorted with grief. His clothing was rumpled and disorderly; and with an absent air about him, he had to be supported by his literary friends Nicolás Fernández de Moratín and Tomás de Iriarte as he passed by the coffin of María Ignacia. After a gut-wrenching farewell at the edge of his lover's tomb, Cadalso returned to his house a broken man. (247-48)

That Cadalso was distraught at María Ignacia's absence is not in doubt, but what happened years later is a subject of dispute. In 1822, a Spanish edition of Cadalso's Noches lúgubres appeared, containing as its introduction the famous carta de un íntimo amigo ("letter from an intimate friend"), which had apparently been written in 1791 (Ugarte 6). Judgment as to the date of the letter's composition being 1791 was originally made by Leopoldo Augusto de Cueto (Marqués de Valmar) in 1869, in Poetas líricos del siglo XVIII (247). The letter summarizes

Cadalso's love affair with María Ignacia, and then makes the startling assertion that he was so demented by grief after her death that he conceived the plan of disinterring her cadaver, mirroring exactly the mad project of his protagonist Tediato during the First Night of Noches lúgubres. The Second Night, says the "intimate friend," is mostly fiction. But the Third Night also reflects what happened in real life, for Cadalso puso en egecucion su irreflexionado intento ("put into execution his rash intention"). He failed in this "rash intention," however, due to the vigilance of various spies entrusted with protecting him from himself, sent out by his friend and benefactor, the Conde de Aranda. They found him in the parish church of San Sebastián and took him away, along with the gravedigger he had hired. After gentle reproofs, the Conde de Aranda sent Cadalso away from Madrid to recover his senses. According to the author of the letter, Cadalso then wrote Noches lúgubres, considered an early Romantic work, in an effort to dissipate his profound melancholy, but was unable to finish the work (which would have included the actual disinterment of the cadaver of Tediato's beloved), once his spell of inconsolable grief had passed. A complete English translation of this work is found in my edition, José Cadalso's "Lugubrious Nights" and the Agony of Romantic Grief, University Press of the South, 2008.

In other words, if the account of the "intimate friend" is accepted, not only had Cadalso written Noches lúgubres in order to console himself over the loss of María Ignacia, but also he had tried to act out its plot in real life. Whether true or not, the "letter from an intimate friend" suddenly converted Cadalso (beginning in

1822) into a romantic legend in Spain (Camarero, "Una versión romántica de las Noches lúgubres 26).

Today few believe in the reliability of what the "intimate friend" says, but the letter cannot be totally discounted. In "Las Noches lúgubres: historia de un éxito editorial," Manuel Camarero notes that, between the letter and Cadalso's Memoir (1773), there is a curious coincidence which reveals a personal relation between the author of the letter and Cadalso (333). Cadalso himself says, in a letter to his nephew Meléndez Valdés, in 1775, that Noches lúgubres contains la parte verdadera, la de adorno, y la de ficción ("the true part, the one of adornment, and the one of fiction"; EA 102). Certainly, the "letter from an intimate friend" is essential to the creation of the legend of Cadalso as a real-life Romantic, since its author is the only friend of Cadalso (albeit an anonymous one) who claims that he actually attempted to disinter the body of María Ignacia Ibáñez (Helman, NL 24). Rumors of a connection between Cadalso and his fictional creation Tediato had been circulating for some time before the "letter from an intimate friend" surfaced; as early as 1803, Manuel José Quintana repeated these rumors for the first time in print: Dícese que estas noches aluden a una aventura sucedida a nuestro poeta ("It is said that these nights allude to an incident befalling our poet"; qtd. in Martínez Mata, "El texto de las Noches lúgubres" 258).

On the other side of the argument, however, Nigel Glendinning states conclusively that evidence exists which proves that Cadalso was not involved in any type of scandal in 1771, least of all in any imposed absence from Madrid.

Instead, the truth was just the opposite. That year, he served as secretary to the Conde de Aranda during a court-martial, and was recommended for a promotion in December. In addition, Cadalso did not leave Madrid until May, 1773, when his military duties necessitated it ("The Traditional Story of 'La difunta pleiteada,' Cadalso's Noches lúgubres, and the Romantics" 210).

In any event, Cadalso composed Lugubrious Nights sometime between 22 April 1771, and 1774 (Sebold, Colonel 89). He probably had manuscript copies made for various friends as soon as he had finished the work, which was most likely in 1771 (Glendinning, "New Light on the Text and Ideas of Cadalso's Noches lúgubres 538). Cadalso suggested, through the voice of Nuño in Letter 67 of the Moroccan Letters, printing the work on black paper with yellow letters, which would have emphasized its sadness. However, it was not published, in any form, in Cadalso's lifetime, possibly because Cadalso realized that in the conformist Spain of Carlos III a deliriously radical character such as Tediato would be considered a bad example, inviting censorship or even suppression of the work. Not until 1789, seven years after José Cadalso's heroic death at Gibraltar, would Lugubrious Nights see publication for the first time, in the Correo de Madrid.

In 1772, Cadalso's growing disenchantment with the Enlightenment found expression in his satire on eighteenth-century pseudo-intellectuals in Los eruditos á la violeta (The Violet-Scented Pundits). The word "violeta" in the title refers to the numerous violet-scented scholars who delighted in parading their learning at fashionable salons of the era (and who would also provide some of the favorite

targets for his satirical shafts in the Moroccan Letters). The popularity of Cadalso's work is reflected in the fact that the phrase erudito á la violeta quickly gained public acceptance, and is even found in modern dictionaries with the meaning "dilettante."

Between 1768 and 1774, Cadalso composed Cartas marruecas (Moroccan Letters), the work for which he is best-known today (with the possible exception of Noches lúgubres). The Moroccan Letters consists of a fictitious correspondence carried on among three people: Gazel Ben-Aly, a young Moroccan diplomat traveling in Spain, Gazel's venerable old mentor Ben-Beley in Africa, and Gazel's Spanish friend Nuño Núñez, a young military officer. Moroccan Letters had its basis in other works in which an author criticized a country through the guise of a supposedly impartial foreign observer. The first book of this type had been Giovanni Paolo Marana's L'Espion du Grand Seignur (Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy, 1684-86). Two other works, which are better-known today than Marana's, were Montesquieu's Lettres persanes (Persian Letters, 1721) and Oliver Goldsmith's Chinese Letters (1760-61; retitled Citizen of the World, 1762). In addition to these antecedents as inspirations for the work itself, Cadalso based his introduction upon the famous prologue of Cervantes in Don Quixote (1605). Indeed, Cervantes, not Montesquieu, is the actual spiritual father of the work, suggests Thomas O. Beebee, despite the lack of formal resemblance between Don Quixote and Cartas marruecas; but this lack of resemblance, says Beebee, is exactly the point Cadalso is making in his introduction: "Spain's decadence (the very topic of the Cartas) has exiled cultural critique, which has traveled through Europe in the

form of epistolary fiction, returning to Spain bearing only the faintest 'family resemblance' to Cervantes" (Epistolary Fiction in Europe 90).

Various other works of José Cadalso deserve mention. Before Moroccan Letters, he had written a novel, Observaciones de un oficial holandés en el nuevamente descubierto reino de Feliztá (Observations of a Dutch Officer in the Newly Discovered Kingdom of Feliztá), the manuscript of which is now considered to be lost (Dale, "Experiencias inmediatas en las Cartas marruecas de Cadalso" 116). Perhaps inspired by the example of Francisco de Quevedo, who wrote a spirited attack upon foreign authors who had criticized Spain negatively, in his España defendida (1609), Cadalso wrote a short work whose origin appears to have been a reaction against the leyenda negra ("black legend"), which laid at Spain's door a harsh indictment of its treatment of natives in the New World, as well as non-Catholics in both the New World and Europe (Chen Sham, "La sátira de España y las denegaciones ideológicas" 108): Cadalso's championing of Spain is titled "Defensa de la nación española contra la 'Carta persiana 78' de Montesquieu." The "Defensa" was published for the first time in 1970 (Chen Sham, "Un acercamiento a la deriva hermenéutica" 8-9). It is possible that in the writing of the "Defensa" Cadalso may have had in mind the closing lines of Montesquieu's Letter 78, in which Montesquieu's fictional correspondent Rica, who has just finished cruelly mocking Spaniards as being mostly loafers twanging away at out-of-tune guitars, says:

> I should not be sorry, Usbek, to see a letter written to Madrid by a

> Spaniard traveling in France; I am sure that he would be able to avenge his country. What immense scope there would be for a thoughtful and cool-headed man! (157)

The Anales de cinco días, ó carta de un amigo á otro (The Annals of Five Days, or Letter from One Friend to Another, 1778) is written in the epistolary form containing dialogue, as in the Moroccan Letters. The "author" of the letter describes in a satirical manner his companionship with a great lady of society and her husband at their house, a companionship which very likely mirrors that of Cadalso with his friends the Benaventes (Sebold, Colonel 24-25). Another work, somewhat less than twenty pages in length, El buen militar á la violeta (The Good Violet-Scented Military Officer, 1772) is a continuation of Los eruditos á la violeta, but with reference to military life. Cadalso wrote at least two other works for the theater besides Don Sancho García: Solaya, ó los circasianos (Solaya, or the Circassians) and La Numantina (The Numantian Woman), which are both lost; the existence of Solaya is shown in official censorship documents (Sebold, Colonel 148), and The Numantian Woman (a tragedy in five acts) is mentioned by Cadalso himself in a letter to Meléndez Valdés (EA 102). He also wrote two works on strictly military matters, both still unpublished: Papeles de la campaña (Campaign Papers) and Diario crítico del sitio de Gibraltar (Critical Diary of the Siege of Gibraltar).

In 1779, Cadalso was transferred to the area of Gibraltar, where he helped in planning the siege of British occupation forces there. Among his duties was acting

as liaison between the Spanish field commanders and the acting Spanish Prime Minister, the Conde de Floridablanca. On 12 January 1782, he was promoted to colonel (Sebold, Colonel 14). Then, on February 27, he died from a grenade wound to the head (Sebold, "¿Qué día murió Cadalso?" 26-27). The exact date of Cadalso's death has aroused, as have the details of his celebrated passion for the actress María Ignacia Ibáñez, considerable controversy. Nigel Glendinning gives the date as 26 February, but concedes that since night operations usually begin at about midnight, Cadalso may have actually received his fatal wound in the early hours of 27 February, which would be implied in the phrase "night of 26 February" ("The Date of Cadalso's Death" 424). This difference in just one day in calculating Cadalso's death prompted Sebold's amusing observation that, two hundred years later, Glendinning had buried him alive ("¿Qué día" 213).

It has been suggested by some that Cadalso's death at age 40 during the siege of Gibraltar was the result of a "suicidal courting of danger" (Goldin 130). María Ignacia Ibáñez, the great love of his life, was considered to have been a socially unsuitable match for the aristocratic Cadalso, and his contemplated marriage to her, had she lived, would have been scandalous and an impediment to his military career (129). However, her death occurred more than ten years before he fell at Gibraltar, and it is not known to what extent he was still grieving over her loss at the time. Cadalso did state, though, in a letter written to the Conde de Floridablanca in July, 1781, less than a year prior to his death, that: puedo jactarme de ser el más desgraciado de todos los hombres ("I can boast of being the most

unfortunate of all men"; (EA 136).

Whether he is ultimately regarded as a Romantic, a pre-Romantic, or a neo-classicist, José Cadalso died as he had lived, defending the honor of Spain. In his life, he had combined two of the qualities most admired by Spaniards, by being un hombre de armas y letras ("a man of arms and letters"), as had Miguel de Cervantes and countless others before him.

"MORDANT AND SUPERFICIAL LITTLE SATIRE"

When José Cadalso's Cartas marruecas (Moroccan Letters) sallied forth upon its tortuous journey from manuscript to publication in February of 1774, it first arrived at the Council of Castile in Madrid with an application for a license to publish, although not under the aegis of its author, the well-known soldier, poet, dramatist, satirist and friend of the Conde de Aranda, one of the most powerful ministers of Carlos III. Instead, the "mordant and superficial little satire," as it is called in the final section of the work, the Protesta literaria ("Literary Protest") was submitted under the pseudonym of Josef Vásquez (Glendinning, "New Light on the Circulation of Cadalso's Cartas marruecas" 136).

Cadalso's cautious subterfuge may have derived from the very nature of the work itself. The theme running throughout all ninety letters in Moroccan Letters (ML) is stated clearly in Cadalso's Introduction: "the most delicate subject in the world, the criticism of a nation." This is not an easy task, since there is always the possibility of offending at least someone with an honest analysis, especially an

author's own countrymen. A nation may be envisaged as a community, writes Benedict Anderson, because the nation "is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Imagined Communities 7). In such a relationship as the one suggested by Anderson, there is always the danger of a seemingly innocuous comment ruffling a few feathers, if the author is perceived as criticizing his own brothers; indeed, his words may even run the risk of sounding traitorous. Cadalso probably anticipated a negative reaction from the censors to his critique of Spain. In Letter 39 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, for example, the fictitious Spanish correspondent Nuño Núñez observes:

> So much has been written, with such variety, in such diverse times, and with such distinct purposes about the governance of the monarchies, that now little can be said anew which may be useful to the states, or safe for the authors.

Interestingly, in the preceding sentence itself the word seguro ("safe") was censored and changed to beneficio ("beneficial") before the work's first publication, in the Correo de Madrid, in 1789 (Glendinning, "Structure" 73).

All of this disproves the long-standing myth, propagated by no less than Cadalso himself, that he did not attempt to publish the Moroccan Letters in his lifetime due to his superior officers' displeasure with his literary endeavors (Glendinning, "New Light on the Circulation" 136). Instead, the truth may lie in the fact that the manuscript was submitted to the Real Academia de la Lengua in February of 1774 for an opinion, and was returned to the Council a year later,

granting permission to publish--in accordance with some necessary "corrections" (137). The matter languished until June of 1778, when Simón Gómez Pérez, acting on behalf of Cadalso, formally petitioned the Council to withdraw the manuscript from consideration for publication (138).

With this first complete translation of the Moroccan Letters into English I hope to remedy its undeserved neglect. Scott Dale has noted the lack of attention given to the work by critics not specializing in Spanish literature, as well as the lack of references to it in studies of the epistolary novel. It is not alone, however, he says, in being neglected; the first epistolary novel, Proceso de cartas de amores que entre dos amantes pasaron, written by another Spaniard, the Toledan author Juan de Segura (1548), has been similarly ignored (Dale, Novela innovadora 39-40). Despite this, the reputation of the Moroccan Letters as one of the premier works of eighteenth-century Spanish literature has only increased during the past two hundred and fifty years. Several prominent aspects of the work are frequently mentioned when attempting to explain its place and enduring popularity: Cadalso's skillful use of perspectivismo (different points of view), his steady attempt to achieve impartiality, his unrelenting criticism of luxury, his portrayal of the concept of the hombre de bien ("honorable man"), his belief in the importance of the good citizen to society, his fostering of international cooperation among intellectuals, as well as his vivid, flamboyant demonstrations of costumbrismo (depiction of Spanish regional customs). Costumbrismo, which achieved maturity in the nineteenth century during the Romantic period, was by then already fashionable in

Spain; it derived, observes Francisco Caravaca, from the Moroccan Letters of Cadalso, as well as from the works of others ("Notas" 6). The most noteworthy example of costumbrismo in the Moroccan Letters is perhaps found in Letter 7 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, which contains a vivid representation of rural life in Andalusia, as well as what may be the first documentation of flamenco in Spanish literature.

Another aspect, not emphasized but still important, is that it is frequently an amusing book. Besides serving the reader as a discussion of serious issues, it can also be read for entertainment. The humor in the Moroccan Letters not unfrequently punctures and deflates the objects of its satire, most specifically the smug proponents of unrestrained faith in the Enlightenment, in material progress, and in the superiority of one group or nation over another. It is not, however, an anti-Enlightenment work, but rather one which periodically questions the unswerving certitude of its adherents' articles of faith.

An examination of the various techniques of humor employed by Cadalso has long been overdue. In the present study, I hope to remedy this startling oversight.

THE GENRE OF THE MOROCCAN LETTERS:

"A LABYRINTH OF UNCONNECTED SUBJECT MATTER"

The reason why Cadalso chose to present an outsider's perspective on Spain through the eyes of a Moroccan diplomat is perhaps self-evident. The country of Morocco was, shortly before the time he wrote the Moroccan Letters, the subject of an important news event in Spain:

> Criticism has attached the most immediate inspiration to a particular media event: the visit of a Moroccan diplomat named Sidi Hamet al Ghazzali and known in Spain as El Gazel. He met with Carlos III in Madrid and attracted much attention as he traveled through Andalucía, Murcia, and Castilla la Nueva from May of 1766 to February of 1767. El-Ghazzal himself was a poet; he kept a travel diary that chronicles the enthusiasm his Spanish trip ignited. (Scarlett 66)

Possibly the most accurate explanation of the genre of the Moroccan Letters is Cadalso's own. In Letter 39 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel describes entering Nuño's room as his friend is rising from bed. He notices a table littered with papers, one of which is a small notebook in Nuño's handwriting titled Sundry Observations and Reflections. In the notebook he finds serious things mixed with trivialities, all arranged in no apparent order. In Gazel's shocked reaction, he calls the work ("a labyrinth of unconnected subject matter"). Scott Dale properly suggests that the chaos of the papers and the disorganization of Nuño's thoughts in the notebook are a reflection of the disorder which seems to reign throughout many of the letters in the Moroccan Letters itself, and that the Moroccan Letters equally reflects the chaotic state of the world ("El orden del caos" 63). Indeed, Manuel

Camarero says that Gazel's description of the hodgepodge nature of Nuño's Sundry Observations and Reflections is a parody of the textual organization of the Moroccan Letters itself ("Composición y lectura" 139).

Others, however, have also attempted to categorize Cadalso's "mordant little satire." The Moroccan Letters does not conform to one of the most prominent features for essays, says Hernán Catáneo, because, since the perspectives of three different characters appear in the work, it does not contain un yo opinante ("an arguing 'I'") which expresses its observations upon a determinado objeto o realidad ("determined object or reality"; 60). Neither is the work a collection of articles of costumbrismo, says Catáneo, because articles of costumbrismo are published separately and later gathered together into a published collection, whereas the Moroccan Letters employs a plot which runs throughout the work, however minimal its storyline may be (60). Its "plot," however, observes Catáneo, does not have enough substance to qualify it as a novel (60), which is the opposite of how Scott Dale categorizes it when he says that the Moroccan Letters is an epistolary work exhibiting various characteristics of a novel ("Experiencias inmediatas" 116). Catáneo himself concludes that the Moroccan Letters is presented as a disguised version of relatos de viajes ("books of travel"), whose main function is to demonstrate a critical vision of Spanish society through means of a play of voices, of points of view, of distinct and opposed perspectives (65).

But designating the work merely as a "book of travel" does not seem to be completely accurate either. Margaret C. Jacob says that during the Enlightenment:

> Along with books about science, a new genre of literature appeared, one that remains a vital part of publishing and leisure time reading to this day. Travel literature described peoples and places never seen in detail before. Generally, the authors treated these peoples as exotic, inferior, or odd. (43)

R. Merritt Cox, who appears to be in agreement with Catáneo in calling Cadalso's work a "book of travel," says:

> The Moroccan Letters, first published in 1789, is an example of a type of literature very popular in the eighteenth century. Ostensibly a sort of travel literature it is actually a critique of the contemporary national scene. (Eighteenth Century Spanish Literature 79)

But, Glendinning, who is not satisfied that "book of travel" is a satisfactory classification, remarks: "Looking at the travel framework of Cartas marruecas we find it to be almost conspicuous by its absence" ("Structure" 56). Glendinning then notes that the first reference to travel within Spain does not occur until Letter 25 (56). In addition, he says:

> The travel line in the Cartas marruecas is, then, extraordinarily vague. And as we have already hinted when talking about the lapse of time between Letter 43 (dated 1768) and 67 (dated1774), the time sequence is not as designedly vraisemblable or rational as that of Montesquieu's Lettres persanes. The reference to Jorge Juan's death in Letter 7 puts it in or after 1774. Evidently the clock has to be put back by the reader to enable him to follow Gazel to the provincial city referred to in Letter 43 in 1768. (57)

Glendinning even calls into question the work's status as a book of letters, when he says, "In reality, it is surprising how few of these [letters in epistolary form] there are in a work supposedly made up of letters." He further observes:

> The only letters with formal endings in the Cartas marruecas are the first two and the last one (1, 2 and 90); also 17, 42, 44, 62 and 86; others, like 71, 84 and 85 make references to other letters and so

> give a sense of being a part of an exchange of correspondence. (55-56)

Despite all the differing opinions of the various critics, the most accurate way to classify the genre of the Moroccan Letters is to look at the works by other authors which it most closely resembles: criticisms of a country through the guise of a supposedly impartial foreign observer. In regard to Giovanni Paolo Marana's L'Espion du Grand Seignur (Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy, 1684-86), the first known book of this genre, Arthur J. Weitzman observes: "Marana may be said to have fathered the device of concocting a series of letters written by a visitor to a foreign country" (viii). The letters comprising the book are supposedly written by Mahmut, the "vilest of the Grand Signior's slaves," who resides in Paris from 1637 to 1682; his letters are presented as reports to his superiors back in Constantinople. By hiding behind a cloak of anonymity, Marana could evade responsibility for anything considered dangerous by the censors of Louis XIV. Weitzman adds:

> And the second advantage of this publishing ruse was the sensational element inherent in the revelations of a spy, which Marana ingeniously exploited and which forms one of the main appeals of the letters. (ix)

In the Lettres persanes (Persian Letters, 1721) by Montesquieu (Charles-Louis de Secondat), the author's fictional Persian correspondents Usbek and Rica visit Europe and find much that is humorous and illogical. According to Christopher J. Betts:

> The book also inaugurated that eighteenth-century phenomenon known as the Enlightenment, a literary and intellectual movement which, in the name of freedom and humanity, attacked almost every traditional value in sight (19).

The letters in Oliver Goldsmith's Chinese Letters (1760-61; with revisions titled Citizen of the World in the book edition of 1762), purportedly written by "a Chinese philosopher residing in London to his friends in the East," began appearing in the Public Ledger of January 24, 1760, and eventually ran to one hundred and eighteen letters in all. According to Katherine Reding:

> The letters show Goldsmith's attempt to delineate the English character through observations made in fictitious correspondence between Lien Chi Altangi in London and Fum Hoam, First President of the Ceremonial Academy at Pekin, China. In an early letter, Lien describes his meeting with the Man-in-Black, who becomes his companion and guide. The Man-in-Black, although he takes no part in the correspondence, is an indispensable personage in the narrative, for he represents the English attitude. (227)

It appears undeniable, Reding asserts, that Cadalso was acquainted with Citizen of the World, and was influenced by it when he wrote the Moroccan Letters. But, states Reding: "The relationship is not one of servile imitation" (233). There are, however, interesting similarities between the two works which Reding acknowledges, principally in the main characters, which can be arranged in three categories, according to their functions. In the first group, there are educated Orientals traveling abroad for the purpose of learning foreign customs (Gazel, a Moor traveling in Spain and Lien Chi Altangi, a Chinese philosopher traveling in

England). In the second group there are two old men residing back in the home country who comment on moral matters to their younger charges who are traveling abroad (Ben-Beley, a Moroccan sage and Fum Hoam, a Chinese dignitary). In the third group are natives of the country being visited, who attempt to explain and interpret the customs of their countries to the visiting foreigner, and who both seem to be the true mouthpieces of the authors (Nuño Núñez, an educated Spanish military officer and the Man-in-Black, an educated Englishman) [228].

Two passages in the Moroccan Letters appear to be allusions to Goldsmith's Citizen of the World. The "Editor" of the Introduction indirectly refers not only to Goldsmith, but also to Marana and Montesquieu, on the very first page:

> This fiction is not so natural in Spain, because of the lesser number of travelers to whom to ascribe such a work. The title of Persian, Turkish or Chinese Letters, written this side of the Pyrenees, would be unbelievable.

The other instance of what seems to be a concrete link to Goldsmith occurs in Letter 80 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, when Gazel says of his friend Nuño:

> Nuño clubs with some of these [foreigners] who reside in Madrid, and he loves them as his own countrymen, because all the hombres de bien in the world seem as such to him, and he being for them a true cosmopolite, or universal citizen [i. e., "citizen of the world"].

Despite the similarities, however, Cadalso's great innovation was to include the native of the country being visited as one of the correspondents, instead of merely relegating him to the status of a person being mentioned from time to time

by the visitor in his letters to his mentor back home. Sebold observes that Nuño Núñez, the educated Spanish correspondent in the Moroccan Letters, does not have a counterpart in the Oriental letter writers of other countries, neither in Montesquieu nor in Goldsmith:

> Critics have noted that Nuño's nationality and opinions make it obvious he is Cadalso's "mouthpiece." However, they have failed to see that Nuño occupies such a new position in the genre in which he appears that its technique is significantly altered as a result. Letters from a traveler in a foreign country suggest detachment and objectivity, but letters from a man residing in his own country, surrounded by familiar things, suggest a personal involvement in national problems. (Colonel 129)

In fact, Nuño's perspective is just as important as Gazel's. In his edition of the Moroccan Letters, Francisco Alonso breaks down the ninety letters of the work into groups, and notes that Ben-Beley writes eight to Gazel and three to Nuño, Nuño writes four to Ben-Beley and six to Gazel, and Gazel writes sixty-six to Ben-Beley and three to Nuño. However, Nuño, in addition to writing ten of the letters himself, is transcribed or cited in fifty-three other letters and is therefore the true protagonist, as well as the alter-ego of Cadalso (129). The very name "Nuño Núñez" suggests Spain itself, since there was a real Castilian hero of the ninth century named Nuño Núñez.

After considering what has been said about the genre of Cadalso's Moroccan Letters, it should be described as a series of letters written by a visitor to a foreign country, while accepting Cadalso's own assertion that it is a satire and acknowledging that it appears, at first glance, to be a "labyrinth of unconnected

subject matter," as noted by the fictional Moroccan correspondent Gazel.

However, this last characteristic, the seeming disorder and lack of connection, may be merely a carefully crafted illusion. The apparent lack of continuity and the apparent disunity in subject matter gives the impression of being deliberate.

PERSPECTIVISMO IN THE MOROCCAN LETTERS: "ASK YOUR FRIEND NUÑO FOR HIS OPINION. . . ."

Cadalso manages to derive order from apparent chaos through the use of what is probably the most visible technique in the work, that of perspectivismo. Various and differing opinions and points of view are interchanged and reflected back upon each other until sometimes achieving a synthesis. For example, in Letter 43 from Gazel to Nuño, Gazel asks Nuño to "reply to me with what occurs to you on this subject." And in Letter 86 from Ben-Beley to Gazel, when Ben-Beley wants Gazel to investigate the legend of Santiago in Spain, he writes:

> Ask your friend Nuño his opinion upon a hero of his country famous for the aid, in a long series of battles their ancestors had against ours for possession of the Peninsula, for which Spaniards have believed that they are indebted to him.

The interchange of ideas is at the heart of Cadalso's perspectivismo. The perspectivismo is achieved through the utilization of the epistolary mode (Ángeles Naval 35). In effect, ideas, when interchanged, act upon each other as a sort of

filter, or prism, whereby Cadalso constructs a modification. As Glendinning observes:

> From one point of view he uses it [the modification process] to correct a misconception of what, in his view, seems an error. From another standpoint, he uses it to suggest that there is more than one solution to a given question. The first position suggests an acceptance of certain absolutes; the second position is relativist. ("Structure" 61)

The goal of the letters, asserts Cadalso's "Editor" in the Introduction, is "the impartiality which reigns in them;" the title of the first printed version of the work, which appeared in the Correo de Madrid, begins with the words "Moroccan Letters Written by an Impartial Politician." For example, when particular Moroccan practices such as the overprotection of women are lauded, observes Elizabeth Scarlett, "[. . .] an ironic overkill makes the reader aware of the similar absurdity of Spanish adherence to European custom, and the two positions cancel each other out" (68). The attitude toward Islamic culture in the Moroccan Letters is less Orientalizing than that of Montesquieu in the Persian Letters, suggests Scarlett, because the French author "emphasizes or invents exotic and taboo elements" in order to interest the reader (68). The main reason for this difference between the two works is that Cadalso does not focus on anything like Montesquieu's racy subplot involving life in the Persian harem, which is the dominant theme in the final fifteen letters (140-161) of the Persian Letters; the harem subplot includes eroticism, brutality of eunuchs and suicide by poison. As a result, the Moroccan Letters lacks that fascination with fanciful notions of "Oriental despotism, splendor,

cruelty, sensuality" which Edward Said criticizes for their stereotypical inaccuracy (Orientalism 4). Such notions have sometimes tended to foster a distorted picture of Islamic life. Said observes:

> Along with all other peoples variously designated as backward, degenerate, uncivilized, and retarded, the Orientals were viewed in a framework constructed out of biological determinism and moral-political admonishment. The Oriental was linked thus to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien. (207)

In any event, Cadalso's use of the technique of perspectivismo, more than anything else, says Manuel Camarero, gives the Moroccan Letters a greater apparance of objectivity than any other work of the same genre ("Cosmopolitismo y casticismo" 40). By reflecting back upon each other the opinions of the three correspondents and filtering them through each other, a justo medio ("golden mean") which the "Editor" also mentions, is established, which results in the desired impartiality. The process involved can be represented in the following manner:

PERSPECTIVISMO ----> JUSTO MEDIO ----> IMPARTIALITY

An example of Cadalso's pursuit of the justo medio is identified by Azorín (José Martínez Ruiz) in his edition of Cartas marruecas (10). The example occurs in Letter 5 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, when Gazel mentions to Ben-Beley his having read about the taking of Mexico by the Spaniards, and then claims to be impartial when he remarks:

> Since the authors through whom I have read about this series of prodigious events are all Spaniards, the impartiality which I profess

> also obliges me to read what is written by foreigners. Then, I shall draw a middle argument between what say the former and the latter.

There are numerous concrete examples of Cadalso's demonstrations of perspectivismo in the Moroccan Letters. For instance, in Letters 27, 28, 84 and 85, his three correspondents discuss the subject of posthumous fame. The theme of posthumous fame is first suggested by Nuño, quoted by Gazel in Letter 27 to Ben-Beley. Interestingly, in this letter can also be found a good example of Cadalso's novelistic touches, since in it there occurs a confluence of writing in first, second and third person (Dale, "Experiencias inmediatas" 126). Nuño attributes the desire to acquire posthumous fame to excessive pride, which spurs people to find after death what they cannot obtain in life. Ben-Beley reacts to Nuño's observation in Letter 28 to Gazel by looking at the positive side of the situation, noting:

> I discern what you tell me of the excess of pride, whence originates the folly of wanting to survive beyond oneself. I believe, as you do, that posthumous fame is of no use to the dead, but that it can serve the living with the stimulus of the example left by the one who has died.

In Letter 84 from Ben-Beley to Gazel, Ben-Beley takes up the theme of posthumous fame again, remarking to Gazel:

> After writing to you upon this subject a few months ago, I have considered that the said desire is one of the few things that can console a man of unfortunate merit. It can be quite a strong relief for him to think that future generations will do him the justice his contemporaries deny him.

In Letter 85 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel appears to agree with the stance of his mentor Ben-Beley when he writes: "It provides me much strength to reflect that the

hope of posthumous fame is the only one which can sustain the many who suffer the persecution of their century and appeal to the coming ones." Then, however, Gazel includes more of Nuño's perspective, which viene a romper la armonía conseguida entre maestro y alumno ("breaks the harmony achieved between the teacher and his pupil"), according to Francisco García-Moreno Barco (65), when he adds: "But my friend Nuño says that too many people in Spain already follow the system of indifference upon this kind of fame."

In this case we have, observes García-Moreno Barco, two positions when judging posthumous fame: the negative of the student and the positive of the teacher, to which must be added the commentary of the other teacher [Nuño]. From this we can conclude, says García-Moreno Barco, that:

> [. . .] el autor ve, en un estado primitivo, la fama póstuma como algo artificial y poco digno de la inteligencia humana, pero que, estudiado en profundidad puede ser muy positivo aliciente para las siguientes generaciones.
>
> [. .] the author sees, in a primitive stage, posthumous fame as something artificial and little worthy of human intelligence, but that, studied in depth, it can be very positive as an incentive for following generations (66).

However, the apparent balance achieved by this filtering process wobbles slightly when in Letter 34 a frivolous project planner says to Nuno,"Pardon a man

desirous of posthumous fame for this short digression." The very fact that this man described by Gazel as a raving fool desires posthumous fame taints anyone else who also longs for it with a negative brush

Another example of perspectivismo examined by García-Moreno Barco occurs in Letters 52, 69 and 70, which are between Gazel and Nuño, who discuss in them the concept of the hombre de bien ("honorable man"). In Letter 52 from Nuño to Gazel, which is quite short, Nuño expresses his conviction that:"Betwixt being an hombre de bien and not being an hombre de bien there is no middle course." The true hombre de bien, he writes, must always adhere strictly to "the invincible strength of virtue." Gazel, in Letter 69 to Nuño, relates to Nuño his chance encounter with a country gentleman after the breakdown of his carriage on a trip through the provinces of Spain. The gentleman, who lives quietly with his happy family in a secluded country home, is a gracious host, and is described by Gazel in the most glowing of terms:

> [. . .] his countenance was mild, his clothing simple but neat and tidy, and his gestures were full of that naturalness which characterizes the habitual manner of illustrious people, without that affectation which inspires arrogance and vanity.

The gentleman is charitable to servants and neighbors alike, aids the local farmers in improving their crops, finds honorable marriages for orphaned girls, provides a part of his house as a hospital for sick people in the region and, in short, sets a wonderful example of generosity and discretion for others. His old manservant,

who adores him, tells Gazel:

> He spent his childhood in this village, his early youth at the university; then, he went into the army; after that, he lived at the Court, and now has retired to this retreat. This variety of lifestyles has made him regard with indifference all types of them, and even the greater part of them with disgust. . . . Hidden merit is looked down on in this world, and if it reveals itself, it attracts envy and its followers. What must a man do, then, who has it?--Retire to where he can be useful without danger to himself.

It seems undeniable that Gazel has just painted for Nuño a perfect portrait of an hombre de bien. However, in Letter 70 from Nuño to Gazel, Nuño, surprisingly, reacts in a negative, although judicious, manner, when he speaks about the gentleman's resigning from public service to an idyllic retirement in the country:

> [. . .] does it not seem sad to you for the State to lose some men of talent and merit who withdraw from careers useful to the realm? Do you not believe that all individuals are obligated to contribute to their country with painstaking care?. . . . Surely you realize that, even though he may be a good man, he is certainly a bad citizen, and that being a good citizen is a true obligation of the ones which a man incurs on being included in the realm.

The discussion of the hombre de bien in Letters 52, 69 and 70 represents, for García-Moreno Barco, Cadalso's theory of relativism. Gazel believes that he has found a true flesh-and-blood model of the hombre de bien, but Nuño's dissenting commentary clips the wings of Gazel's soaring enthusiasm, leaving the matter in a state of relativism; what can be a model for Gazel is not one for Nuño because it does not comply with a requisite which he considers indispensable (67-68).

Relativism also appears in the Moroccan Letters, but not as explicitly, according to Nigel Glendinning, in Cadalso's treatment of religion: "The whole

work reflects . . . a willingness to accept the equal validity of Moorish and Christian standards" ("Structure" 63). At the conclusion of Letter 42, as Glendinning correctly points out, Nuño mentions to Gazel "the Supreme being, whom we call God and you call Allah." Furthermore, in Letter 87 to Ben-Beley, Gazel remarks, upon the subject of Santiago in Spain that:

> This conversation between an African Moor and a Christian Spaniard is undoubtedly odious, but among rational men of any country or religion it can be discussed quite well without vitiating friendship.

Cadalso's relativist view of some religious superstitions and miracles appears also in Letter 87 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, as Gazel relates to Ben-Beley the observations of Nuño concerning the presumed appearance of Santiago (Saint James, the patron saint of Spain) at the battle of Clavijo in 844. In Nuño's judgment, according to the assessment of Glendinning:

> The philosopher may doubt the validity of his appearance and yet should he spread his doubt as if it were necessarily right? Belief may be wrong in this instance but it was useful in that it encouraged the ordinary soldier to win the battle. ("Structure" 63)

But, asks Glendinning, if relativism and the pursuit of impartiality are essential elements in the work, what about absolutes? Virtue seems to be one, and also the concept of the hombre de bien, since in Letter 52 from Nuño to Gazel, Nuño declares firmly that: "Betwixt being an hombre de bien and not being an

hombre de bien there is no middle course." In spite of this, Glendinning concludes that the major absolute in the work would appear to be reason, since:

> [. . .] many of the letters take the form of a demonstration: a generalisation followed by supporting evidence; or a case-history or anecdote followed by a generalisation. . . . A similar belief in reason lies behind the satire [in Letter 23] of scholarly disputations (64).

And yet, although the skillful use of the technique of perspectivismo in the Moroccan Letters gives the impression of an interchange of various and differing opinions and points of view among the three correspondents, it should not be forgotten that Gazel, Nuño and Ben-Beley are fictional creations of Cadalso. In a sense, then, it can be said that there is one perspective which is always being presented: that of Cadalso himself. It is therefore no wonder that, as Michael P. Iarocci suggests, in the words of each character are manifested the presence or influence of the others (167). Indeed, Helman observes that as early as 1785, a young admirer of Cadalso's, Vargas Ponce, after reading a manuscript copy of the Moroccan Letters, was struck by a new and original aspect of the work: "[. . .] Cadalso's expression of his own personal feeling even when he portrayed contemporary reality from several different points of view" ("Caprichos and monstruos" 211). In fact, as Sebold observes, the actual author Cadalso, hiding behind the identities of the three fictitious correspondents, is one of them: the Spaniard Nuño Núñez (Colonel 127).

Cadalso's use of masks is closely related to some of the other most important techniques which are conspicuous in the work, the narrative framing

devices.

NARRATIVE FRAMING IN THE MOROCCAN LETTERS: "WE KNOW YOUR TRUE FACE AND SHALL TEAR AWAY THE MASK. . . ."

On the surface, the structural basis of the Moroccan Letters appears to be the written communication carried on among the three correspondents Gazel Ben-Aly, Nuño Núñez and Ben-Beley during the interchange of ninety letters (although, according to the final "Note" by the "Editor," the list of contents of the letters, published as well as unpublished, is actually one hundred and fifty). Interestingly, as Scott Dale has noticed, the reader is the only one who is able to read all of the letter (El orden del caos" 61); presumably, so also are the two fictional "Editors": the one who announces himself as such in the Introduction (and is referred to as "Vásquez" in the dream sequence in the "Literary Protest" at the conclusion), as well as the "friend" of the "Editor" who left him the manuscript of the work upon his "death." But none of the three correspondents has had access to every letter. In addition, a presumed "translator" must have read all ninety letters in order to translate them, apparently from Arabic into Spanish because, as the "Editor" says in the Introduction: "Some of them maintain all the style, and even the genius--let us call it that--of the original Arabic."

But does this sufficiently explain the levels of narration in the work? Hardly. To the foregoing must also be added the fictitious "original author" (or

"editor")--identity unknown and actual existence uncertain--of the "original manuscript" which the "Editor" mentions in the Introduction when he writes:

> Luck had it that, because of the death of an acquaintance of mine, a manuscript fell into my hands, whose title is: Letters Written by a Moor Named Gazel Ben-Aly to Ben-Beley, His Friend, Concerning the Practices and Customs of Spaniards Ancient and Modern, With Some Replies by Ben- Beley, and Other Letters Relative to These.

Jorge Chen Sham believes that the stated aim of impartiality in the prologue "[. . .] becomes almost an obsession that has forced the author to filch his responsibility (the alienating device of a false manuscript found by chance)[. . .]" ("Las contradicciones del contrato de lectura" 99), but the use of a newly discovered "lost manuscript" is an old and venerable framing device. Marana, the "editor and translator" of Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy claims that he has discovered in Paris a packet of letters written in Arabic. In Jorge Isaacs's romantic novel María (1867), the presumed "editor" mentions the protagonist Efraín having put into his hands the book of his recollections. Cervantes himself used the device of the discovered manuscript in Don Quixote, but did not reveal it until chapters eight and nine of the Primera Parte. In chapter eight, Don Quixote's battle with a Basque squire is interrupted at the critical moment:

> Pero está el daño de todo esto que en este punto y término deja pendiente el autor desta historia esta batalla, disculpándose que no halló más escrito destas hazañas de don Quijote, de las que deja referidas.

> But the misfortune of all this is that, at this crucial point the author of this history leaves this battle hanging, excusing himself by saying that he found no more record of the deeds of Don Quixote than those referred to here (43).

In chapter nine, the narrator continues relating the details of Don Quixote's battle with the Basque squire, after stating that he discovered an old Arabic manuscript in Toledo containing the rest of the story, written by the Arab historian Cide Hamete Benengeli, and which someone there had translated for him.

Five of the ninety letters in the Moroccan Letters contain other letters within them, forwarded from one correspondent to another. For example, in Letter 32 from Ben-Beley to Gazel, Gazel forwards to Ben-Beley a letter of Nuño's on the subject of tiresome conventions. In Letter 35 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel quotes Nuño's reading aloud to him a letter written by Nuño's sister in which she mangles her Spanish grammar by attempting to employ fashionable Gallicisms. In Letter 64 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel forwards to Ben-Beley three letters written to him by Spaniards petitioning his help in introducing Moroccan fashions to Spain. In Letter 75 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel forwards to Ben-Beley a letter written to him by a young widow who has just buried six husbands and complains of marriages arranged by fathers against their daughters' consent. Also, in Letter 76 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel forwards to Ben-Beley a letter written to him by a Spanish coquette.

There are other examples of what can be called "intratextuality," or, as Scott Dale calls them, ficciones interpoladas. According to Dale, these are texts whose origin seems to come from another author ("Ficciones y relatos históricos" 130). They are, as it were, "inserted texts." Such inserted texts in the Moroccan Letters are those which are quoted in excerpts, or in their entirety, and are not written by the authors of the particular letters in which they appear. For example, in Letter 3 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel remits to Ben-Beley the observations written down by Nuño on the history of Spain. Letter 6 from Gazel to Ben-Beley purports to be about the backwardness of the sciences for lack of support, but also contains the entire text of a dedication in honor of the Madrid water-boy Domingo de Domingos which was written by Nuño for a book of his on literature. Letter 8, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, contains the preface of Nuño's Castilian dictionary. In Letter 9 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel quotes Nuño's reading to him of notes he has written in defense of Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conqueror of Mexico. Letter 16, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, contains the prologue of Nuño's Heroic History of Spain. In Letter 39, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel describes items from Nuño's Sundry Observations and Reflections, although he does not specifically quote from it. In Letter 51, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, on the subject of politics, there are extensive quotes from Nuño's Castilian dictionary. In Letter 54, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel quotes from Nuño's dictionary again, from his definition of the word "fortune." Letter 77, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, contains Nuño's list of books, papers and plays exhibiting bad taste.

Then there are instances when the narrator/writer of a letter gives way to someone else who takes over the narration in the middle of the letter and begins to tell his own anecdote or story. This type of framing is what is typically referred to as metanarration. Gérard Genette refers to the process as "metadiagesis" (228-34). The process is perhaps best explained by looking at how it works in The Thousand and One Nights, as the Franco-Bulgarian philosopher Tzvetan Todorov describes it in his essay "Narrative Men." According to Todorov (qtd. In Genette 214), the record for the number of narrators in The Thousand and One Nights appears to occur in the story of the bloody chest:

Scheherazade tells that

Jaafer tells that

the tailor tells that

the barber tells that

his brother (and he has six brothers) tells that

A much more simple example mentioned by Genette is that of Odysseus, who washes ashore on Scheria, the island of the Phaecians, in Book 5 of The Odyssey, is found by Nausicaa, daughter of King Alcinous, and becomes a guest of the Phaecians. At a banquet, a bard sings of the Trojan War, which causes Odysseus to weep; he then tells the Phaecians the story of his trip from Troy to Scheria, in Books 9 through 12, in what Genette calls diagesis of the second degree (216). The "Parable of the Prodigal Son" in the Bible which Jesus narrates to his

disciples is another example of second-degree diagesis.

In the Moroccan Letters, the first instance of metadiagesis, or metanarration, occurs in Letter 7, from Gazel to Ben-Beley. After a few introductory paragraphs, Gazel prepares the way for Nuño to take over as narrator when he writes: "Between laughter and weeping, Nuño related to me an episode that seems to come from a novel." Nuño then tells the story of his chance encounter with a young nobleman while traveling to Cádiz. In addition, in the midst of Nuño's story, Nuño temporarily gives way to the young señorito, who narrates to him a scene with his old uncle, the Comendador, as well as one with his friend, the butcher Tío Gregorio. In Letter 8 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Nuño takes over the narration in the second half of the letter, and relates to Gazel a discussion he had with a petimetre (a dandy given to foreign fashions) about his Castilian dictionary. Letter 55 from Gazel to Ben-Beley is entirely metadiagetic after the first sentence, in which Gazel cedes the narration to Nuño: "'Why does a man want to make a fortune?' Nuño was saying to one who thinks of nothing else." In Letter 60 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, which concerns the difficulties which can arise due to the differences in customs and languages among countries, Gazel gives way to Nuño, who relates the humorous incident of the eyeglasses (which he has heard told to him by someone else): "'I recall having heard told to my father,' says Nuño. . ." In Letter 69, from Gazel to Nuño, in the middle of Gazel's account of his meeting with a gentleman who lives a secluded life in the country, the gentleman's old manservant takes over the narration as he tells Gazel the gentleman's life story.

One other level of narration remains to be identified, that of the real, the first narrator: the actual author himself, José Cadalso. But who--and what--or which--Cadalso should be credited as the author of the work? In truth, Cadalso does not make the answering of this question as simple as it may seem, for there is more than one remaining mask to be pulled back before revealing the author's rightful face, which may be smiling yet at his final little jest upon the reader.

FICTIVE AUTONOMY AND THE UNSTABLE NARRATOR: "... THE TRUE AUTHOR OF THEM WAS SO MUCH LIKE ME AND I SO MUCH LIKE HIM, THAT WE ARE ONE AND THE SAME"

In Luigi Pirandello's metadramatic play Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore (Six Characters in Search of an Author, 1921) it is not possible, says Richard Hornby, to determine whether the inner or the outer play is the main one, and it is a common criticism of Pirandello that he did not distinguish between illusion and reality. In Six Characters, says Hornby:

> The six characters appear in both the outer and inner plays--as themselves--but, until the end, are represented in the inner play by actors whom we saw rehearsing in the outer play, while the six characters themselves, until the end, stay in the outer play, and, like Hamlet and the members of the court watching The Mousetrap, comment upon it. The inner play is both framed and inset, both primary and secondary. (43-44)

This particular blurring of the boundary between illusion and reality constitutes what may be considered to be a part of the framing device. It is an

aspect of fictional status which John W. Kronik calls "fictive autonomy":

> [. . .] a protagonist who functions as a purportedly autonomous character, that is, one who is himself aware of his fictional status and by virtue of that awareness gains a degree of independence from his creator. (71)

Kronik further explains that by "autonomous" he means a character's illusion of independence from authorial control by means of his "confrontation with his fictionality" (90).

For example, Kronik points out that Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of Benito Pérez Galdós's novel El amigo Manso (Friend Manso, 1882) comprise a frame establishing the protagonist in his own words as "a lie, a fictive invention" (70). This is a correct analysis because Máximo Manso, a thirty-five-year-old preparatory school teacher and doctor of philosophy, announces in the title of Chapter 1: "Yo no existo" ("I do not exist") and goes on to explain that he is merely a creation of the author, una condensación artística, diabólica, hechura del pensamiento humano ("an artistic, diabolic condensation, a creation of human thought"; 9). However, with the title of Chapter 2, Manso abandons awareness of his fictional status with the words Yo soy Máximo Manso y tenía treinta y cinco años cuando . . . . ("I am Máximo Manso, and I was thirty-five years old when . . . ." 11). He then proceeds to narrate the story of his life, oblivious of his nonexistence until the end of the novel, when he dies, once again aware that he is a being constituted of nothing but

ink on paper, and the ink has run out.

"Paradoxically," observes Kronik, "the cry of 'I do not exist' can be uttered only by a being existentially aware of himself." Kronik adds: "The passage from 'I do not exist' to 'I am Máximo Manso' is the affirmation of non-existence, that is, the apotheosis of fictionality" (75). It is perhaps no accident that Manso, a philosopher, should concern himself with his own version of Descartes's cogito, which states: "I am thinking, therefore I exist" (Descartes, The Philosophical Writings 1:127).

Another well-known example of fictive autonomy occurs in Miguel de Unamuno's Niebla (Mist,1914). Theodore Ziolkowski notes that Unamuno created his interplay of fiction and reality a decade before Pirandello did the same (xv)--although Ziolkowski ignores the fact that Pérez Galdós had predated them both by more than three decades. In any case, the critical moment in Niebla occurs in Chapter 31, when the protagonist, Augusto Pérez, depressed and weary of existence, decides to kill himself but, before doing so, travels to Salamanca, where he confronts the philosopher Unamuno, who tells him that he cannot kill himself because he is only a product of his (Unamuno's) imagination and therefore is not in control of his own fate. Pérez argues angrily with Unamuno, pointing out the possibility that Unamuno may be the real fictitious character, and not he, Pérez. He adds that Unamuno may be nothing more than a vehicle for bringing the history of Augusto Pérez into the world (295).

In regard to the Moroccan Letters, when Sebold says that Cadalso himself, barely disguised behind a transparent mask, is one of the correspondents (Colonel 127), this clearly touches upon the very nature of the game of fictive autonomy being enacted in the work. It is useful to recall that the "Editor" (in fact, the second "Editor"), in the Introduction, refers to receiving the manuscript after the death of a friend (in fact, the first "Editor" or possibly, the "author"). However, at a later point in the Introduction, this second "Editor" confesses:

> But the friend who left me the manuscript of these Letters and who, according to the most judicious conjectures, was the true author of them, was so much like me and I so much like him, that we are one and the same. And I know his mode of thinking as well as my very own, in addition to his being so exactly my contemporary that he was born in the same year and month, on the same day and moment as I. So that, for all these reasons, and another one which I will refrain from mentioning, I can call this work my own without offending truth [. . .].

In the "Literary Protest" at the conclusion of the Moroccan Letters, the second "Editor" dreams that his friends criticizing the work address him as "Vásquez" (which is actually part of Cadalso's full name, as it is the family name of his mother). Thus, there appears to be at this point a definite relationship between the real Cadalso and the fictitious second "Editor."

Although Jesús Pérez Magallón denies the accuracy of the claim that Cadalso is in reality his fictitious Spanish correspondent Nuño ("Epistolaridad y novela" 168), Sebold's assertion that Cadalso is actually Nuño, and that Nuño is the alter ego of Cadalso (Colonel 128) is supported by an examination of Letter 67 in

the Moroccan Letters. In this letter, from Nuño to Gazel on the subject of the pedantic use of Latin quotations to ornament literary works, Nuño (a fictitious character) lays claim to authorship of the Noches lúgubres (a real work authored by the real José Cadalso): "[. . .] I would dare to publish the Noches lúgubres, which I have composed upon the death of a friend of mine, in the style of the work written by Dr. Young." Nuño then says that he intends to append to it the quotation from Virgil's Aeneid which actually adorns the frontispiece of the real Noches lúgubres of Cadalso.

At this point Cadalso has entered and merged with the persona of Nuño--or else Nuño has entered and merged with that of Cadalso. In any event, Cadalso has through this process become a fictional character in his own work--or perhaps his fictional character has become him. It is little wonder that Donald E. Schurlknight believes that Cadalso is the author, or editor, and also another character in the work: Nuño Núñez, who hides behind a mask the true personage of Cadalso ("Cadalso: tensión vital, tensión literaria" 429).

Thus, it does not appear to be an exaggeration to say of Cadalso that, as Kronik says of Pérez Galdós's fictional character Máximo Manso: "As subject and object, as teller of his tale, as creator of himself, he stands both outside and inside the fiction. He is a fictional being who is witness to his own fictionalization" (78). The difference here is that the process has been reversed. Instead of the fictional character becoming real, the real person has become fictional. Or have both things happened simultaneously? Indeed, there seems to be a circularity to the apparent

"reverse fictive autonomy" in Cadalso's Moroccan Letters. Certainly, Cadalso's ingenious handling of an unstable narrator displays a utilization of techniques more complex than, and anticipating by at least a century, the use of similar techniques by Pérez Galdós, Unamuno and Pirandello, and which also makes their accomplishments seem less revolutionary by comparison. In this respect, the Moroccan Letters stands forth as a truly modern work.

QUESTIONING THE ENLIGHTENMENT:

"THIS MUTATION, THIS TINSEL THAT GLITTERS THROUGHOUT ALL EUROPE AND DAZZLES THE LESS PRUDENT"

At the conclusion of Part One of Antonio Buero Vallejo's play Un soñador para un pueblo (A Dreamer for the People, 1958), a dramatic treatment of the Motín de Esquilache in Madrid in 1766, a street lamp is lit somewhere outside the home of the Marqués de Squillaci, and shines in through the window. Squillaci, who is preparing to leave his house as mobs of caped rioters are gathering in the street, comments:

> La oscuridad termina. Dentro de poco lucirán todos los faroles de Madrid. La ciudad más sucia de Europa es ahora la más hermosa gracias a mí. Es imposible que no me lo agradezcan.
>
> The darkness is gone. Soon all the lamps in Madrid will be alight. Thanks to me, the grubbiest city in Europe is now the most beautiful. I can't believe that they're not grateful to me for that. (119)

The installation of street lamps in Madrid had been a part of Squillaci's reform program. But, in addition to their resentment caused by his order prohibiting the wearing of the traditional long Spanish cape and broad-brimmed hat, a large portion of the people of Madrid were angered at having to live in darkened houses at night due to a shortage of lamp oil while at the same time the streets were illuminated and using up the precious oil (Macías Delgado 14).

A fitting metaphor for the shattering of hope for easy acceptance of the Enlightenment in Spain occurs in Buero Vallejo's play after Squillaci leaves his home--as the caped rioters begin throwing stones and smashing all the street lamps, leaving the city in darkness (123).

The Moroccan Letters includes many comments which reflect a less violent attitude than that of the mobs opposing the reforms of Squillaci, but which nevertheless betray some of Cadalso's occasional skepticism toward the program of

Europeanization occurring in Spain during the reign of Carlos III. Russell Sebold remarks:

> The writings of this overconfident new century are parodied in the very Introduction of the Moroccan Letters. The terms of this first bit of anti-Enlightenment satire are typical of the style and viewpoint of the work . . . (Colonel 124).

Intellectually, adds Sebold, Cadalso is liberal and modern, although at the same time caught in the contradiction of being emotionally loyal to Spanish tradition (125).

Cadalso's first suggestion of imperfection in the Enlightenment surfaces in Letter 4, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, when Gazel describes his confrontation with an "apologist" for the Enlightenment. "The Europeans of the present century," writes Gazel to Ben-Beley, "are insufferable with the praises that they heap upon the era in which they have been born." Gazel relates the skepticism with which he parried the arguments of the apologist, which included this dissenting comment:

> I grant you a certain apparent enlightenment that has dispossessed our century of the austerity and rigor of the past ones--but do you know for what purpose serves this mutation, this tinsel that glitters throughout all Europe and dazzles the less prudent? I firmly believe that it serves for nothing more than to confound the respective order, established for the good of each state in particular.

In this satire of a petimetre (the apologist), who according to Gazel has made "a

panegyric upon the age, and almost upon the very year, which had the felicity to produce him," Cadalso appears to be mocking, as Voltaire had mocked before him in Candide (1759) with Dr. Pangloss's smugly optimistic mantra that this is "the best of all possible worlds," the philosophy contained in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's "principle of sufficient reason," which asserts that "nothing happens without a reason why it should be so rather than otherwise" (321) and that since there is an infinity of possible things, not all of which exist, the ones that do exist must therefore be the best of all the possible ones (19). And Gazel's cynical judgment of the apologist, in his hope that Heaven spares his homeland from "the effects of the culture of this century, if it consists of what this fellow is putting into his defense," would seem to echo Candide's reaction after being brutally flogged by agents of the Inquisition in Portugal: "If this is the best of all possible worlds, what are the others like?" (12).

According to Elizabeth Scarlett, although Cadalso endorsed the Enlightenment, at his core dwelt the strain of Stoicism, a dormant but authentically native Spanish philosophy, which led him to resign himself to a "disengaged inner enlightenment." As a result, he was often bothered by superficial and materialistic aspects of the Enlightenment (78). For example, in Letter 34, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel describes Nuño's humorous conversation with a project planner who envisions building an elaborate and absurd (and obviously expensive) system of public canals. After finally dismissing the fellow as a lunatic, Nuño turns to Gazel, commenting: "Do you know the evil of all this? The evil thing is that the people,

spoiled by so many frivolous projects, are prejudiced against useful innovations." The folly of the project planner actually prompts Nuño to recommend that he be committed to a madhouse.

Edith Helman observes that Cadalso, a representative of the Enlightenment, although often a rationalist, was "critical and skeptical even of rationalism." As an example she mentions Letter 81, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, which shows the despair sometimes felt by the honest man, who does not know how to behave in a world of shifting values ("Monstruos y caprichos" 209). In Letter 81, Gazel ruefully concludes:

> These considerations, vexatious with maturity and confirmed by so many examples which abound, give a man the desire to withdraw to the most uninhabited place in our Africa, to flee from his fellow men, and to choose the abode of the deserts or the hills, among the wild animals and brutes.

Because of Cadalso's occasional insinuations of possible imperfection in the Enlightenment, he appears to occupy a place in Spanish literature similar to that of the Swiss author Jean-Jacques Rousseau in French literature: that of a transition figure between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Cadalso also wrote the Romantic Noches lúgubres and Rousseau wrote several pre-Romantic works,

perhaps the most influential being La Nouvelle Héloïse (1761), a book in the new lachrymose style which became known as sentimentalism. Within months of his arrival in Paris in the 1750s, according to Margaret Jacob, Rousseau began to find fault with the society there, complaining of its hypocrisy and its aloofness from the needs of common people (55-56). Jacob adds:

> Rousseau's break with the enlightened fraternity of the philosophes took many years and many forms. . . . Rousseau's Social Contract was the most important political work written in the French language in the century. It laid the theoretical foundation for democracy, proposing that human beings left to their own are basically good, and that government should be based on a contract with the governed. No more dangerous set of ideas surfaced in the Enlightenment. (57)

Cadalso also shared with Rousseau a great regard for the role of nature, that is, the natural state of things. This regard for nature was not unique to them alone; other important thinkers of the eighteenth century had it, too, including the Englishman Samuel Johnson who, in his novel The History of Rassellas, Prince of Abyssinia (1759), remarks that, in order to be happy, it is necessary "to live according to nature" (45). The first language of man, says Rousseau in The Social Contract, was "the cry of nature" (101). At the beginning of the note prefacing his Confessions (1782), Rousseau boldly professes: "Here is the only portrait of a man,

painted exactly according to nature and in all its truth . . ." (3). Cadalso strikes a similar note in the First Night of Noches lúgubres in the following exchange between the protagonist Tediato and the gravedigger whom he has hired to assist him in digging up the corpse of his dead lover:

LORENZO: What a picture you paint!

TEDIATO: Nature is the original. I neither flatter it nor insult it.

And in the Introduction of the Moroccan Letters, Cadalso's "Editor," commenting on the accuracy of the "translation" from Arabic to Spanish, says: "Nature can be the only judge; but its voice--where can it be found?"

THE TERTULIA AND THE SALON:

"I HAVE ALWAYS FOUND SOMETHING IN THEIR CONVERSATION WHICH FREES ME FROM MELANCHOLY. . . ."

"Conversation, conversation, it pervades the Moroccan Letters," remarks Russell Sebold. The reader is received into animated salons other than the one described in Letter 56 from Gazel to Ben-Beley (which Sebold suggests may be patterned upon actual gatherings at the home of Cadalso's friend, the Condesa-Duquesa de Benavente), as well as to cafés in which cliques of friends assemble to take part in stimulating discussion. (Colonel 23) Thus, in the Moroccan Letters the two most fashionable forms of communication in the age of Enlightenment are replicated, for, as Sebold also comments, the most popular eighteenth-century

literary genres were based on letters, the means through which distant friends conversed (20-21).

The tertulia mentioned in Letter 56 is a gathering where the conversation always frees Gazel from melancholy. He describes the atmosphere of this tertulia in faithful detail:

> I entered when they had just finished taking coffee and were starting to converse. A lady was about to set up the harpsichord; on the balcony, two quite young señoritos were very mysteriously reading a piece of paper; another lady was making a cockade; a young officer was standing with his back to the chimney; an elderly man seated in an armchair by the fire was beginning to snore; an abbé was gazing at the garden whilst reading something in a black and gold book; and other people were speaking. Everyone greeted me when I entered, except for three ladies and as many young men who were absorbed in an apparently most serious conversation.

The tertulia, a uniquely Spanish custom, was essentially an informal gathering which sometimes, as in the case of the tertulia in Letter 56, resembled the salon society of Europe. The salon, on the other hand, was, according to Helen Clergue, "a carefully selected and assorted company, its numbers regulated, and so skillfully arranged and directed as to form a homogeneous unity" (The Salon 23). The important salons, says Clergue, were generally directed by women (25). An aspiring writer or artist could hope to establish a reputation for himself at a fashionable salon; in fact, the salon was the very place to do so, since, according to Clergue:

> Not one great writer in the eighteenth century but submitted to the influence of the salon, derived sustenance from it, and composed for it. Montesquieu left his vines to visit Madame de Lambert and

> Madame de Tencin, Voltaire was a frequenter of the salons and intimate with their most influential leaders, the genius of Rousseau developed under the roof provided by Madame d'Epinay. . . . (8-9)

No one was ever allowed to monopolize the conversation at the salon, as Clergue observes:

> Should anyone suppose that he had reason to be given more attention than another, he was quickly disillusioned for he must soon discover that, instead of attention being directed to him, he was only expected to add his ideas to the subject under discussion. (14)

A violation of this salon etiquette occurs in Letter 10 of the Moroccan Letters, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, which contains the first instance of a tertulia in the work. Gazel describes having trouble conversing with a "noble Christian lady" because of the distraction caused by a petimetre who is loudly expressing his disdain toward women. "The drawing room," writes Gazel, "was full of people, all hanging on the words of a young man of twenty years, who had usurped with inexplicable authority the attention of the assemblage." In the lady's opinion, the young man is a barbarian.

In Letter 33, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, which consists mainly of the copy of a letter written by Nuño in Madrid to Gazel which the young Moor has received during one of his travels throughout the Peninsula, Nuño assures his Moroccan friend that "I continue living the life you know, and visiting the tertulia that you are acquainted with." In this letter, according to Sebold:

> The tertulia to which Nuño alludes is undoubtedly the famous one at the San Sebastián Inn that Cadalso frequented, and this seems all the more likely in view of references to two other members of the San Sebastián group contained in another letter in which Nuño tells of a discussion similar to those that take place at tertulias. (Colonel 131)

The other letter to which Sebold refers is Letter 80, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, which contains an amusing discussion in which some of Nuño's friends subject him to a good ribbing about the Spanish abuse of the word don. The "two other members of the San Sebastián group" mentioned by Sebold apparently are two foreign attendees at the tertulia described in Letter 80, a Flemish gentleman and a French officer.

The custom of the tertulia and its sphere of conversation is an important element in the Moroccan Letters. The action described in at least six letters occurs specifically in one tertulia or another (Letters 10, 11, 33, 56, 59, 80), and the proceedings detailed in many other letters seem to indicate the discourse among people at similar social gatherings.

CENSORSHIP OF THE MOROCCAN LETTERS:

"HALF DREAMING AND HALF AWAKE, STRETCHING OUT MY ARMS TO HALT MY FURIOUS CENSORS . . ."

At a tertulia in Letter 59, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel tells Nuño that he wishes to see a history of the present century written with impartiality, containing nothing but the unadorned facts. "And where would it be published?" Nuño

replies jokingly. "It used to be necessary to publish it near Cape Horn or the Cape of Good Hope," he adds, implying that such a work might face censorship or complete prohibition, "and to read it to the Hottentots or the Patagonians."

It would seem that, in Letters 18 and 71, Cadalso may be offering parodies of censorship. Near the conclusion of Letter 18, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, a passage is omitted and replaced with the words "here the manuscript is erased," as if added by an editor. And Letter 71, from Nuño to Gazel, abruptly ends with the apologetic words of an apparent editor: "Here the manuscript is torn, with which the public is deprived of the continuation of so commendable a subject."

In Letter 39 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, the word "safe" had been censored and changed to "beneficial" when it appeared in the Correo de Madrid in 1789 (Glendinning, "Structure" 73).

Letters 55 from Gazel to Ben-Beley and 83 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, as well as the "Literary Protest," do not appear in the first published version of the Moroccan Letters in the Correo de Madrid in 1789; and the Sancha book edition of 1793, while omitting Letter 55 and the "Literary Protest," does include Letter 83, but in truncated form. The Sancha edition is, according to Emilio Martínez Mata, a revision (319). The omissions appear to be the result of censorship. Glendinning states specifically that a paragraph on Cervantes in Letter 83 was removed from the Sancha edition due to censors ("Structure" 74). Fortunately, the Osuna manuscript of the 1770s (OS) and the Asaguirre manuscript of 1783 (AS) contain all the items

omitted in the Correo and Sancha versions; OS has been the source most used for modern editions (320). Nigel Glendinning believes that the Osuna manuscript is an early text of the work ("Structure" 54).

In the "Literary Protest" at the conclusion of the Moroccan Letters, the "Editor" appears to foresee censorship of the work when, describing a nightmarish dream, he says: "And half dreaming and half awake, stretching out my arms to halt my furious censors and move them to pity. . . ."

Unfortunately, some of Cadalso's ideas and actual wording in the Moroccan Letters may never be known, due to alterations made later (Glendinning, "New Light on the Circulation" 148-49). None of the surviving manuscripts is in Cadalso's hand, says Joaquín Arce, and it is not valid to conjecture about his genuine expression (57).

Two letters appeared in variant versions in the Correo de Madrid in 1788, one year earlier than the first official publication of the Moroccan Letters in that periodical. One is a portion of Letter 7 from Gazel to Ben-Beley (which does not mention Nuño by name) and the other is a complete version of Letter 45 from Gazel to Ben-Beley. Both differ substantially from all surviving manuscripts, as well from all other printed versions. Glendinning suggests that the versions of these two letters printed in 1788 may represent Cadalso's original intention before censorship:

> Punctuation and word-order and the occasional misprint account for the majority of the variants. But there are a number of cases which support the theory that these are primitive texts of Cadalso himself, rather than revisions, imitations or corrupt manuscripts. ("New Light

on the Circulation" 147)

The use of imitations of Andalusian speech in Letter 7, such as toyto for todito ("whole") and naar for nadar ("to swim"), says Glendinning, indicate that this was an early draft (147).

One important variant which occurs in this "primitive version" of Letter 7 (Appendix), published in the 2 February 1788 issue (No. 134) of Correo de Madrid, occurs in the phrase which reads: lo hermoso de los árboles ("the beauty of the trees"). The phrase "beautiful trees" seems more appropriate here than lo hermoso de los troncos ("the beauty of the tree trunks") which is the phrase which appears in all the surviving manuscripts and all the printed versions.

In the "primitive version" of Letter 45 (Appendix), published in the 30 July 1788 issue (No. 185) of Correo de Madrid, Glendinning sees the last two sentences as particularly indicative of possible censorship, because of "strictures which existed in questions of national honour" (148). The portion in question is the phrase: ¡Gracioso cuerpo! exclamé yo ("'Charming [or amusing] corps!' I exclaimed"), which became ¡Glorioso cuerpo! exclamé yo ("'Glorious corps!' I exclaimed") in the later 1789 version in the Correo de Madrid. The earlier version, says Glendinning, contains a sarcasm at the expense of the nation's cadets, and he suggests that this was probably the reason for its being changed (148).

In Glendinning's view, it is regrettable that some of the more controversial letters have not survived in this primitive form because, in the case of the two

which do: "They show how alterations made by the author with the censors in view, and then by the editors and the censors themselves, may have robbed us of many of the original ideas and attitudes of Cadalso, as of his original phraseology" (149). Unfortunately, these assertions of Glendinning regarding the author's original intent are ultimately unprovable due to the lack of a version in Cadalso's own handwriting.

RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT IN THE MOROCCAN LETTERS

"I HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED TO PUBLISH THEM, INASMUCH AS NEITHER RELIGION NOR GOVERNMENT ARE DISCUSSED IN THEM . . . ."

If it is a credible assumption that Cadalso made some alterations in the Moroccan Letters due to fear of censorship, as Glendinning and others have suggested, then Nuño's playful remark in Letter 69 from Gazel to Ben-Beley on having to publish the "unadorned facts" in distant lands may not be merely commentary by a fictional character, but instead it may be the expression of a somewhat justified apprehension of Cadalso based upon actual recent events. Emilio Martínez Mata mentions the possibility that any self-censorship by Cadalso may have been in response to action against his friend Tomás de Iriarte by the Inquisition, in which Iriarte was condemned for offenses against the faith and for reading prohibited books. Unlike Montesquieu's Persian Letters, says Martínez

Mata, there were two areas which Cadalso had to avoid: religion and politics ("Las redacciones" 322).

In the Introduction of the Moroccan Letters, the "Editor" proclaims: "I have been encouraged to publish them [the Moroccan Letters], inasmuch as neither religion nor government are discussed in them . . . ." Nevertheless, throughout the work, the word "religion" occurs at least twenty-seven more times and the word "government" at least sixteen more times. In addition, Letters 86 from Ben-Beley to Gazel and 87 from Gazel to Ben-Beley concern a delicate subject touching upon religion: the legend of Santiago (Saint James) in Spain.

Perhaps the two subjects were, after all, unavoidable. Extreme care must have been necessary, however, when allowing any reference to them in the text, particularly in the realm of religion. Cadalso distanced himself from the Church and frequently made fun of its beliefs, according to Jorge Demerson, who also says that he adhered to a vague deism and imitated his benefactor the Conde de Aranda in adopting a clearly Voltairian posture. Demerson adds that if he attacked the Church at all, it was in private, not in the works published during his lifetime ("Cadalso y la Ilustración" 102). As Glendinning observes: "It is obvious that Cadalso had to be guarded or indirect in his relativism, and not express overtly deist as opposed to orthodox Catholic positions" ("Structure" 74). On the subject of government, it is difficult to determine the true position of Cadalso regarding royalty and royal power, due to the varying views he expressed on them in this and in other works, Glendinning says, in "Ideas políticas y religiosas de Cadalso" (250),

although Cadalso did believe that "felicity," the happiness of the people, was the political objective of a monarch (252). And, in fact, in Letter 3 of the Moroccan Letters, he blames the Hapsburg monarchy for Spanish decline. He subjects it to the same criticism as he did with any other aspect of Spanish life in the work (Eugenio Matus, "Una interpretación de las Cartas marruecas" 70).

In Letter 86, from Ben-Beley to Gazel, Ben-Beley asks for Nuño to give him an explanation of the meaning of the Santiago legend. The legend originated, says T. D. Kendrick, because, according to popular belief, the specter of Santiago appeared on the battlefield of Clavijo, in the year 834, and aided the Christian Spaniards in defeating a large Moorish army. The legend records that about seventy thousand Moors were killed. After the Christian victory, King Ramiro I gave thanks to St. James in a famous document called the Diploma of Ramiro. Ramiro used the supposed aid of Santiago as justification for establishing in Spain a universal tax, the Voto de Santiago (Saint James in Spain 21-23). In the Diploma, Ramiro said that he had become ashamed of his royal ancestors on discovering that they had agreed to pay the Moors for ceasing their attacks by giving them an annual tribute of one hundred Spanish virgins (21-22). Spanish soldiers used the battle-cry of ¡Adjuva nos Dios et Sancte Jacobe! ("God and St. James, help us!") for the first time at Clavijo (23).

Elizabeth Scarlett acknowledges Cadalso's skillfully prudent handling of the Santiago legend in Letter 87:

> Much attention has been paid to the passage about Clavijo. Faith, reason, history, patriotism, multiculturalism, and the Enlightenment problem of superstition are conflated in this central myth, making the subtlety of the author's treatment a notable achievement. ("Mapping Out the Cartas marruecas" 76)

Azorín, in his assessment in the prologue to his edition of the Cartas marruecas, salutes Cadalso's accomplishment in uprooting many prejudices and absurdities, remarking: Hay en las Cartas marruecas páginas de crítica (como la Carta 88), respecto de las cuales no sabemos qué pensar: tan atrevidas nos parecen ("There are in the Cartas marruecas pages of criticism [as in Letter 87], regarding which we do not know what to think: so daring do they seem to us"12).

Cadalso's daring and subtlety do indeed appear to be on display in Letter 87. In it, Nuño says that belief in the battlefield aid of Santiago is not an article of faith (which some might have considered a hazardously unpropitious statement to make in eighteenth-century Spain) and therefore anyone can deny it without deserving to be called impious or irrational. Skill in weapons and tactics of one army can easily be copied by another, Nuño admits in Letter 87, especially if enough money is available. "But," he adds, the belief that a celestial champion descends to aid a troop of soldiers fills it with inimitable vigor." In truth, Nuño sees a practical value in the legend. Even if it can be discredited and proven wrong through modern philosophy or scientific demonstration, it would be a mistake to do so in Cadalso's view because he considers the legend to be beneficial to the national security and he has Nuño himself confirm this when he says:

> Even if our arbitrary system empty of all basis of reason or authority were evident with total geometric rigor, it should be kept hidden among a few individuals of each realm. This should be a secret of state, mysteriously guarded among a very few. . . .

This verdict on Santiago is in conflict with that of another important Spanish author, Francisco de Quevedo, although there were many similarities between the two men, as John B. Hughes points out in "Las Cartas marruecas y la España defendida, perfil de dos visiones de España." Both wore the habit of Santiago; both were patriots of unquestionable personal valor; both defended their nation with pen and sword; and both produced writings on Santiago which were not published in their lifetimes (139). On the other hand, an important difference between the two regarding Santiago is that, while Quevedo passionately defends the legend itself, Cadalso leaves aside the question of the objective truth of Santiago's appearance on the battlefield at Clavijo and defends only the utility of the traditional belief in the legend because of the beneficial effect it produces in the nation's soldiers.

HUMOR IN THE MOROCCAN LETTERS:
"BETWEEN LAUGHTER AND WEEPING, NUÑO RELATED TO ME AN EPISODE. . . ."

The Spanish novelist Benito Pérez Galdós once commented, in the prologue

of the third edition of Leopoldo Alas's La Regenta (1900), that Spanish naturalism, with its happy mixing of the serious and the comic, responded better than French naturalism to human truth (ix). With this statement, observes Michael Nimetz, Pérez Galdós "brackets truth and realism with humor." Nimetz adds: "Humor, then, lies at the very core of the Spanish realistic tradition" (5).

The Moroccan Letters of José Cadalso not only has much content that is serious but also much that is comical. Cadalso is, says Phillip Deacon, an observador irónico ("ironic observer") of Spanish society ("José de Cadalso, una personalidad esquiva" 330). Robert Hughes observes that one of the main characteristics of the work is the frequent superficial satires of petimetres, such as the apologist for the eighteenth century in Letter 4 whose only retort to Gazel's arguments is to praise the wondrous effects of his favorite French cosmetic powder; Hughes then suggests that the overall treatment of customs shows the humorous aspect of Cadalso (Goya 197).

In his attempt to criticize a nation through an examination of its customs, Cadalso demonstrates touches of a nascent realism, while also creating many humorous passages. For example, Letter 7, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, concerns a very serious matter: the lack of education in Spain's youth; the illustration of the problem is achieved by Gazel ceding the narration to his Spanish friend, when he writes: "Between laughter and weeping, Nuño related to me an episode that seems to come from a novel." Nuño's tale about his encounter with a Spanish youth who forsakes study in favor of amusing himself in the company of Gypsy girls and the

local butcher is narrated in a highly realistic manner, and contains several humorous scenes depicting rural customs.

Another example of Cadalso's use of humor to treat a serious subject is Letter 75, from Gazel to Ben-Beley. The topic concerns the harm done by the custom of arranged marriages. According to Linda-Jane C. Barnette:

> Cadalso was not unsympathetic to the plight of the young woman who is forced to marry against her will, as depicted in Letter 75, which consists almost entirely of a letter from a twenty-four-year-old woman who has already been widowed six times. Like Moratín and Goya, Cadalso uses humor to ridicule marriages of convenience, as the young woman describes her six husbands and their untimely deaths. ("Woman as Mirror in Cadalso's Cartas marruecas" 102-3)

In her letter to Gazel the young widow appears to be unaware that she sometimes unintentionally describes the deaths of her husbands with a comic touch. Her first husband, she says, was already a cadaver when they married: "I was about to display my bridal attire, when I had to go into mourning." The second died calling her his daughter, quite appropriately, she remarks, since the old man treated her as such "from the first day to the last." Her third husband, a captain of grenadiers, died in a duel which broke out during an opera. The fourth was a gambler who met his end due to his bungling incompetence at card-playing: "[. . .] the result of one of his friends throwing a candlestick at his head because of some blunder or another of laying down a card to the right which should have been laid down to the left." The fifth husband, who died of smallpox, receives little mention. But the sixth husband died on their wedding night; neglecting his new wife, he went out into the

country to observe the passing of a comet and in the cold night air caught pneumonia, from which he soon died.

Even religion appears to be on the receiving end of humorous treatment in the work, albeit in a very subtle manner. Indeed, a religious subject becomes the central theme in Letters 87 and 88. According to Félix San Vicente:

> Es el conocido episodio de la batalla de Clavijo, narrado como ejemplo de defensa de unas creencias oportunas para el vulgo. La acusacion es tan contraria al espíritu ilustrado que algún crítico se ha preguntado si Cadalso hablaba en broma.
>
> It is the well-known episode of the Battle of Clavijo, narrated as an example of the defense of some beliefs convenient for the common people. This is so contrary to the spirit of the Enlightenment that one critic has wondered if Cadalso was speaking in jest. ("El discurso de la ciencia" 431)

But what is humor? If it can be defined, can it also be analyzed in a coherent manner? Unfortunately, comic theory has no magical formula for a definition upon which every critic can agree. Laughter, perhaps, the subject of that elusive "lost treatise" by Aristotle, if it existed, could possibly provide, at the least, a starting point, as Paul Lauter, in Theories of Comedy, remarks:

> Perhaps Aristotle did not worry much about the effect of comedy

> because it seemed self-evidently the production of laughter. Certainly most critics, whatever else they regarded as the aims of comedy, have assumed laughter to be somewhere among them. (xvi)

The cause of laughter, says Lauter, lies in what is laughable or ludicrous, that is, what is ridiculous, and he adds: "[. . .] indeed, hardly a comic theorist has not included in his work some account of the ridiculous" (xvii).

Nothing is completely serious, suggests Eugenio Matus, because everything has a ludicrous aspect (69). In Letter 15, Gazel observes that the people of each profession often depreciate the professions of others through ridicule, and he concludes: "What must we infer from all this?--that in all the human faculties there are ridiculous things."

In the concluding section, the Protesta literaria ("Literary Protest"), Cadalso has his imagined readers accuse him of hiding his true Enlightened spirit behind a veil of humor: "The jocose style in you is artificial: your nature is somber and austere. We know your true face and shall tear away the mask with which you have tried to hide yourself."

The humor in the Moroccan Letters is achieved chiefly through the use of three techniques: satire, irony and parody. In satire, such things as vices, follies, stupidities, and abuses are held up to ridicule. In irony, the intended meaning of the words used is the direct opposite of their usual sense; it can sometimes include the feigning of ignorance in an argument. A parody imitates the characteristic style of some other work, but in a nonsensical manner.

The following examples of satire, irony and parody are not the only ones which can be found in the Moroccan Letters, but they do constitute a representative sampling of the various uses of humor in the work as a whole.

SATIRE:

"THE UNIVERSAL SATIRE WHICH HUMANITY SUFFERS FROM IN OUR TIME"

José Cadalso, whom Carmen Martín Gaite refers to as a satirist (25), calls his own work the Moroccan Letters a "mordant and superficial little satire" in the terminal section of the work, the "Literary Protest." Cadalso, like Montesquieu, says Emily Cotton, "wished to draw a satirical portrait of his times" ("Cadalso and His Foreign Sources" 7). According to Jorge Chen Sham in "La sátira de España y las denegaciones ideológicas en Cartas marruecas": Cuando el relato de viajes retoma la crítica de las costumbtes y las ridiculeces de los individuos, estamos propiamente en el terreno de la sátira [. . .] ("When the book of travels takes up again criticism of the customs and follies of individuals, we are, properly speaking, in the terrain of satire [. . .]" 123). In Letter 47 from Nuño to Ben-Beley, Nuño might seem to be speaking for Cadalso, echoing his view of the world itself when he remarks: "I see that we quite agree with each other on the ideas of virtue, friendship and vice, as well as on the justice we do to the heart of man in the midst of the universal satire which humanity suffers from in our time."

In Letter 7 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Nuño's story describes how a young señorito dismisses study of naval matters, mocking his venerable old uncle, the Comendador. The old Comendador is a key figure, since he is seen not only as a representative of Spain's heroic past but also as a man who actually remembers it. Memory, writes Anthony D. Smith, is vital to a nation's concept of itself:

> Of course, there is much more to the concept of the "nation" than myths and memories. But they constitute a sine qua non: there can be no identity without memory (albeit selective) , no collective purpose without myth, and identity and purpose or destiny are necessary elements of the very concept of a nation. (The Ethnic Origins of Nations 2)

In the characterization of the relationship between the young man and the old man, a double satire appears to be at work here, a technique often used by Cadalso: while the old Comendador is being satirized by his upstart young nephew, the young nephew's attitude, demonstrating through his own words an almost incredible ignorance and disrespect, satirizes him and his generation. This type of satire in the Moroccan Letters, says Edith Helman:

> [. . .] arises at times out of the contrast between the character and behavior of the people Cadalso sees and those of earlier days--the frivolous and effeminate dandies, for example, with their grave and noble ancestors. . . . ("Caprichos and monstruos" 210)

The satirical portrait of the elderly gentleman which the señorito paints for Nuño focuses on the Comendador's infirmities due to age, such as trembling lips, missing teeth, and his ceaseless recounting in a seemingly senile manner tales of the battles

he participated in during his long-past youth, narrations which can only be stopped when he is interrupted by an attack of gout. Clearly, the young señorito regards the old Comendador from the angle of ridicule.

In Letter 78, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, the targets of Cadalso's satire are pompous and ignorant scholastic savants of his own day. Gazel evokes the image of a representative of this type: a man "quite dried out, quite tall, quite full of tobacco, quite overloaded with eyeglasses, quite incapable of lowering his head in greeting a living soul," who spouts nonsense saying that modern physics is nothing but a "puppet show," that a good doctor only needs to know some good aphorisms and syllogisms, or that an "oration either suitably funereal or suitably congratulatory" can be composed by merely knowing a few dozen words of fourteen or fifteen syllables and repeating them frequently. In contrast, the remedy proposed by Nuño on a serious note in this satire of pretentious learning is to work in the positive sciences and "give works to the public on useful matters."

Letter 67, from Nuño to Gazel, is a satire on the eighteenth-century fashion of pedantically loading down literary and scientific works with Latin quotes, notes Félix San Vicente. In this letter, the satire is directed at an overly erudite friend of Nuño's, whom he characterizes by emphasizing the fellow's continual pacing to and fro and taking a pinch of snuff while pontificating in conversation laced with Latin quotations. "As the pedantic friend gives his opinion to Nuño," observes Rebecca Haidt, "his erring judgment is matched by his erratic gestures" (Embodying Enlightenment 174). By this method, Cadalso uses the individual's

lack of control and moderation to illustrate his lack of reason and his failure to achieve the justo medio.

Another character satirized by body movements which indicate his intellectual disorder is the petimetre who, in Letter 4 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, futilely attempts to defend the culture of the eighteenth century against Gazel's devastating arguments. Unable to rationally rebut Gazel's criticisms, the "apologist stood up," writes Gazel, "quite annoyed, gazed around on all sides and, realizing that no one was maintaining his opinion, dawdled with the small bells of his two watches, and left. . . ."

Similarly, in Letter 10, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, the young petimetre who breaches etiquette by trying to dominate the conversation at a tertulia is portrayed as irrational by once again emphasizing a failure to control body movements and nervous speech patterns: "If rapidity of style, volubility of language, a torrent of words, continuous movement of an elegant body, and majestic gestures formed a perfect orator, no one could be his equal."

The unsuitability of the local butcher Tío Gregorio to be in charge of the education of the señorito in Letter 7 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, says Haidt, is reflected in Gregorio's "inability to govern his body" (176). Nuño's description of Gregorio is highly satirical and not at all flattering: "There, I had the felicity of meeting señor tío Gregorio. With his raucous and resounding voice, long side whiskers, round belly, rough manners, frequent oaths, and familiar ways, he stood

out from all the others." Gregorio is further described by his shouting and hand clapping while Gypsy girls and local señoritos are dancing.

In Letter 34, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, the folly of the canal proposed by the project planner, which includes dividing Spain into four administrative districts, is highlighted by directing attention to the turmoil and paroxysms exhibited in the project planner's physical demeanor. By instilling the idea that there is extreme disorder in his mental competence, Gazel discredits anything the man may suggest:

> So great was the blather that the man kept on spouting about his project that his dry lips were suffering notable injury, like that noticed in the contortions of the mouth, the convulsions of the body, the rolling of the eyes, the movement of the tongue, and all the signs of genuine frenzy. Nuño stood up, to give no further encouragement to the ravings of the poor maniac. . . .

Nuño himself offers harsh judgment upon the project planner, declaring: "Do you know what is needed in each part of our four-part Spain? A lunatic asylum for the project planners of the north, south, east, and west."

Nuño's blunt analysis of the project planner signals one of the important characteristics of Cadalso's diagnosis of Spain's social problems in the eighteenth century. Paul Ilie notes that: "A short metaphorical step takes the Cartas marruecas from Spanish decadence to Spanish disease, and this liberty permits the satire to compare Spain further to an insane asylum" ("Cadalso and the Epistemology of Madness" 174). Ilie offers further evidence to support the notion that Cadalso is comparing Spain to a lunatic asylum when he draws a connection between Cadalso's use of a quotation from Book 2 of Horace's Epistles: Somnia, terrores

magicos, miracula, sagas, / Nocturnos lemures, portentaque tesala rides?: ("Do you laugh at dreams, magic terrors, wonders, witches / Night-walking spectres, Thessalian omens?) and the dream sequence in the "Literary Protest". According to Ilie: "The editor's brief mingling of dream with reality, together with the implied author's portrayal of madness in social reality, comprises the first stage of irrationalist skepticism within the Spanish Enlightenment" (186).

Haidt asserts that in Letter 34 there is drawn "an explicit connection between the speaker's thoughtless proposal for national improvement and his uncontrolled body" and she concludes: "The body overtaken by passion and by extremes, as insane as the proyectista's plans are bizarre, is evidence of Spain's lack of good men fit to govern" (178).

In Letter 23, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, the inability to reason thoughtfully being paralleled by chaotic body motion occurs in a delightfully satirical depiction of debating assemblies called Conclusions. Belief in reason, says Nigel Glendinning, is the basis of this satire on the subject of scholastic disputations ("Structure" 64). Gazel notices the choleric behavior of the participants toward each other, and writes: "[. . .] from among them not one man rose to calm them, notwithstanding the danger that they might cut each other to pieces, judging by the gestures and insults they traded." One of the debaters, Gazel adds: "[. . .] who had three yards in height, almost an equal amount of girth, powerful lungs, the voice of a giant, and frenzied manners, defended in the morning the proposition that a thing was black, and in the afternoon that it was white."

The most frequent target of satire in the Moroccan Letters, however, is a social type of the eighteenth century in Spain: the petimetre. According to Dorothy Noyes: "The petimetre was a foreign import. His very name came from the Parisian petit maître, a rather contemptuous appellation suggesting the youth, social ambitions, and preciosity of this kind of dandy" ("La Maja Vestida" 199). Although the term petimetre was derived from French, says Robert Hughes, one had to be Spanish for it to really apply. Hughes adds:

> The petimetre was a bundle of pretensions: manners, clothing, language, all were judged (by him and others) in terms of their success in aping French and, to a lesser degree, Italian manners and artifices. The satirical papers and the comic theater of the time were full of him. He was an unending source of satirical possibility--a helpless but indefatigable fashion victim, a narcissistic fop who wanted to be everything that "real" Spaniards were not. (Goya 77)

Ramón de la Cruz (1731-94), creator of many satiric one-act sainetes in the eighteenth century, frequently used the petimetre in his works. Michael Nimetz describes Cruz's typical portrayal of a petimetre:

> The petimetre is a middle-class fop whose daily exertions include the pampering, perfuming, preening, and glossing of his own person. He interrupts this ritual only to attend the dressing table of his dama (usually engaged in the same activities). (Humor in Galdós 40)

In El majo de repente (1784), Cruz mocks Fabricio, a petimetre who finds it necessary to disguise himself as a majo (the masculine opposite of a petimetre) in order to seduce a lower-class woman (Andioc, Teatro y sociedad 148). The petimetre, then, especially when at the mercy of the satirists of the day, was used as

a symbol of unapproved sexual identity, while at the same time a symbol threatening national identity. According to Haidt:

> The petimetre's devotion to luxury items signals his favor toward imports and is tantamount to the praise of foreignness. Accordingly, the petimetre-type's opposite, the majo, represents "adherence to purity," or casticismo. The majo is a homegrown working-class figure, a man ready to fight in defense of his women, his neighborhood and his Spanishness. In popular texts petimetres and majos are often set against one another. (118)

The majo, the subject of many of Goya's most vivid tapestry paintings, was a colorful character. He was, suggests René Andioc, a descendant of the héroe caballeresco ("chivalric hero"), conserving, however, no more of his ancestor than external qualities, and because of this was confused with the valentón or the matasiete, that is, with bullies and braggarts (147). The majo costume was instantly recognizable. According to Dorothy Noyes:

> The men were recognized by their costume of hair net, broad-brimmed soft hat, and long cloak, all black or brown. The cloak was worn with one side flung across the front over the shoulder, and the hat brim, often pulled down, leaving very little of the wearer's face exposed, this menacing posture was characteristic. The women [majas] wore a hair net or a black mantilla, a tight bodice and a basquiña [a tight petticoat] over a skirt sometimes as high as mid-calf. (199)

The wearer of the majo costume could walk around in his cloak and hat brim pulled down over the eyes and be, in effect, disguised. This had been one of the reasons that the Conde de Aranda had attempted to limit its use. Later, in 1775, Aranda's successor, the Conde de Campomanes, attacked the majos for unsanitary reasons,

complaining that the hair net encouraged the laziness of not combing the hair, bringing infections from ringworms, lice and other vermin (206). The authorities considered the majo class to be not only a national security threat, but also a threat to the public health. He was a security threat because in the minds of the government minsters his stubborn adherence to his "Spanishness" represented an impediment to the implementation of their "enlightened" reforms, which were in many cases the result of foreign influence. The majo, after all, wore his "traditional" Spanish costume in open defiance of the law; his clothing was an outer expression of his inner "seditious" feelings and served him as a proudly displayed badge proclaiming his national identity. Majismo, insists Jesús Torrecilla, should be understood in terms of national authenticity, not those of class or political belief (España exótica 39).

But the majo's popularity only increased. In fact, in 1784, a royal order complained that various persons of distinction were imitating the majos, a costume the government associated with persons of dubious social quality (Gypsies, smugglers, bullfighters, and butchers). The king's ministers recommended that anyone (including military officers and royal servants) caught wearing the costume should be arrested (210).

However, in the end, the culture of majismo won out. "Bullfights, Andalusian music, and pretty women in black mantillas became," says Noyes, "the conventional signs of Spanish identity" (214). The bullfighter's costume, adapted from that of the majo, was depicted often by Goya. In his portrait of matador Pedro

Romero (1795-97) are clearly visible the hair net and the cape of the majos. French Romanticism, adds Noyes, also contributed to the mythification of the majo culture. The stereotype was set, asserts Noyes, in Prosper Mérimée's 1845 novella Carmen, which was turned into an opera by Georges Bizet. Carmen, says Noyes, "apotheosis of the urban maja, becomes the single most powerful image of Spain" (214).

Curiously, the majo attire for men, which became emblematic of "Spanishness" was, it appears, a foreign import. This is a judgment rendered by Cadalso himself, in Letter 21, from Nuño to Ben-Beley:

> I hear affectionate and respectful talk of a certain most uncomfortable costume, which is called "in the old Spanish style." The point is that the said costume is not in the old Spanish style, nor in the modern, but rather a costume totally foreign to Spain, since it was brought by the House of Austria.

The assumed sexual deficiency of the petimetre was often satirically emphasized by comparing him to a monkey. The image of the monkey in the eighteenth century, says Rebecca Haidt, was popularly used for describing a person trying to elevate his social status by dressing ostentatiously; also, she writes:

> The comparison between petimetres and monkeys serves additionally to emphasize the petimetres' unmanliness and inferiority to "real" men (such as majos). In satires of petimetres the monkey is used as a figure representing such difference in that its gestures lack purposefulness, gravity and vigor, thereby emphasizing the petimetre's difference from masculine, serious males. (144)

In Letter 64, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Nuño confesses to Gazel that he had spent a

few seasons himself as a petimetre, then describes a ridiculous scene in which one of his fancy low-buckled shoes got caught in the foot-board of a ladies' coach as the mules galloped off, leaving him with only one shoe. "And there I was," admits Nuño, "feeling as foolish as a trained monkey."

One of the main pursuits of the petimetre, according to Carmen Martín Gaite, was to spend his hours of idleness in trying to "keep up to date with the variations of the contredance and the minuets" (52-53), both foreign forms of dance. In Letter 35, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel relates how Nuño allowed him to read a letter written by his sister which is almost unintelligible because of his sister's clumsy attempt to imitate French words and phrases, which reveals her affected lifestyle and her enslavement to fashion (Albert Derozier, "La cuestión del lujo" 100). The ridicule of French fashions in Letter 35 is possibly related to a standing joke between Cadalso and his friends, the Condesa-Duquesa de Benavente and her husband, suggests Russel P. Sebold (Colonel 25). Amusingly, the only person Nuño has found who has the slightest ability to comprehend his sister's Frenchified letter is a petimetre: "Only a nephew of mine who is twenty years old, who carves a hare, dances a minuet, and uncorks a bottle of champagne with more elegance than all the men born of women, was able to explain some of the words to me." After Gazel reads the absurd letter, Nuño muses aloud on whether a noble Spaniard of an earlier, and more heroic time, Count Fernán Gonzalo, would have understood his sister's mangled grammar. He seems to be appealing here to the concept of ancestral virtue as the antidote to the vitiating effects of luxury.

In Letter 82, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, "Gazel quotes Nuño's mocking catechism of two petimetres," observes Linda-Jane C. Barnette, "who are compared to madmen in their attachment to superficial, 'Frenchified' customs" (108). In one of the exchanges between the two petimetres, one asks the other in all seriousness if it is possible to be a great savant by, among other frivolous things, having no more talent than dancing a minuet (to which his companion replies in the affirmative).

These two subjects, luxury and the frivolous, are treated with satiric emphasis in the Moroccan Letters and are often epitomized by the petimetre's slavish adherence to them. The implied charge of effeminacy associated with the petimetre was equated with moral laxity and luxury (Noël Valis, The Culture of Cursilería 142). In Letter 4, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, for example, the petimetre who argues with Gazel about the superiority of eighteenth-century culture boasts that:

> [. . .] since the siege of Troy up until that of Almeida, there has not been seen the production of anything so honorable for the human spirit, so useful for society, and so marvelous in its effects, as the sans pareille cosmetic powders invented by Monsieur Frivolité on the Rue St. Honoré in Paris.

It hardly seems an accident that this petimetre buys his perfumed powders from a foreigner called "Monsieur Frivolité," whose very name suggests that his product is a frivolous item. Neither is it an accident that in the Moroccan Letters the frivolous is seen as even more so, when its only defenders are those whose behavior and speech brand them as hopeless fools.

Excessive consumption of foreign luxury goods was not only harmful to a nation's economy, argues Gazel in Letter 41 to Ben-Beley, but it is also detrimental to its fundamental character: "All luxury is injurious, since it multiplies the necessities of life, employs human understanding in frivolous things, beautifies vices, and makes virtue--the only thing produced by true wealth and pleasures--insignificant." Gazel's satirical indictment of a petimetre who foolishly wastes all his money on frivolous foreign goods is presented in such extravagant detail that it results in a heightened sense of utter ridiculousness:

> On what does he spend his income? Two beautifully groomed and dressed valets awaken him. He drinks exquisite Mocha coffee in a cup brought from China, through London. He puts on an infinitely fine shirt from Holland, then a most pleasing robe woven in Lyons, France. He reads a book bound in Paris. He dresses at the direction of a French tailor and wig-maker. He goes out in a coach which was painted where the book was bound. He will eat hot food on dishes wrought in Paris or London, and fruits and sweets on plates from Saxony or China. He pays a maestro of music, and another of dance, both foreigners. He attends an Italian opera, well or badly performed, or a French tragedy, well or badly translated.

Luxury can even result in the destruction of a nation, as Gazel comments in Letter 68 to Ben-Beley: "From this luxury, effeminacy has ensued; from this effeminacy, moral weakness has been born; from this moral weakness, its ruin has proceeded."

Luxury, observes Daniel L. Purdy, was especially considered a menace when it was taken up by the lower classes:

> Latin writers like Seneca and Cicero objected to Luxus in the strongest terms, seeing it as a threat to the Roman military and a

> challenge to social hierarchy. A soldier accustomed to sensual pleasures would be far less willing to die in combat; the mere promise of luxury reduced his effectiveness as a fighter. (The Tyranny of Elegance 51-52).

By the time of the Enlightenment, suggests Purdy: "[. . .] the eventual collapse of the Roman Empire was taken as evidence of how destructive it [luxury] could be to a citizenry's fortitude" (52). Gazel echoes this stoic sentiment in Letter 88 to Ben-Beley when he declares:

> A nation accustomed to exquisite food, soft beds, fine clothing, effeminate manners, amorous conversations, frivolous pastimes, studies directed toward refining the delights or other aspects of luxury, is not capable of hearing the voice of those who try to show it the proximity of its ruin.

In Letter 56, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel describes a tertulia at which he arrives late, after everyone has already had coffee. He overhears the middle of an agitated conversation among three men and three ladies, all of them tremendously upset by the subject they are discussing. At first, he thinks that some national disaster has occurred, until one of the ladies turns to him and says: "Can you believe, Gazel, that in all of Madrid they did not find a ribbon of this color, no matter how much they searched for it?" The whole scene has been a burlesque of the controversy which can burst out over a frivolous item of fashion. The hard-to-find ribbon, suggests Barnette, is a metaphor for luxury (109). Even the men, one a military officer, are agitated, which appears to demonstrate the presumed effeminating effect of luxury.

One satirical technique often used by Cadalso in the Moroccan Letters is that of ridicule by distortion, often doing so by treating a trivial subject in exaggerated style. "[. . .] Cadalso's caricatures," observes Paul Ilie, "tend toward the Goyesque and the madness that betokens the cultural mind of a diseased body politic" ("Cadalso and the Epistemology of Madness" 174). In Letter 24, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel describes an indiano who has struck it rich in the New World but is unable to enjoy his return to Spain as a wealthy man because of all the frivolous projects he is obsessed with pursuing. "I shall marry one daughter to a marquis, another to a count," the indiano proclaims pompously, adding: "Then I shall bring a lawsuit against a cousin of mine over four houses which are falling down in Vizcaya; afterwards, another against a second uncle over a sum of money left by one of my grandfather's second cousins."

In Letter 64, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel sends his mentor copies of three letters from Spanish clothing manufacturers who petition his help in introducing Moroccan fashions to Spanish society. The wording of the letters to Gazel by the makers of hats, shoes and pants sets a burlesque tone, observes Derozier (99). The discussion of Moroccan "fashions" in Letter 64 is similar to the discussion of Chinese fashions in Letter 13 of Oliver Goldsmith's The Citizen of the World, of which Rosalind Vallance comments that Goldsmith had been shrewd in making his fictitious letter-writer a Chinese, because at that time there was a craze in England for anything from China (11). Gazel's petitioners are hoping to create a similar craze for Moroccan clothing in Spain, from which they expect to

profit. Nuño, who has read the petitions, speaks to Gazel of the women who baste hats in exalted and laudatory terms, distorting his praise of them to elevate them to the rank of military heroes:

> Does not the knowledge that our soldiers' hats are cut out, basted, put together, trimmed with gold braid, and fixed with cockades by the hands of Fulana, Zutana, or Mengana contribute to the fame of our military? Those who write the histories of our century--will they not receive a thousand thanks from posterity for having taught it that, in a certain year, a person was living in a certain house on a certain street, who basted the hats of two hundred cadets of the guards, four hundred infantrymen, twenty-eight cavalrymen, eight hundred subaltern officers, three hundred captains, and fifty superior officers?

The agitation over the scarcity of a certain color of ribbon in Letter 56 is portrayed by the exaggerated nature of the hysterical comments of the attendees at the tertulia, such as: "I am ashamed to be Spanish" and "What will the foreign nations say! Good heavens!" or "What a sorry plight! May God have mercy!"

In Letter 67 from Nuño to Gazel, Nuño uses ridicule by distortion to describe a pedantic friend who grandiloquently lards his conversation with Latin quotations:

> And in truth they say that he is really a savant because, although he spends twelve hours in bed, four at the dressing table, five in visits, and three on the promenade, it is rumored that he has read all the books that have been written and, in prophetic vision, all that will be written, in Hebrew, Syrian, Chaldean, Egyptian, Chinese, Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian, French, English, German, Dutch, Portuguese, "Swiss," "Prussian," Danish, Russian, Polish, Hungarian, and even the Basque grammar of Padre Larramendi.

Nuño also ridicules by distortion the Spanish overuse of the word don in

Letter 80 from Gazel to Ben-Beley. At a tertulia described by Gazel, Nuño responds in a jocose vein to some of his friends who are gently ribbing him about Spanish customs, in particular, the abuse of the don:

> To simply call someone Don Juan, Don Pedro, Don Diego, is to treat him as a lackey. It is necessary to call him Señor Don, which means don twice. If in the next century Señor Don also manages to increase in number as don in our own, Señor Don will no longer be sufficient for calling a man in such a way that he is not offended, and it will be necessary to say Don Señor Don.

IRONY:

"TAILORS, SHOEMAKERS, VALETS, DRESSMAKERS, PASTRY COOKS, HAIRDRESSERS, AND OTHER INDIVIDUALS USEFUL FOR THE VIGOR AND GLORY OF OUR STATES "

A variation on ridicule through distortion is that of directly equating something trivial with something important or great. . The mock-epic poem The Rape of the Lock (1712) by Alexander Pope utilizes the same conventions and devices of the Iliad, the Aeneid and Paradise Lost, constantly guiding the reader into comparing small things with great ones, instead of a war between nations. Pope's poem celebrates a relatively trivial episode: a young fop's efforts to steal a lock of hair from a young lady. Equating something trivial with something great invariably results in greater emphasis upon the inferiority of the trivial thing when compared side-by-side with the great one, which borders upon irony, since in irony the intended meaning is the direct opposite of what is actually said. The need to

take for granted, or understand, that the opposite of what is being said is really what is meant in the Moroccan Letters, notes Manuel Camarero, requires a reading by means of irony ("Composición y lectura" 138).

In Letter 4 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, the fatuous petimetre's preference for foreign luxury products is deflated to the level of ridiculousness by a simple comparison of Monsieur Frivolité's cosmetic powders with the siege of Troy in the Iliad. The irony is that it is the petimetre's own words, not those of Gazel or Nuño, which create the impression of triviality.

In Letter 39 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Gazel tells of finding Nuño's notebook titled Sundry Observations and Reflections and indicates his surprise upon finding it to be a "labyrinth of unconnected subject matter." Gazel comments: "Right beside a most serious reflection upon the immortality of the soul, I found another about French dancing, and between two relating to patria potestas, one upon tuna fishing."

In Letter 10 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, which follows Nuño's defense of Hernán Cortés in Letter 9, Gazel relates his encounter with a boastful petimetre at the same tertulia where another petimetre had been rudely trying to dominate the conversation. The boastful petimetre impudently makes fun of the Moorish custom of the seraglio, and blusters that he has had his way with as many women in one day as Gazel has had in his entire life. Gazel's comment to Ben-Beley upon this incident is devastating in his comparison of the young Spanish braggart to a real

conqueror of history: "Now, friend Ben-Beley, eighteen women per day in the three hundred and sixty-five a year of these Christians, makes 6,500 conquests of the feminine gender by this Hernán Cortés." Gazel continues his computations, calculating that by the age of thirty-three the petimetre will have seduced 111,690 women, and that by the end of his life the number of his sexual conquests would reach close to 150,000. The young Spaniard, in his stereotyping of Moslems and his exaggerated notions of his own prowess, only makes himself look foolish. Another example of the trivial being compared with the great by again using Hernán Cortés as a standard for measuring greatness occurs in Letter 80 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, which deals with the overuse of the don by Spaniards. Nuño remarks wryly that: "[. . .] in our century everyone not wearing livery calls himself Don Fulano--something which neither Hernán Cortés obtained in illo tempore, nor Sancho Dávila. . . ."

The frivolous effects of fashion are also examined in Letter 64, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, when Gazel reproduces three petitions he has received from Spanish clothing manufacturers who are seeking his advice. In this letter, observes Elizabeth Scarlett:

> The ironic counterpoint to Eurocentric trendiness appears when Gazel reports that Spanish clothiers have begged him for designs so that they can make Moroccan turbans, trousers, and babouches, since they will certainly be the next rage ("Mapping Out the Cartas marruecas" 73).

In Letter 88, from Ben-Beley to Gazel, Ben-Beley laments the "universal

ruin" worked by frivolous pastimes upon a nation, when trivial things are given as much respect as those which are truly important, commenting:

> The invention of a sherbet, of a coiffure, of a dress and of a dance, is regarded as mathematical proof of the progress of human reason. A new composition of delightful music, of an effeminate poem, of an amorous drama, count among the most useful inventions of the century.

In another example of the hazards of the frivolous, the utter frivolity of the project planner's elaborate scheme for building a canal in Letter 34 is directly related to the frivolity of the project planner himself, when he tells Nuño:

> These two lines will be severed at Castilla la Nueva, forming an island, to which shall be given my name, in order to immortalize the proto-project planner. On it, a monument shall be raised to me when I die, and all the project planners in the world will come on pilgrimage to ask Heaven to enlighten them.

Thus, the project planner's own words, referring to his irrational folly of expecting his grave to become a shrine of worship, brand him as a hopelessly frivolous person.

An example of more conventional irony early in the Moroccan Letters occurs at the conclusion of Letter 4, after another frivolous petimetre has finished defending the superiority of eighteenth-century culture by praising the wondrous effects of his perfumed powders from Paris. "Well spoken," says Gazel, meaning exactly the opposite for, since after this remark he adds, in a silent comment to himself: "I stood up to go say my prayers, adding one, and a very fervent one, that Heaven should spare my homeland from the effects of the culture of this century, if

it consists of what this fellow was putting into his defense."

In Letter 9, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Nuño reads from his notes defending the reputation of Hernán Cortés. Before Gazel includes Nuño's defense of Cortés, he makes this highly ironic comment:

> [. . .] I should reflect for the time being upon the fact that only those countries which cried out so much about the cruelty of the Spaniards in America are exactly the same ones that go to the coasts of Africa, buy rational beings of both sexes from their parents, brothers, friends or victorious warriors, with no more right than the purchasers being white and the ones purchased black people.

The wealthy indiano in Letter 24 from Gazel to Ben-Beley is seemingly oblivious to the irony inherent in the manner in which he plans to use his newly acquired riches, when he says to Gazel that he is going to "seek entry into a military order; then, a title in Castile; then, a position at the Court." The legitimacy sought by the indiano is an illusion based solely upon a naïve belief in the socially transformative power of money, and in the end will probably not be worth the price he pays for it.

In Letter 35, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Nuño speaks with obvious irony when he refers to "tailors, shoemakers, valets, dressmakers, pastry cooks, hairdressers, and other individuals useful for the vigor and glory of our States." The pride of Spaniards is treated ironically in Letter 38 from Gazel to Ben-Beley. A Spaniard's level of pride, notes Gazel, increases as his social status diminishes. For example, the vanity of a village hidalgo, who constantly flatters himself by ruminating upon his ancestral heritage, surpasses that of even the king. According

to Gazel:

> This type strolls majestically in the miserable plaza of his poor hamlet, muffled in his shabby cape, contemplating the coat-of-arms which covers the door of his partially dilapidated house, and giving thanks to Divine Providence for having made him Don Fulano de Tal.

In Letter 41 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, which concerns the injurious effects of frivolous foreign items upon a nation's economy and its character, Gazel concludes a lengthy depiction of the lavish and wasteful daily routine of a typical petimetre of the period with an ironic comment: "And at bedtime, he can say this prayer: 'I give thanks to Heaven that all my actions today have been directed towards throwing out of my country all the gold and silver in my possession.'"

Letter 58 from Gazel to Ben-Beley begins with a sharp comment which literally exudes irony: "In the Republic of Letters there is a sect whose members are savants at little cost. These are the critics." Gazel goes on, observes Geoffrey Ribbans, to stress that "no effort is required to become a critic." The shortness of life, adds Ribbans, is given here as an "ironic argument"justifying a profession which demands no training ("A Note on Cadalso and Samuel Johnson" 49). Gazel allows an imagined critic to express his disdain for training in a highly ironic manner:

> How much more this determination pleases us!: If for this reason I cannot learn any science or art, I shall persuade the world and myself that I am master of them all, and I shall pronounce my opinions, ex tripode, on whatever I may hear, see, or read.

PARODY:

"EACH NATION HAS ENOUGH ABSURDITIES WITHOUT COPYING FOREIGN ONES"

In a parody, the characteristic style of some other work is imitated, but in a nonsensical manner, in an attempt at humor or ridicule. There are many examples of parody in the Moroccan Letters, beginning with the Introduction itself.

"The writings of this overconfident new century," writes Russell P. Sebold, "are parodied in the very Introduction of the Moroccan Letters" (Colonel 124). In his edition of Cartas marruecas / Noches lúubres (2002), Sebold identifies the multiple use of asterisks at the beginning and end of the two final paragraphs in the Introduction as one of the Cadalso's devices for the parodying of erudition (150). The use of the asterisks in the penultimate paragraph by the "Editor" of the work gives the appearance of mimicking the practice of isolating editorial comments from the text itself with typographical signs. The asterisks preceding and following the final paragraph seem parody the comments of another individual, the copyist:

> *In the manuscript from which this was copied, there are some crossed-out paragraphs, and even letters, as if signifying it to be the intention of the author to suppress or correct them; and he who made this copy has reproduced it completely, indicating the crossed-out portions with asterisks at the beginning and the end*.

At two other points in the text, asterisks are used again, to parody the occasional interference of the "Editor." In Letter 10 and Letter 18, entire paragraphs are set off; and in Letter 8 and Letter 9, some short phrases are set off. In Letter 10, in

which Gazel describes to Ben-Beley the rude behavior of two petimetres at a tertulia, three paragraphs are marked off by asterisks. This entire passage is the one containing the boastful remarks of a young Spaniard about his sexual prowess, and Gazel's ironic observations; the isolation by asterisks indicates that the "Editor" may regard them as perhaps being too indiscreet for publication. In Letter 18, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, nearly two whole paragraphs are marked with asterisks, isolating comments by Gazel in which he appears to be waxing too feverishly poetic. In Letter 8, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, two words spoken by Nuño in the middle of a sentence are marked off by asterisks, possibly indicating that the "Editor" considers the phrase to be either improper or controversial: "Each kingdom has its fundamental laws, its constitution, its history, *its tribunals*, and knowledge of its strengths, climate, products, and alliances." And in Letter 9, from Gazel to Ben-Beley, the third of Nuño's comments defending Hernán Cortés ends with a short phrase set off by asterisks, seeming to indicate the possibility that the phrase is either irreligious or at least indiscreet: "[. . .] that inexplicable chain of events that we Christians call Providence, *the materialists Chance, and the poets Luck or Fate*."

Other editorial practices are parodied in the text. In Letter 18 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, for example, not only are Gazel's emotional concluding thoughts set off by asterisks, but also at one point the text is interrupted with an underlined statement, presumably that of the "Editor": "Here the manuscript is erased..." And in Letter 71 from Nuño to Gazel, the ending is missing; it is replaced with another

comment by the "Editor": "[Here the manuscript was torn, with which the public is deprived of the continuation of so commendable a subject.]" The intention of the missing part of the manuscript is a parody of censorship.

The parodying of editorial pedantry continues to the concluding sections of the work. In the "Nota" following the final letter (Letter 90, from Gazel to Nuño), the "Editor" reveals the fact that there were originally as many as one hundred and fifty letters in all, but that some were too illegible to publish. This apology for missing material, or lacunae, is a faithful mimicking of what is often encountered by editors when handling old manuscripts.

In Letter 6 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, which ostensibly concerns the backwardness of the sciences in Spain for lack of financial support, or patronage, Nuño reads to Gazel from a dedication he had once written for a book he had planned to write upon literature. The dedication is a parody of many such dedications of the period; it is not written in honor of a nobleman or other such wealthy patron, but instead in honor of a humble working man: Domingo de Domingos, dean of the water-boys at the fountain of Ave María in Madrid. Nuño praises Domingo in lofty and exaggerated language, elevating him to the status of classical heroes: "Who will deprive me of calling you, if I want to, more noble than Aeneas, more warlike than Alexander, more wealthy than Croesus, more beautiful than Narcissus, more wise than the seven of Greece, and all the other 'mores' that come to my pen?" Interestingly, what Nuño writes next, observes Michael P. Iarocci, does not seem to be a comment in jest, but rather one in complete

seriousness ("El silencio" 170). "No one," says Nuño, "can prevent me from doing so, except for the truth [. . .]". The irony here is that the truth is probably not what a wealthy patron would usually expect to find in an author's dedication to him, but instead his money's-worth of servile flattery.

"Each nation has more than enough absurdities without copying foreign ones," writes Gazel in Letter 50 to Ben-Beley. The wisdom of this statement is nowhere more evident than in Letter 34 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, in which is parodied a project planner's frivolous proposal to build an elaborate and costly canal system in Spain. The project planner's own words identify him as a utopian fool:

> "The canals," said the project planner, interrupting Nuño, "are of such great utility, that the mere act of denying it would brand anyone as a fool. I have a project to build one in Spain, which will be called the San Andrés Canal, because it will be shaped like the crosses of that sainted martyr. From La Coruña, it will reach to Cartagena, and from the Cabo de Rosas to that of San Vicente. These two lines will be severed at Castilla la Nueva, forming an island. . . ."

The project planner's nonsensical scheme does not end with the construction of his canal system; indeed, he is only getting warmed up in his madness, for he continues, describing to Nuño his intention to divide the country geographically into manageable political regions:

> "We now have, in addition to the civil and political advantages of this arch-canal, a geographical division of Spain, most conveniently done, into northern, southern, western, and eastern. I call southern the region comprised from the Island to Gibraltar; western that which is contained from the aforementioned place to the shores of the Ocean Sea along the coasts of Portugal and Galicia; eastern that

> of Catalonia and Valencia; and northern the fourth remaining region."

The excited project planner is still not finished, however. He also envisions a meticulous social system similar to that proposed by Bartolomé de Las Casas in his Memorial de remedios para las Indias (Petition for Remedies for the Indies, 1516), which was itself parodied by Thomas More in his Utopia (1516), according to Victor N. Baptiste (Bartolomé de Las Casas and Thomas More's Utopia 3). The project planner continues, describing his envisioned social system:

> Now enters the sublime part of my speculations, directed towards the better efficiency of the given Provinces, easier administration of justice, and the greater felicity of the towns. I want one language and a customary style of dress in each of these regions. In the northern, Basque will perforce be spoken; in the southern, closed Andalusian; in the eastern, Catalonian; and in the western, Galician. The style of dress in the western shall be like that of the Maragatos, neither more nor less; in the second, a tall Granadan montera, a capote with two folds and adjusting in front; in the third, a Catalonian gambeto and a pink cap; in the fourth, long white breeches, with all the rest of the accoutrements worn by Galician harvesters. Item: in each of the said, cited, mentioned, and referred-to four constituent parts of the Peninsula, I want there to be its patriarchal Church, major university, captaincy general, chancery, intendancy, casa de contratación, seminary of nobles, poorhouse, naval department, treasury, mint, factories for wools and silks and linens, general customs office. Item: the Court will be moved around through the four regions according to the four seasons of the year, the winter in the southern, the summer in the northern, et sic de caeteris.

By the time the project planner is finished propounding his absurd ideas, notes Gazel, his body is in convulsions, his eyes are rolling wildly and he is exhibiting signs of frenzy. Gazel reports to Ben-Beley the reaction of Nuño, who turns the

project planner's own words back upon him with supreme irony: "Do you know what is needed in each part of our four-part Spain? A lunatic asylum for the project planners of the north, south, east, and west."

In Letter 35 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, the inclusion of the letter written by Nuño's foolish young sister is a parody of the tendency of some Spaniards of the day to encumber their language with Gallicisms. Nuño's ironic comment after reading the letter to Gazel implies that this practice is a sign of national moral weakness, and perhaps even of effeminacy, since he harks back to an earlier Spain and wonders how the heroes of those times would react:

> "Of course," proceeded Nuño, "how would count Fernán Gonzalo have understood this letter, if in his time there were no thé, no deshabillé, no night bonnet, if there were no Zaire, no Monsieur Lavanda, no toilettes, no modistes, no chefs being divine, no being acquainted with crapaudinas, no coffee, nor more liquids than water and wine."

A long parody of pedantry occurs in Letter 67 from Nuño to Gazel. After a conversation with a highly educated friend who sprinkles his talk with Latin quotes, Nuño calls upon his copyist, a certain Don Joaquín, and tells him that he has decided to insert Latin quotations abundantly in all of his future writings. The rest of the letter contains twenty-three such instances of borrowing quotes from Horace to Virgil, in this effective parody of the affectation of erudition by means of stealing from classical authors. Nuño concludes with an ironic comment to Gazel: "I see you laughing at this method, friend Gazel, because undoubtedly it must seem pure pedantry to you. But we see a thousand books which have nothing good in them

but the epigraph."

In Letter 82 from Gazel to Ben-Beley, Nuño satirizes two petimetres who pepper each other with foolish questions and frivolous answers in a lengthy parody of a catechism. For example, in one of the many fatuous exchanges between the two petimetres, the following dialogue occurs:

> Question. Do you believe that in order to be a useful citizen it suffices to sleep twelve hours, to spend three at the theater, six at table and three at gambling?
>
> Answer. Yes, I believe.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Although José Cadalso refers to the Moroccan Letters as a "mordant and superficial little satire," it is hardly a superficial work. In it, he has attempted a thoughtful and impartial criticism of the Spain of his day, using a variety of techniques and themes: perspectivismo, critiques of the detrimental effects of excessive luxury, the concept of the hombre de bien (closely linked with the idea of the good citizen) and costumbrismo. All these are indeed serious subjects.

Cadalso's "criticism of a nation" may have a didactic goal, but one of the most important means by which he achieves this end is the frequent use of humor, especially satire, irony and parody; many times what results is, as Gazel remarks in Letter 7, something "between laughter and weeping." That space between laughter

and weeping is a form of justo medio, or middle ground. The petimetre, the pedant, the wrongheaded thinker deficient in reason, the superficial imitator of foreign customs, and a host of other targets of Cadalso's wit, scamper in and out, wandering dizzily through the course of the ninety letters which comprise the work. The follies of each are exposed and laid bare by means of a thoroughgoing humorous examination. In this respect, Cadalso seems to have faithfully followed the long-venerated advice of Horace: docere delectando ("to teach while pleasing").

In the end, Cadalso's criticism, as impartial and balanced as he has been able to make it, reveals his concept of Spain as a nation. On one hand, he reveres the character of Spain's heroic past, while on the other hand he wants his country to belong in the modern age on an equal footing with the rest of Europe, while not forfeiting its "Spanishness." He encourages his fellow Spaniards to adopt from other nations what is good and useful, especially in the realm of the physical sciences, but to reject what is frivolous, wasteful or injurious. Foreign customs and fashions are not of themselves necessarily dangerous, even though slavish acceptance of them in the pursuit of luxury may harm the nation's economy. In other words, everything has its positive as well as its negative aspects. "All things are good on one side and bad on the other, like coins which have heads and tails," Nuño remarks to Gazel in Letter 11. We should consider both sides before drawing conclusions, Cadalso is telling his countrymen. Consider both sides, then seek out the middle ground--seek out the justo medio.

THE SPANISH TEXTS AND THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

The present translation is made from a collated version of six of the earliest texts of Cadalso's Cartas marruecas: two manuscript versions (OS, Osuna collection, ca. 1770s; AS, Asaguirre ms., 1783) and four printed versions (CM, Correo de Madrid, 1789; SA, Sancha edition, 1793; PI, Piferrer, 1796; RE, Repulles edition, 1818).

The first book version, the Sancha edition of 1793, is used as the basis for two main reasons. First, and most importantly, it is the earliest version which can be said to be "complete" since it it is the first one known to include the índice ("index"); OS, AS and CM, which are earlier versions, do not include the índice, although OS, the oldest known surviving version of the text, does mention its existence at the end of the manuscript, while not presenting it. The index is actually a listing of the topics for each letter; for the convenience of the modern reader, the topics are not listed together at the end of the work, but instead each one is incorporated at the beginning of the appropriate letter, along with the letter number and the names of the correspondents. Several important items are missing in two of the earlier versions, AS and CM: Letters 55 and 83 are entirely missing in CM; no letter numbered 89 is in CM; no letter numbered 90 is in AS; a paragraph in Letter 83 on Cervantes is missing in AS. Second, although much less importantly, the Sancha edition is used as the basis for the collation because of the difficulty in reading the handwriting in the manuscript versions. In some eighteenth-century Spanish manuscripts, for example, it is sometimes not a simple

matter to distinguish between the letter "x" and the letter "r," since they tend to look alike. Thus, a printed text (in this case, SA) serves as a guideline to indicate what one is looking for in the handwritten versions. However, the Osuna manuscript (OS) is given preference whenever possible in the choice between variants, since it is the earliest known text.

In the English translation, I have made every effort to preserve fidelity to the Spanish text, as well as to make the translation readable and vibrant in English. This has not always been an easy task. Cadalso shows a preference for long sentences with multiple clauses in which the subject of the verb does not occur until well into the passage (what is often called "Ciceronian prose"). In the translation, these sentences are rendered as much as possible in accord with their original constructions, except in cases where the meaning is in danger of being lost; then, I have allowed slight deviations. Additionally, I have attempted to respect Cadalso's fondness for parallel structures, although this has occasionally made the work of translating more challenging (but not less interesting). One particularly ingenious example of Cadalso's predilection for parallel structure occurs in Letter 68, from Gazel to Ben-Beley. The topic of the letter is the consequences of luxury. Here, Cadalso employs the rhetorical technique of gradatio (a sentence construction for increasing the order of magnitude in a sort of "staircase" parallel, in which the last word of one clause becomes the first of the next, through three or more clauses). "Examine the history of all nations, and you will deduce that each one has been established by the austerity of customs," writes Gazel, then adds, in the gradatio:

> In this state of strength, it has grown; from this growth, abundance has come; from this abundance, luxury has been produced; from this luxury, effeminacy has ensued; from this effeminacy, moral weakness has been born; from this moral weakness, its ruin has proceeded.

As for Cadalso's prose in the original Spanish throughout the work, it is extraordinarily lucid and accessible, not to mention modern in its tone. I have retained some Spanish words, such as señor, caballero and sombrero, in the translation, since they are familiar and are a mild reminder that the milieu is always Spain.

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APPENDIX.

"PRIMITIVE VERSION" OF LETTER 7 113

EXAMPLE OF CENSORSHIP 117

"PRIMITIVE VERSION" OF LETTER 45 120

MOROCCAN LETTERS: ENGLISH TRANSLATION 123

INDEX 414

"PRIMITIVE VERSION" OF LETTER 7

tambien dijo el asno acá,
lo de já jé ji jó já.
Esto bien lo sabes tú,
y asi, dile á ese D. Juan,
no tropiece en este can
ni le diga tus ni sos,
porque ni el se asusta de os,
ni teme al votoba san.

Otra. No podemos dejar de confesar que hemos visto la viveza y penetracion natural de los andaluces, que se pueden graduar por los mayores talentos de nuestra España. Por lo mismo excita mas la compasion, el descuido que en aquellos Reynos, tienen en la educacion de la juventud. No salimos garantes del contenido en la siguiente carta; al paso que en obsequio de la verdad debemos decir que conocemos muchísimos andaluces muy hábiles profundamente instruidos y llenos de erudicion.

El autor de esta carta lo da á entender bastantemente claro; quando habla de los segundones, manifiesta que siguen la carrera de las armas ó de las letras; en los mayorazgos, parece que halla depositada la ignorancia.

Mi querido editor: la eruditísima carta del inmortal Marco Aurelio, que nos presenta el instructivo periódico de Vm. num. 124 y que con la mayor complacencia he leído y releído, ha renovado en mí la gran compasion, que hace mucho tiempo me aflije, viendo el estado tan deplorable en que se halla la educacion de nuestros jovenes, unica y legítima causa de la corrupcion, tan grande que advertimos en las costumbres. ¡Quán admirables efectos causarian entre nosotros las prudentes leyes, que en dicha carta se citan! Porque á la verdad, no puede menos de tocar el extremo de la felicidad todo pueblo, donde su juventud sea dirijida por la prudente y sana educacion; y por el contrario es imposible haya prosperidad donde se abandona la direccion de los jovenes.

Entre varios papeles que heredé de un amigo mio, se halla una carta de que remito copia, cuyo contenido puede servir de una no pequeña prueba del descuido en que ya hace la educacion de nuestros jovenes y de su estraordinaria viveza de talento, con especialidad en algunas provincias. La carta sin quitar ni poner es como sigue.

Cadiz 23 de Diciembre de 1786. Mi amigo y señor D. N.... de N.... gracias al altísimo, pues ha tenido á bien llegase á este mi destino, donde me prometo descansar de las muchas incomodidades, que la fatalidad de caminos y posadas me ha ocasionado. Reservo para mas adelante la relacion de los acaecimientos y observaciones en mi viaje: contentandome por ahora con referirle una aventura, para prueba de los fervorosos deseos que me asisten de cumplir con sus preceptos.

Saliendo de...para....perdí el camino y me interné en el monte: iba ya anocheciendo, y mi favorable suerte me presentó un caballero, que manifestaba 22 años con corta diferencia: era este de buen porte y presencia: lleva un arrogante caballo, un encaro, dos pistolas, calzon y ajustador de ante, chupilla de lana con muchas docenas de botones de filigrana, el pelo dentro de una redecilla, sombrero blanco muy fino, y grande pañuelo de seda morada al cuello, y la capa de verano caida sobre las ancas del caballo. Saludamonos como era regular, y preguntandole por el camino de...respondió que estaba muy lexos: que la noche iba cerrando y prometia tronar y algo mas: que el monte no era seguro y que mi caballo manifestaba estar cansado: en cuya atencion me aconsejaba y suplicaba, fuese con el á un cortijo de su abuelo que distaba de allí media legua. Todo esto lo dijo con tanta franqueza y agasajo y lo instó con tanto empeño que me vi precisado á admitir su oferta.

La conversacion como es costumbre, cayó sobre el tiempo y cosas semejantes, pero en ella manifestaba el mocito una clarísima luz natural: las salidas muy prontas en que acreditaba su mucha viveza y felíz penetracion: todo lo qual

junto con una voz muy agradable y gesto proporcionado descubria todos los requisitos naturales de un perfecto orador; pero ¡qué lastima! de los que enseña el arte, por medio del estudio ni uno siquiera.

Salimos ya del monte y habiendome admirado lo hermoso de los árboles, le pregunté; ¿si empleaban aquellas maderas en la construccion de navios? Que se yo de eso (me respondió con presteza) para eso mio el comendador, en todo el dia de Jesus habla, sino de navios, brulotes, fragatas y galeras. ¡Valgame Dios y que pesado es el buen caballero poquitas veces hemos oido de su boca algo tremula por sobra de años y falta de dientes, la batalla de Tolon, la toma de los navios la Princesa y el glorioso y la colocacion de los navios de Leso en Cartajena! Tengo la cabeza llena de almirantes Holandeses é Ingleses. Por quanto hay en el mundo no dejára de rezar todas las noches á S. Telmo por los navegantes, y luego entra un parladillo sobre los peligros del mar: en seguida la descripcion de la perdida de toyta una flota (no se que año) en que se escapó el buen señor Naando: y su remate es una digresion natural y bien traida sobre lo util, que es el saber nadar. Desde que tengo uso de razon no le he visto corresponderse por escrito con otro, que con el marques de la victoria; ni le he conocido mas pesadumbre, que la que tuvo quando supo la muerte de D. Jorge Juan. El otro dia estabamos comiendo y al dar el relox las tres, dió una tan gran palmada en la mesa, que hubo de romperla ó romperse las manos y dijo no sin mucha colera: á esta hora fue quando se llegó á nosotros, que ibamos en el navio Princesa, el tercer navio Ingles, y á fe que era muy hermoso, y de 90 cañones, ¡y qué velero! de eso no he visto: lo mandaba un señor oficial; y ¡qué oficial! si no es por él los otros dos no hubieran contado el lance: pero ¿qué se ha de hacer? tantos á uno... Y en esto le asaltó la gota, que hace dias padece y que nos valió un poco de descanso, porque sino tenia traza de irnos contando de uno en uno todos los lances de mar que han sucedido desde el arca de Noe.

Cesó por un rato el mozalvete la murmuracion contra un tio tan respetable, segun lo que él mismo contaba, y al entrar en un campo muy llano y grande: ¡bravo campo! dije yo para disponer en batalla setenta mil hombres. Con esas á mi primo el conde que fue capitan de guardias Españolas (respondió el señorito con igual desembarazo) que sabe quantas batallas se han dado desde que los angeles buenos derrotaron á los malos: y no es lo mas esto, sino que sabe tambien las que se perdieron, porque se perdieron y las que se ganaron, porque se ganaron, y porque se quedaron indecisas, las que ni se perdieron ni ganaron. Ya lleva gastados no se quantos doblones en instrumentos de matemática, y tiene un baul lleno de unos, que él llama planos, y son unas estampas que no tienen caras ni cuerpos.

Procuré no hablar de semejantes materias: mas habiendo dicho yo entre otras cosas que no seria lejos de allí la batalla que se dió en tiempo de D. Rodrigo, y que fue tan costosa segun nos dice la historia.

Historia dijo al instante, me alegra que estuviera aquí mi hermano el canónigo de Cevilya: yo no he aprehendido porque Dios me ha dado en él una biblioteca viva de todas la historias del mundo. Es mozo que sabe de que color era el vestido que llevaba puesto el Rey Don Fernando quando tomó á Cevilya.

Llegabamos ya cerca del cortijo, sin que el caballero me hubiese contestado á materia alguna de quantas le toqué. Mi natural sinceridad me incitó á preguntarle como le habian educado y me respondió: á mi gusto, al de mi madre y al de mi abuelo, que era un señor muy anciano y me queria como á las niñas de sus ojos. Murió de cerca de cien años: habia sido capitan de lanza de Carlos II. en cuyo palacio se habia criado. Mi padre bien queria que estudiase yo; pero tuvo poca vida y autoridad para conse-

guirlo: murió sin tener el gusto de verme escribir, ya me habia buscado un ayo y la cosa iba de veras, quando cierto accidentillo lo descompuso todo.

Quales fueron sus primeras lecciones, le pregunte, ninguna, respondió: en sabiendo leer un romance, y tocar un polo, para que necesita mas un caballero. Mi domine bien quiso meterme en jouduras, pero le fue muy mal. El caso fue que yendo yo con otros camaradas á un encierro: supólo el buen maestro y vinó tras mí á oponerse á mi voluntad: llegó precisamente á tiempo que los vaqueros me enseñaban como se toma la vara (no pudo su desgracia traerle à peor ocasion) á la segunda palabra que quiso jablar le plante un varazo tan divino en medio de los sentidos, que le abrí la cabeza en mas cascos que una granada y gracias que me contuve porque mi primer pensamiento fué de ponerle una vara lo mismo que á un toro de diez años: pero por la primera vez me contuve con lo dicho. Toitos los presentes gritaron *viva el señorito*: jasta el tio Gregorio, que es hombre de pocas palabras esclamó: lo ha fecho V. S. como un angel del Ciclo.

Atonito yo de que hubiese quien aprobase tal insolencia, le pregunté, quien era el tio Gregorio, y me respondio: es un carnicero de la Ciudad, que suele acompañarnos à comer, fumar, y jugar: poquito le queremos todos los caballeros de por acá. Con ocasion de irse mi Primo Jaime Maria, á Granaa, y yo á Cevilla hubimos de sacar la espada, sobre quien se lo habia de llevar, y en esto hubiera parado la cosa, si en aquel tiempo mismo no le hubiera preso la justicia, por no sé qué puñaladillas, y otras frioleras semejantes, que todo se compuso con ocho dias de carcel.

Dandome cuenta del caracter del tio Gregorio, y otros iguales personajes llegamos al cortijo, Presentóme á los que allí estaban, que eran varios amigos, y parientes suyos de la misma edad, clase, y crianza, que sé habian juntado para ir á una cazeria, y esperando la hora competente, pasaban la noche jugando, cenando, cantando, y jablando. Para todo lo que se hallaban muy bien provistos, porque habian concurrido algunas gitanas con sus venerables padres, dignos esposos, y preciosos hijos.

Allí tuve la dicha de conocer al tio Gregorio, que por su hueca, y ronca, voz patilla larga, vientre redondo, modales vastos, freqüentes juramentos, y trato familiar se distinguia entre todos. Su oficio era hacer cigarros, dandolos yà encendidos de su boca á los caballeretes, atizar los velones, decir el nombre y mérito de cada gitana: llevar el compás con las palmas de las manos, quando vaylaba alguno de sus apasionados protectores, y brindar á su salud con medios cantaros de vino.

Conociendo que yo venia cansado, me hicieron cenar luego, y me llevaron á un quarto algo apartado para dormir, destinando á un mozo, para que me dispertase, y condujese al camino. Referir los dichos y hechos de aquella academia es imposible, ó por mejor decir, indecente, solo diré que él humo de los cigarros, los gritos y palmadas del tio Gregorio, la bulla de tantas voces, el ruido de las castañuelas, lo destemplado de la guitarra, el chillido de las gitanas, sobre qual habia de tocar el polo para que lo vaylase preciosilla, el ladrido de los perros, y el desentono de los que cantaban, no me dejaron pegar los ojos.

Llegada la hora de marchar monté á caballo, diciendo en voz baja ¿asi se cria una juventud, que pudiera ser tan util siendo la educacion igual al talento? y un hombre serio, que al parecer estaba de mal humor con aquel genero de vida, oyendome, me dijo con lagrimas en los ojos, señor, tiene su merced razon.

Creo hago bastante para estár tan cansado, paselo Vm. bien y mande á su afecto servidor N::: de

Señor Editor: si Vm. no tiene á mal que esta carta ocupe un rinconcito en su gracioso periódico le estimaré lo ejecute sin las dilaciones que acostumbra, y mande á su apasionado Vejor y Ranza

EXAMPLE OF CENSORSHIP

cion al trabajo á los pobres, á los desvalidos y á los desgraciados que se dejan seducir de la floxedad ó de los vicios. Madrid, Zaragoza y otros Pueblos de España han reconocido la verdad y razon en el encuentro de los abusos con semejantes establecimientos, ó podrian servir de argumentos para convencer á los desventurados que no ven [illegible] que acarrean con sus [illegible]

[illegible] propiedad del ayre fixo [illegible] esquema de los cuerpos [illegible]

[illegible] producir mas la bugía en el vaso, porque en este intermedio se mezcla una cierta cantidad de ayre atmosferico con el ayre fixo. Un carbon encendido se apaga igualmente en una masa de este fluido. No podemos omitir el hablar de un fenómeno que tiene [illegible] cion con este de que acabamos de [illegible] cion de un cuerpo, que ha [illegible] en un volumen de ayre atmosferico [illegible] que una bugía encendida [illegible] minuye insensiblemente [illegible] apagandose: porque el ayre [illegible] es el [illegible] intermedio que puede [illegible] q[illegible] El ayre fixo [illegible] m[illegible] ayre [illegible] mas pesado [illegible] el ayre [illegible] con [illegible] abs[illegible]

(m) ¡Ah! Si mirase el hombre á sus semejantes con aquel amor que le predican la humanidad, la razon y las divinas máximas de Jesus, no sufriria el verlos pálidos, desnudos, llenos de males, y lo que peor es de vicios.

Nunca podrán persuadirme de que bastan las palabras y los nombres para satisfacer á unas leyes, que exigen sinceridad y acciones. „Non erit mendicus inter vos.“

Nota
A virtud de lo mandado en el Edicto publicado p.r este Tribunal en 15 de Marzo de 1792. borrè la parte de llana de aquì se ve, p.r el debido cumplim.to, y lo demàs q. se ve en la tacha hasta donde se halla mi rubrica; lo q. certifico y firmo como Secretario del mismo S.to Oficio. Madrid 5. de Enero de 1792. D.n Miguel Martinez de Ranedo.

caclon al trabajo á los pobres, á los desvalidos y á los desgraciados que se dejan seducir de la floxedad ó de los vicios.

Madrid, Zaragoza y otros Pueblos de España, que han reconocido la verdad y salen al encuentro de los abusos con semejantes establecimientos, os podrian servir de argumento para convencer á los desventurados que no ven la luz, y que acarrean con sus errores la vergonzosa situacion de su patria.

Es menester un corazon de bronce, una alma insensible (m) y la sangre mas desapiadada para mirar con indiferencia los enjambres de mendigos, que embarazan nuestras calles, buscando la existencia ó limosna, que hallan en la equivocada caridad de muchos de los que las habitan.

¿No seria satisfaccion el convertirlos en industriosos vasallos, que formando familias y casas, amasen las buenas costumbres, y fortalecieran con el cultivo y artes (que necesitan de sus brazos) el vigor, fuerzas y felicidad de la patria? (*Se continuará.*)

Fisica. Esta propiedad del ayre fixo de oponerse á la quema de los cuerpos, es una de las mas singulares de este fluido. Si se mete una vela encendida en la atmosfera de una cuba en fermentacion ó en un vaso lleno de ayre fixo, la flama se desprende al instante del mechero, y aspira sobre la masa del ayre fixo; se apaga la bugia. Vuelvase á encender, y metase segunda vez; aun se apagará, y este fenómeno se experimentará quantas veces se practique mientras haya ayre fixo en el vaso; pero ultimamente se apurará este ayre, y quedará encendida la vela. Cada vez que se vuelva á encender, es preciso introducir mas la bugia en el vaso, porque en este intermedio se mezcla una cierta cantidad de ayre atmosferico con el ayre fixo. Un carbon encendido se apaga igualmente en una masa de este fluido. No podemos omitir el hablar de un fenómeno que tiene mucha relacion con este de que acabamos de hablar; es la extincion de un cuerpo que ha ardido en un volumen de ayre atmosferico renovado. ¿Por que una bugia encendida al fondo de un vaso, disminuye insensiblemente su luz, y acaba apagandose? porque el ayre mas puro es el unico intermedio que pueda servir para que arda. El ayre de la atmosfera es una mezcla de ayre el mas puro con el fixo, y mientras dura la quema es absorbido el ayre mas puro; solo resta el ayre fixo que, como hemos ya demostrado, se opone absolutamente á que arda cosa alguna.

Conclusion del discurso sobre las pasiones. Suele decirse freqüentemente que hay personas naturalmente propensas á la cólera, á la piedad, á la envidia; lo que verdaderamente significa, si puede decirse asi, que sus almas no están perfectamente sanas; el exemplo de Socrates nos demuestra bien claramente que aun en este estado, son enteramente incurables; Zopiro á quien se tenia por un habilisimo fisónomo, despues de haber exâminado á Socrates, delante de un numeroso concurso, fue nombrando todos los vicios que le asistian; apenas hubo en toda la concurrencia uno que *no soltase la risa* al oir la prediccion, por no haber conocido en él ninguno de los vicios enumerados; pero aquel sabio salvó el honor de Zopiro y aumentó su reputacion, declarando que verdaderamente era propenso a todos ellos, pero que habria logrado curarlos y extinguirlos con el auxilio de la razon. A pesar de la mayor propension que se tenga hácia algun vicio ó mayor debilidad para resistirlo; siempre el hombre es capaz de triunfar de él y de vencerlo; del mismo modo que se puede disfrutar de una salud completa, aunque se haya nacido con una disposicion muy proxima á cierta ó cierta enfermedad.

(m) ¡Ah! Si mirase el hombre á sus semejantes con aquel amor que le predican la humanidad, la [illegible] y las divinas máximas de Jesus, no sufriria el verlos pálidos, desaseados, llenos de males, y [illegible] de vicios.
[illegible] podrian persuadirme de que bastan las palabras y los nombres para satisfacer á unas leyes, [illegible] sin sinceridad y acciones. „Non erit mendicus inter vos.“

"PRIMITIVE VERSION" OF LETTER 45

tar y perfeccionar facilmente su agricultura y artes; porque tiene en sí misma todos los medios que para estos se necesitan, á diferencia de otros paises que carecen de ellos. (*Se continuará.*)

Carta de Gazel á Bem-Beley. Acabo de llegar á Barcelona: lo poco que he visto de ella me asegura ser cierto el informe de Nuño; el juicio que formé por instruccion suya del genio de los Catalanes y utilidad de este principado. Por un par de provincias semejantes pudiera el Rey de los christianos trocar sus dos Américas. Mas provecho redunda á su corona de la industria de estos pueblos, que de la pobreza de tantos millones de Indias. Si yo fuera Señor de toda España, y me precisáran á escoger los diferentes pueblos de ella, por criados mios haria á los Catalanes mis mayordomos. Esta plaza es de las mas importantes de la Peninsula, y por tanto su guárnicion es numerosa y lucida, porque entre otras tropas se hallan aquí las que llaman Guardias de Infanteria Española. Un individuo de este cuerpo, está en la misma posada que yo desde anteanoche que yo llegué. Ha congeniado sumamente conmigo por su franqueza, cortesania y persona. Es muy joven, y su vestido es lo mismo que el de los soldados rasos, pero sus modales le distinguen facilmente del vulgo soldadesco. Estrañé esta contradiccion, y ayer á la mesa, que en estas posadas llaman redonda, porque no tienen asiento preferente; viendolo tan familiar y bien recibido con los oficiales mas viejos del cuerpo, que son tan respetables, no pude aguantar ni un minuto mas mi curiosidad acerca de su clase, y asi le pregunté, ¿quién era? Soy me dixo cadete de este cuerpo, y de la compañía de este caballero, señalando á un anciano venerable con la cabeza cubierta de canas, el cuerpo lleno de heridas y el aspecto guerrero. Si señor, y de mi comunidad respondió el viejo. Es nieto y heredero de un compañero mio que, mandaron á mi lado en la batalla de campo Santo: tiene veinte años de edad y cinco de servicio: hace mejor el exercicio que todos los granaderos del batallon; es un poco travieso, como todos los de su clase y edad: los viejos no lo estrañemos, porque son lo que fuimos y serán lo que somos. No sé que grado es este de cadete dixe yo. Esto se reduce, dixo otro oficial á que un joven de buena familia, sienta plaza, sirve doce ó catorce años, haciendo siempre el servicio de soldado raso; y despues de haberse portado como es regular se arguye de su nacimiento, es promovido al honor de llevar una bandera con las armas del Rey, y divisas del regimento: en todo este tiempo suelen consumir por la indispensable decencia sus patrimonios, y por las precisiones de gastar que se les presentan, siendo su residencia en esta ciudad, que es lucida y deliciosa ó en la Corte que es costosa. Buen sueldo ganarán, dixe yo, por estar tanto tiempo sin el caracter de oficial, y con gastos como si lo fueran. El presto de soldado raso, y nada mas dixo el primero; en nada se distinguen sino es en que no toman ni aun eso, pues lo dexan con alguna gratificacion mas al soldado que cuida sus armas y fornitura. Pocos habrá, insté yo, que sacrifiquen de ese modo su juventud y patrimonio: ¿cómo pocos? saltó el muchacho somos cerca de doscientos, y si se admiten todos los que pretenden ser admitidos, llegariamos á dos mil. Lo mejor es, que nos estorvamos mutuamente para el ascenso por el corto número de vacantes, y grande de Cadetes. Pero mas queremos esperar montando continela con esta casaca, que dexarla. Lo mas que hacen algunos de los nuestros, benefician compañías de Caballería ó Dragones quando la ocasion se presenta, si se hallan ya impacientes de esperar, y aun asi quedan con tanto afecto al Regimiento, como si viviesen en él. ¡Gracioso Cuerpo! exclamé yo: en que doscientos nobles ocupan el hueco de otros tantos plebeyos, sin mas paga

que el honor de la nacion. Gloriosa nacion que produce nobles tan amantes de su Reyno: poderoso Rey que manda á una nacion, cuyos nobles individuos no anhelan mas que á servirle, sin reparar en qué clases, ni con qué premio.

Continuacion del origen de la desigualdad entre los hombres. Subamos, pues, de aqui poco á poco al mayor poder que los hombres se adquirieron en los primeros años: á la superioridad que lograron unos mas fuertes, poderosos y valientes, sobre otros mas debiles, pobres y cobardes; veremos al hombre dominando á los demas, ya con su influxo, ya adquiriendose un cierto derecho sobre las haciendas y posesiones, á fin de ser auxiliados de la fuerza y del mayor poder; en fin veremos establecerse el dominio regio, y extenderse segun la debilidad de los pueblos, y segun las fuerzas con que se hacian respetar: veremosle echar los cimientos para la grande obra que solo tocaba acabarse y perfeccionarse en los siglos de ilustracion; la obra sin igual, la unica, capaz de producir al genero humano las ventajas que solo por ella se han experimentado y se experimentan en todo el universo; y la que puede compararse por su division y hermosura á la musica, á la pintura, á las matematicas &c. &c. á la musica porque con la division de un sin fin de tonos diferentes y distintos forma los mas armoniosos y sublimes cantos; á la pintura porque con tanta variedad de colores, sabe representarnos quanto vemos y observamos en la naturaleza; á las matematicas porque con sus distintos asuntos sabe descubrirnos los misterios revelados solo con el estudio y la aplicacion: por ella los Príncipes en la pacifica posesion de sus tronos; por ella el hombre guiado de la razon camina gustoso al cumplimiento exacto de su obligacion; y en fin por la nobleza y la division de gerarquias esta el mundo bien mandado, bien gobernado, y todo con el debido concierto. La desigualdad, y la division de gerarquias es tan precisa, que sin ella no puede haber buen orden; ni el mundo sería otra cosa que un caos y confusion donde nadie sabria el puesto que debia ocupar: el mismo Dios nos da un exemplo de este admirable orden en la division de gerarquias que hay en el cielo. ¡Infeliz de aquella nacion que abandona este orden y concierto! Hasta el mismo Monarca será considerado como un hombre del mayor desprecio. ¿Qué cuidado pues deben tener los Príncipes en entretener lo que los filosofos llaman entusiasmo y preocupacion de honor? Este debiera ser un punto sagrado, al qual nadie debia llegar sin orden expresa del Rey ó sus Ministros; quien ataca la esencia de la nobleza, ataca los sólidos fundamentos que tiene un estado para sostenerse, y perpetuar por este medio su engrandecimiento, su duracion, y aquel espíritu de patriotismo que solo puede tener cabida en los nobles, pues la gente villana no tiene domicilio ni propiedad en parte alguna, y están expuestos á venderse á quien mas les diere, ayudando con su asistencia al mismo enemigo comun de la patria; por esto pueden muy bien considerarse, como vagos y mercenarios, y temerse de ellas qualquiera extravio. Pero bien convencidos están los Monarcas de la necesidad que hay de la nobleza, y de las utilidades que ella acarrea en todas las naciones; por esto se esfuerzan y apresuran á porfia en colmarla de exenciones, privilegios y gracias con que saben atraerla, y vincular de este modo la ilustracion de la sangre. ¿A qué puede aspirar todo hombre desde que nace, sino es á ilustrarse por toda especie de terminos; y á ennoblecerse? si el hombre no tiene ese aliciente, cometerá las mas infames y viles acciones. El amor y la estimacion á los aplausos, se hace sentir en nosotros desde la niñez; el deseo de una buena reputacion, nace, digamoslo asi, con nosotros; es la voz de la naturaleza, la reputacion satisface aun al sabio: todo es vano, ilusorio y frivolo á los ojos de quien no se dexa llevar del deseo de adquirir fama: las riquezas son

MOROCCAN LETTERS

INTRODUCTION

Ever since Miguel de Cervantes composed the immortal novel in which he criticized with so much wisdom the dissolute customs of our ancestors, which we their descendants have replaced with others, criticisms from the pens of more or less impartial authors in the most cultured European nations have multiplied. But those which have received the most acceptance among men of the world and of letters are those which carry the name of Letters, supposedly written in this or that country by native travelers of kingdoms not only distant but also contrary in religion, climate, and government. The great success of this species of criticisms should be attributed to the epistolary method, which makes its reading more comfortable, its distribution more easy, and its style more pleasant, as also the foreignness of the character of its supposed authors: from whose concurrence it results that, although in many cases they may say nothing new, they always express things with a certain novelty which pleases.

This fiction is not so natural in Spain, because of the lesser number of travelers to whom to ascribe such a work. The title of Persian, Turkish, or Chinese Letters, written this side of the Pyrenees, would be unbelievable. This consideration was always sensible to me because, in view of the customs of our ancients which we still conserve, those which we have contracted from dealings with foreigners, and those which are neither admitted nor excluded, it always seemed to me that one could work on this subject successfully, introducing some traveler arrived from foreign lands, or from lands very different from our own in

customs and practices.

Luck had it that, because of the death of an acquaintance of mine, a manuscript fell into my hands, whose title is: Letters Written by a Moor Named Gazel Ben-Aly to Ben-Beley, His Friend, Concerning the Practices and Customs of Spaniards Ancient and Modern, With Some Replies by Ben-Beley, and Other Letters Relative to These.

My friend's life ended before he could explain to me whether they were in fact letters written by the aforementioned author, as could be inferred from the style, or whether it was the amusement of the dead man, in whose composition he had consumed the final years of his life. Both cases are possible: the reader will judge that which he thinks the more accurate, perceiving that if the Letters are useful or useless, good or bad, it little matters the status of the true author.

I have been encouraged to publish them, inasmuch as neither religion nor government are discussed in them; since it will be easily observed that few are the times that through a remote connection something of these two subjects is touched upon.

There is no series of dates in the original, and it seemed to me that coordinating them would postpone too much the publication of this work; in which case I have not tarried in doing so nor in portraying the character of those who wrote them. This latter will be inferred from their reading. Some of them maintain all the style, and even the genius --let us call it that--of the original Arabic; their

phrases must seem ridiculous to a European, sublime and Pindaric, contrary to the character of epistolary and common style; but then, our locutions probably seem intolerable to an African. Which is correct? I do not know. I dare not decide this, nor do I believe that one can do so unless he is neither an African nor a European. Nature can be the only judge; but its voice--where can it be found? I do not know this, either. The confusion of other voices is too great for hearing that of the human origin in many of these matters which are present in the everyday dealings of men.

But offering myself to the public as a mere editor of these letters would be too humiliating to my self-esteem. To make amends for my vanity and presumption, I was going to imitate the usual method of those who, finding themselves in the same situation of publishing foreign works for lack of their own, burden them with notes, commentaries, corollaries, annotations, variants and appendices, now insulting the text, now disfiguring it, now mutilating the meaning, now overwhelming the peaceful and humble reader with inopportune reference marks, so that, cheating the author of his genuine merit, mediocre though it may be, and augmenting the volume of the work, acquire for themselves the unwished for but certainly deserved name of vexatious bores. With this in mind, I determined to put in a sufficient number of notes in the places where I saw, or seemed to see, the mistakes of the traveling Moor, or the extravagances of his friend, or perhaps the errors of the copyists, placing them with asterisks, numbers, or letters at the foot of each page, as is the custom.

I had an additional motive which other editors do not have. If I set myself

to publishing with the same method the works of some author dead for seven centuries, I would laugh at the undertaking, because it would seem an absurd task to inquire into what a man meant, between whose death and my birth six hundred years had passed. But the friend who left me the manuscript of these Letters and who, according to the most judicious conjectures, was the true author of them, was so much like me--and I so much like him--that we are one and the same. And I know his mode of thinking as well as my very own, in addition to his being so exactly my contemporary that he was born in the same year and month, on the same day and moment as I. So that, for all these reasons, and another one which I will refrain from mentioning, I can call this work my own without offending truth, whose name I have always venerated, even when I have seen it hitched to the wagon of victorious falsehood (a phrase which means nothing and, therefore, is quite appropriate for a prologue such as this or any other one).

"Even so," a friend of mine tells me, exceedingly severe and somber in the matter of criticism, "I am not of the opinion that such notes ought to be put in. They augment the size and weight of the book, and this is the greatest inconvenience that a modern work can have. The ancient ones used to be weighed by the hundredweight, like iron, and these of our day are weighed by the carat, like precious stones; they used to be measured by the span, like lances, and these are measured by the length of a finger, like swords. So, you see: let the work be what it may, but let it be short."

Notwithstanding the above contradiction, I admired his profound judgment

and obeyed him, reducing these pages to the smallest number possible; and I began, observing the same deference toward this introduction, preliminary, foreword, prologue, proem, preface, or whatever it may be, by not augmenting the number of those who start out confessing the tediousness of this kind of preparations and, in spite of their admission, continue on with the same vice, gravely offending their fellow man with the abuse of his patience. Furthermore, another consideration held me back which, to tell the truth, is quite strong, and therefore, which resolved me not to publish this brief work: to wit, that it will not please, nor can it please. I base my opinion upon the following:

These Letters deal with the national character, as it is nowadays and as it has been. In order to conduct this criticism toward the taste of some, it would be necessary to tarnish the nation, heaping it with contumely, and not finding in it anything of middling worth. In order to please others, it would be equally necessary to praise everything that a survey of its genius offers us, and exalt that which is in itself reprehensible. Whichever one of these two systems were to be followed in the Moroccan Letters would gain a great number of enthusiasts; and at the cost of being badly regarded by some, the author might have ingratiated himself with others. But because of the impartiality which reigns in them, it is indispensable to incur the odium of both factions. It is true that this golden mean[1] is the one which a

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[1] Golden mean: Cadalso uses the term justo medio, by which he means impartiality or balance. At the beginning of Book 3 of the Eudemian Ethics, Aristotle says that there are middle states in the virtues. He represents the mean for all virtues as striking a balance between vices of excess and vices of defect.

man desirous of making some use of his reason should endeavor to follow; but it would also make the prejudiced of both extremes suspicious of him. For example: an ancient and illustrious Spaniard will go on losing some of his solemnity, and very nearly reach the point of laughing when he reads some sort of satire against the love of novelty; but when he reaches the following paragraph and sees that the author of the letter praises in the novelty some useful thing, which the ancients were unaware of, he will throw the book into the fire, and exclaim:

"Goodness gracious! This man is a traitor to his country!"

In the opposite case, when one of these who are ashamed of having been born on this side of the Pyrenees reads a panegyric of the many good things we can have obtained from foreigners, he will undoubtedly give such agreeable pages a thousand kisses; but if he has the patience to read a few lines further, and arrives at some reflection about the regrettable nature of the loss of some appreciable part of our ancient character, he will throw the book into the fireplace and say to his valet:

"This is absurd, ridiculous, impertinent and execrable, abominable and pitoyable."[2]

*As a consequence of this, if I, poor editor of this critical study, present myself in any given house of a member of these two orders, although they may

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[2] pitoyable: Pitiable. By use of this French word, Cadalso parodies the gallicisms used by Spaniards during the Enlightenment, which derived most of its influence from France.

receive me with some good grace, they cannot restrain me from telling myself, according to the circumstances: "At this moment, they are saying among themselves, 'This man is a bad Spaniard,' or rather, 'This man is a barbarian.'" But my self-esteem will console me (as it does others in many cases), and I will tell myself: "I am nothing more than an hombre de bien,[3] who has brought forth a paper, which has seemed quite impartial to me, about the most delicate subject in the world, the criticism of a nation*."

In the manuscript from which this was copied, there are some crossed-out paragraphs, and even letters, as if signifying it to be the intention of the author to suppress or correct them; and he who made this copy has reproduced it completely, indicating the crossed-out portions with asterisks at the beginning and the end.

[3] Hombre de bien: A man of probity and good will. Russell P. Sebold presents a detailed discussion of this concept in Colonel Don José Cadalso, pp. 118-23.

LETTER 1

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Gazel gives Ben-Beley news of his stopping in Spain, his idea of traveling through it, and of his friendship with Nuño. He promises to inform him of all that he observes, and he asks him to help with his advice.)

I have managed to remain in Spain since the return of our ambassador, as I was hoping to do many days ago, and which I wrote you about several times during his sojourn in Madrid. My desire was to travel practicably, and this object cannot always be achieved in the retinue of great lords, particularly the Asiatic and African ones. These do not see--let us put it that way--anything but the surface of the land through which they pass. Their pomp, the complete lack of advance information with which to inquire about things worthy of being acquainted with, the number of their servants, the ignorance of languages, the suspects they must be in the countries through which they go, impede them in the many circumstances that are offered to the individual who travels less noticeably.

I find myself dressed as the Christians, introduced into their homes, in perfect command of their idiom, and in a very intimate friendship with a Christian named Nuño Núñez, a man who has undergone many vicissitudes of fortune, careers, and modes of living. At the present, he finds himself separated from the world and, according to his expression, imprisoned within himself. In his company I pass the time pleasurably, as he endeavors to instruct me about everything that I

ask; and he does so with such sincerity that, sometimes he tells me: "Of that I do not understand" and other times: "Of that I do not wish to understand." With these points of reference,[4] I am determined to examine not only the Court, but also every province of the Peninsula. I shall observe the customs of each town, noting those which are common to other countries of Europe, and those which are peculiar. I shall endeavor to divest myself of many prejudices that we Moors hold against the Christians, and against the Spaniards in particular.

I will take note of that which surprises me, in order to speak about it with Nuño and afterwards to share with him the judgment I may have formed regarding it. With this, I will respond to the many persons who have written me asking for information about the country in which I find myself. Until then, my imprudence will not be so great that I begin speaking about that which I do not understand, since it would be telling you many things concerning a kingdom about which, until now, everything has been an enigma to me, although it would be quite easy for me to do so. I would complete my work, as many others have done, with noting only four or five strange customs, whose origin I would not take the trouble to investigate, putting them in a fluent and amusing style, adding some satirical reflections, and letting go of my pen with the same levity with which I took it up.

But you taught me, venerable teacher, you taught me to love truth. You told

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[4] With these points of reference: Meaning: between the two aforementioned poles Of that I do not understand and Of that I do not want to understand, that is, to seek a balance or a state of impartiality.

me a thousand times that the lack of it is a crime, even in frivolous matters. My heart was so impressionable then, and your voice so efficacious when you impressed upon me this maxim, that the passage of time will not erase it.

May Allah preserve you in a healthy and cheerful old age, the fruit of a temperate and circumspect youth, and may you continue sending me from Africa the wholesome warnings which are your custom. The voice of virtue crosses the seas, thwarts the distances, and penetrates the world more brilliantly than the light of the sun, since the latter cedes part of its dominion to the darkness of the night, and the former never clouds over. What will become of me in a country more agreeable than my own, and more free, if I do not follow the idea of your presence, represented by your counsels?--This shall be a shadow that follows me amidst the enchantment of Europe, a kind of tutelary spirit, which will deliver me from the edge of the precipice, or like thunder, whose clamor and uproar hold back the hand that was going to commit the crime.

LETTER 2

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Gazel takes the time to inform his teacher with respect to the diversity that he observes among the Europeans, and even among the Spaniards themselves.)

I still do not find myself capable of obeying the new requests you make of me to remit to you the observations that I am beginning to make in the capital of

this vast monarchy. Do you know how many things are necessary for forming a true idea of the country in which one travels? It is quite true that, having made several trips through Europe, I find myself capable, or better to say, with less obstacles than other Africans; but even so, I have found such a difference among the Europeans, that a knowledge of one of the countries of this part of the world does not suffice for judging the other states of the same. The Europeans do not seem to be neighbors. Although outward appearances may have made them uniform in victuals, theaters, avenues, armies and luxuries, nevertheless, the laws, vices, virtues and government are exceedingly diverse, and consequently, each nation's own customs.

Even within the Spanish, there is an incredible variety in the character of its provinces. An Andalusian in no way resembles a Basque; a Catalan is totally distinct from a Galician; and it is the same case between a Valencian and a native of Santander. This Peninsula, for so many centuries divided into different kingdoms, has always had a variety in dress, laws, idioms and currencies. Of this you will infer what I told you in my last letter about the levity of those who through scant observations of their own, or perhaps without having made any at all, and only through the reports of scarcely reflective travelers, have spoken about Spain.

Allow me to come to know their history well, to read their political authors, to ask many questions, to make many reflections, to note them down, to review them prudently, to take the time to make certain of the judgment I form of each thing, and then I promise to gratify you. Meanwhile, I shall not speak to you in my

letters of anything but my health, which I assure you is well, and of yours, which I hope is perfect, for my own information, the education of your grandchildren, the governance of your family and the welfare of all those who know you and associate with you.

LETTER 3

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Summary of the history of Spain, up until the beginning of the present century.)

In the months that have passed since the last letter I wrote to you, I have apprized myself of the history of Spain; I have seen what has been written about it since the times before the invasion of our ancestors and their settlement in it.

As this forms a series of many years and centuries, in each of which have occurred various extraordinary events whose influence has been visible until the present day, the summary of all this is a very long work to remit in a letter; and in this kind of task I am not very experienced. I will ask my friend Nuño to take charge of it, and I will remit it to you. Do not fear that the summary of his country's history shall come from his hands vitiated because of some national prejudice, since I have heard him say a thousand times that, although he loves and esteems his fatherland for having judged it worthy of affection and appreciation, he considers it a mere happenstance to have been born in this part of the globe, or in its antipodes, or in any other.

This letter remained thus, three weeks ago, when I was struck by an illness during whose time Nuño did not leave my room; and doing for me the abovementioned task during the first days, he fulfilled it as soon as I was out of danger. During my convalescence, he read it to me, and I found it entirely in accordance with the idea that I myself had imagined; I remit it to you just as it passed from his hands to mine. During the time we correspond about these matters, do not lose sight of its being a necessary key to the knowledge of the origin of all the practices and customs worthy of the observation of a traveler such as I, who go through the lands I write about, and of the study of a wise man such as you, who sees the entire globe from your retreat.

"The Peninsula called Spain is only contiguous to the continent of Europe on the side of France, from which it is separated by the Pyrenees Mountains. It is abundant in gold, silver, mercury, iron, precious stones, mineral waters, cattle of excellent quality, and fish as abundant as they are delicious. This happy circumstance made her the object of the greed of the Phoenicians and other peoples. The Carthaginians, partly by deception and partly by force, settled there. The Romans tried to consummate their power and glory with the conquest of Spain; but they encountered a resistance that seemed as puzzling as it was terrible to the proud lords of the rest of the world. Numantia, a single city, cost them fourteen years of siege, the loss of three armies, and the tarnished reputations of its most famous generals, until the Numantians, reduced to the necessity of capitulating or dying due to the total ruin of the country, the small number of those remaining alive, and the

abundance of cadavers in the streets (not counting those which had served as fodder for their fellow citizens after running out of all their victuals), burned their houses, hurled their children, women, and old people into the flames, and went out to die on the level plain with their weapons in their hands. The great Scipio was witness to the ruin of Numantia, and thus cannot properly be called the conqueror of this city--it being worth noting that Lucullus, in charge of raising an army for that expedition, found no recruits to lead from among the Roman youth, until the same Scipio was called upon to inspire them to action.

"If the Romans knew the valor of the Spaniards as enemies, they also realized their virtue as allies. On the Romans' behalf, Saguntum underwent a siege by the Carthaginians equal to that of Numantia; and since that time the Romans formed the high opinion of the Spaniards that one sees in its authors, orators, historians, and poets. But the fortunes of Rome, superior to human valor, made her mistress of Spain as in the rest of the world, with the exception of some mountains in Cantabria, whose complete conquest is not recorded in history, so that it cannot be clouded over in doubt. Long revolutions in this place not worth recounting brought from the North swarms of ferocious, greedy, and warlike nations who settled in Spain. But with the delights of this climate, so different from the one they had left, they fell into such a state of effeminacy and weakness that, in due time, they were the slaves of other conquerors who came from the South. The Spanish Goths fled as far as the mountains of a province today called Asturias, and scarcely had the time to rid themselves of the shock, to bewail the loss of their homes and

the ruin of their kingdom, when they sallied forth again under the command of Pelayo,[5] one of the greatest men whom nature has produced.

"From here, there opened a theater of wars that lasted nearly eight centuries. Several kingdoms rebelled against the ruins of the Spanish Gothic monarchy, destroying that which the Moors wanted to build in this land, awash in more Spanish, Roman, Carthaginian, Gothic, and Moorish blood than can be pondered over with horror by the pen that writes about it or by the eyes that see it written about. But the population of this Peninsula was such that, after wars so long and bloody, it still had twenty million inhabitants. Many quite different provinces were incorporated into two kingdoms, that of Castille and that of Aragon, and both of them in the marriage of Fernando and Isabel,[6] sovereigns who must seem to be immortals among those who know what is governance. The reform of abuses, the fostering of the sciences, the humbling of the haughty, the protection of agriculture, and other similar actions, shaped this monarchy.

"Nature aided them with an incredible number of vassals renowned in arms and letters, and they would have been pleased at having left to their successors an

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[5] Pelayo: The Visigothic noble of Asturias who, according to legend, defeated the Moorish invaders in A.D. 718, in the battle of Covadonga, at the foot of the Holy Rock (Peña Santa), thus initiating the Spanish Reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula.

[6] Fernando and Isabel: Ferdinand and Isabella, known as the "Catholic Monarchs" (reigned 1479-1517).

empire greater and more lasting than that of ancient Rome (counting the newly discovered Americas), if they had succeeded in leaving their crown to a male heir. Heaven denied them this pleasure in exchange for the many others that it had granted them, and their scepter passed to the house of Austria, which squandered Spanish treasure, talent, and blood on things foreign to Spain, and earned for her the odium of all Europe due to the excess of ambition and power to which attained Carlos I,[7] until weary of so many felicities, or perhaps prudently aware of the vicissitudes of human things, he did not wish to expose himself to their reverses, and he left his throne to his son, Felipe II.[8]

"This sovereign was as ambitious and political as his father, but less fortunate, so that, continuing the projects of Carlos, he did not find the same successes, even at the cost of armies, armadas, and vast fortunes squandered in propagating his ambitious ideas. He died leaving his people extenuated by wars, made effeminate by the gold and silver of America, diminished by the populating of the New World, disgusted by many misfortunes, and desirous of rest. The scepter passed through the hands of three sovereigns little suited to managing such a great monarchy; and at the death of Carlos II, Spain was nothing but the skeleton of a giant."

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[7] Carlos I: First Hapsburg ruler of Spain, also elected as Carlos V, Emperor of Germany (reigned 1517-1555).

[8] Felipe II: Son of Carlos I (reigned 1555-1598), known as el Rey Prudente ("the prudent king"). Felipe II attempted unsuccessfully to invade England in 1558 with his Great Armada.

Thus far writes my friend Nuño. From this account you will probably infer, as do I: first, that this Peninsula has not enjoyed a peace that can be called such in nearly two thousand years, and that consequently it is a miracle that the fields have grass and the springs water (an evaluation that Nuño is in the habit of making when its present state is spoken of); second, that religion having been the motive of so many wars against the descendants of Tariq,[9] it is likely the reason behind all its actions; third, that the continuation of having arms in their hands has made them look scornfully upon commerce and mechanical industry; fourth, that from this same thing is born the exorbitant degree with which each noble in Spain glories in his nobility; fifth, that the numerous fortunes acquired in the Indies distract many from cultivating the mechanical arts in the Peninsula and from augmenting its population.

You will continue noting the further moral consequences of these political events in the letters that I shall write to you concerning these matters.

LETTER 4

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(The state of Europe, and in particular Spain, in this century.)

The Europeans of the present century are insufferable with the praises that

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[9] Tariq: Moorish commander who defeated the forces of Rodrigo, the last Visigothic ruler of Spain, in the battle of Guadalete, in A.D. 711.

they heap on the era in which they have been born. If you could only believe that they are correct, you would say that human nature made precisely a prodigious and incredible crisis of the complete seventeen hundred years of our new chronology. Each individual founds an immensely great vanity upon having had ancestors not only as good as he, but much better, and the entire generation abominates the generations that have preceded it. I do not understand it.

Still, my good disposition for learning is greater than their arrogance. Often and repeatedly, they have told me of the advantages of this century over the others, which has made me earnest to inquire into this point. I say again that I do not understand it; and I add that I consider it unlikely that they understand it themselves.

Ever since the epoch in which they date their culture, I find the same transgressions and miseries in the human species, and in nothing an increase in its virtues and comforts. The other day, at a rather numerous assembly, I said all this with my natural frankness to a Christian who was making a panegyric upon the age, and almost upon the very year, which had the felicity to produce him. He was shocked at hearing me defend the contrary of his opinion; and everything that I told him was in vain, in more or less the following manner:

"Let us not be deluded by appearances, and let us get to the substance. I believe that the excellence of one century above another should be measured by the moral and civil advantages which produce men. Whenever these may be better, we

shall also say that their era is morally superior to that which produced no such harmony, it being understood, in both cases, this advantage in the greater number. Granted this principle, which to me seems just, let us see now what moral and civil advantages your century of the 1700s has over the earlier ones. Regarding the civil, which are the advantages that it has? Of the arts that flourished in antiquity, a thousand have been lost; and those which have moved forward into our era--what have they produced in practice, however much they flaunt in speculation? Four Basque fishermen in small crude boats made in ancient times trips that are made today but rarely, and with so many and such precautions that they are capable of terrifying anyone who undertakes them. Of agriculture and medicine, it cannot be said without prejudice that they have achieved more successes in practice, although they offer so many in speculation.

"As to that which touches upon moral advantages, although appearances may favor our own day--in reality, what shall we say? I can only say with assurance that this century so felicitous in your opinion has been as wretched in experience as the earlier ones. He who writes history without flattery will leave to posterity a dreadful account of dignified sovereigns dethroned, very reasonable treaties broken, many countries quite worthy of love betrayed, matrimonial ties broken, paternal authority disregarded, solemn oaths profaned, the rights of hospitality violated, friendship and its sacred name destroyed, valiant armies surrendered through treason, and above the ruins of so many iniquities the raising of a sumptuous temple to the general disorder.

"To what have amounted these advantages, so boasted of by you and your colleagues? I grant you a certain apparent enlightenment that has dispossessed our century of the austerity and rigor of the past ones--but do you know for what purpose serves this mutation, this tinsel that glitters throughout all Europe and dazzles the less prudent? I firmly believe that it serves for nothing more than to confound the respective order, established for the good of each state in particular.

"The mixing of the nations of Europe has generally admitted the vices of each one and eliminated their respective virtues. From this it will originate, if it has not already originated, that the nobles of all the countries will have equal indifference toward their native lands, forming among all the others new nations separate from the rest, and distinct in idiom, dress, and religion, and that the people will be unhappy in the same degree, that is to say, in proportion to the nobles. The general decadence of the states will follow this, since some will be maintained only by the weakness of the others, and none of them by their own strength or vigor. The time that it takes for the parliaments to become exactly uniform will also be required for some nations to discern the ambitions of the others: and this degree of universal demolition shall seem to be a desirable system of security in the eyes of effeminate politicians; but the good ones, the prudent ones, those who merit this name, shall perceive that a short number of years will reduce all of them to a state of weakness which foretells a quick and horrible destruction.

"If some unknown and warlike nations disembarked at the two extremes of Europe, commanded by a few heroes from among those that a climate produces,

when the other breeds nothing but average men, I do not doubt that they would find themselves in the heart of Europe, having traversed and destroyed a most beautiful land. What obstacles would they find at the assistance of the inhabitants? I do not know if I should say this with laughter or with pity: a few shining and symmetrical armies, no doubt, but composed of slaves debilitated by their chains, and commanded by some generals in whom is lacking the principal stimulus of a hero, namely, patriotism. Do not believe that the number of fortified cities is a sufficient obstacle for halting similar eruptions. If luxury, indolence, and other such vices--the fruits of laxity in customs--were to reign, these would undoubtedly open the gates of the cities to the enemy. The greatest fortification, the most secure one, the only invincible one, is the one which is composed of the hearts of its men, not of the height of its walls or of the depth of its moats.

"What Spanish troops faced us on the banks of the Guadalete? How quickly, in proportion to their numbers, were they vanquished by our forefathers, tough, austere, and daring! How long and sad the time of their subjugation! How much blood spilled during eight centuries to repair the damage done to them because of their effeminacy, and to shake off the yoke that never would have oppressed them, if they had maintained the rigor of the salutary customs of their ancestors!"

The apologist for our century of was not expecting these arguments, much less the following ones, in which I brought all my remarks to bear upon his own country, continuing in the following manner:

"Although it is not all this way in various parts of Europe, can you doubt it in your own? The decadence of your country in this century is capable of demonstration with complete geometric precision. You speak of population? It has scarcely ten million souls, half the number of Spanish vassals of Fernando the Catholic. This diminution is evident. I see a few new houses in Madrid, and a few other large cities; but go out through the provinces and you shall see at least two thirds of the houses in ruins, with no hope of one day being rebuilt. You have a city in Spain which once counted fifteen thousand families, reduced today to eight hundred. You speak of the sciences? Two centuries ago, your nation was the most learned in Europe, as the French was in the past one, and the English in the present one; but today, on the other side of the Pyrenees, the men who are called scientists over here are hardly known at all. You speak of agriculture? This always follows the proportion of the population. Inquire of the elders of the common folk, and you shall hear lamentations. You speak of manufactured goods? What has become of the ancient ones of Córdoba, Segovia, and others? They were famous in the world, and now, these that have replaced them are very far from equaling them in fame and merit: which one definitely finds in their beginnings, with respect to France and England."

I was preparing to proceed into other areas, when the apologist stood up, quite annoyed, gazed around on all sides and, realizing that no one was maintaining his opinion, dawdled with the small bells of his two watches, and left, saying:

"That has nothing to do with the culture of the current century, its

excellence among all those of the past and future, and my felicity and that of my contemporaries. The point is that we dine more exquisitely, lackeys talk about religion, husbands and lovers do not challenge each other, and since the siege of Troy up until that of Almeida,[10] there has not been seen the production of anything so honorable for the human spirit, so useful for society, and so marvelous in its effects, as the sans pareille[11] cosmetic powders invented by Monsieur Frivolité on the Rue St. Honoré[12] in Paris."

"Well spoken," I replied, and I stood up to go say my prayers, adding one, and a very fervent one, that Heaven should spare my homeland from the effects of the customs of this century, if it consists of what this fellow was putting into his defense.

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[10] Almeida: In August, 1762, during the Seven Years' War, Spanish forces under the Conde de Aranda besieged and captured Almeida in northeast Portugal. After the war, Almeida was returned to Portugal in exchange for the return of Cuba and the Philippines to Spain by the British.

[11] Sans pareille: A well-known type of perfume mentioned frequently by Cadalso in his satiric work Los eruditos á la violeta (The Violet-Scented Pundits).

[12] Rue St. Honoré: One of the oldest medieval streets of Paris (named for the Saint-Honoré Church), situated in the first arrondissement (administrative district) in the heart of the city, and known for its elegant commercial establishments. The street was known by this name as early as 1241. The Rue St. Honoré played host to many important events of the French Revolution; during the National Constituent Assembly, the ultra-radical Jacobin Club gathered in the Jacobin Church on the street, and the cart carrying Maximilien de Robespierre to the guillotine on the Place de la Concorde on 28 July 1794 made a stop at a house on this street. Honoré (Honorius) is the patron saint of bakers and pastry chefs.)

LETTER 5

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Conquests in the Americas.)

I have read about the taking of Mexico by the Spaniards, and a summary of the historians who have written about this nation's conquests in that remote part of the world called America; and I assure you that everything seems to have been executed by the magic arts: discovery, conquest, possession, and dominion are as many more marvels.

Since the authors through whom I have read about this series of prodigious events are all Spaniards, the impartiality which I profess also obliges me to read what is written by foreigners. Then, I shall draw a middle argument between what say the former and the latter, and I believe that in this I will arrive at the most sound judgment. Since the conquest and dominion of that half of the world had, and still has, so much influence upon the customs of the Spaniards, who are presently the object of my speculation, the reading of this particular history is a necessary supplement to the general history of Spain, and an indispensable key for comprehending the various succeeding alterations in the political and moral state of this nation. I shall not enter into such a vulgar question as finding out if these new acquisitions have been useful, useless, or detrimental to Spain. There is no event in human affairs that cannot turn into harm or benefit, according to the manner in which prudence is managed.

LETTER 6

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Backwardness of the sciences for lack of protection.)

The backwardness of the sciences in Spain in this century--who can doubt that it proceeds from the lack of support found by its professors? There is a coachman in Madrid who earns more than three hundred pesos duros,[13] and a cook who founds legacies; but there is no one who does not realize that he will die of hunger devoting himself to the sciences, excepting those of pane lucrando,[14] which are the only ones that provide sustenance.

The few who cultivate the others are like the voluntary adventurers of the armies, who earn nothing and expose themselves to higher risk. It is a pleasure to hear them talk of mathematics, modern physics, natural history, international law, and antiquities and the humanities, and at times with more prudence than if they coined counterfeit money. They live in obscurity and die as they lived: considered superficial savants in the judgment of those who know how to lay down seventy-seven syllogisms in a row concerning whether the heavens are fluid or solid.

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[13] Pesos duros: Pieces of eight, the obsolete Spanish or Spanish American silver dollar, equal to eight reales.

[14] Pane lucrando: The reference here is to jurisprudence and medicine, university studies which offer more lucrative employment than those of philosophy and theology. Emilio Martínez Mata presents a detailed discussion of this in his edition of Cartas marruecas / Noches lúgubres, 113.

Speaking a few days ago with a scholastic savant holding many honors in his field, I heard from him this statement, on the occasion of an individual excellent in mathematics having been mentioned in the conversation:

"Yes, in his country many dedicate themselves to these little matters, such as mathematics, oriental languages, physics, international law, and other such things."

But I assure you, Ben-Beley, that if they gave awards to the professors, awards of honor or profit, or of both--what progress they would make! If only someone sponsored them, they would take great pains with their work without further positive stimulus; but there are no patrons.

So persuaded was my friend of this truth that, speaking about it he told me:

"In other times, way back when I imagined that it was useful and glorious to leave behind fame in the world, I labored over a work dealing with several aspects of literature that I had cultivated, although with more love than success. I wanted it to appear under the sponsorship of some powerful patron, as is natural with all apprentice authors. I heard a wealthy man say that all authors were mad; another that dedicatories in books were humbug; another that the man who invented paper should be disowned; another ridiculing those men who fancied themselves to know anything; another who insinuated to me that the work which would please him most

would be the lyrics of a tonadilla;[15] another who told me to meet with one of his own man-servants to discuss this subject matter; another who did not want me to speak; another who did not want me to answer; another who did not want to listen to me; and as a result of all this, I determined to dedicate the fruit of my diligence to the boy who brought water to the house. His name was Domingo, his homeland Galicia, his occupation I already mentioned. Consequently, I gathered these precious materials for formulating the dedicatory of this work."

And upon saying these words, Nuño took from his letter case some folded sheets of paper, put on his eyeglasses, approached the light and, after glancing through the sheets, began to read: Dedicatory to Domingo de Domingos, dean of the water-boys at the fountain of Ave María. My friend paused for a moment, and said to me:

"Look, what a Maecenas!"[16] He proceeded reading:

"Good Domingo, arch your eyebrows; put on a solemn demeanor; cough; spit; expectorate; ceremoniously take a pinch of snuff; yawn noisily; stretch out on this bench; begin to snore--while I read this, my very sincere and just dedicatory. What?--you laugh and tell me that you are a poor water-boy, a dolt, a plebeian and, therefore, a person little fit for protecting works and authors? Is this because it

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[15] Tonadilla: A light, popular song; a ditty.

[16] Maecenas: Roman statesman, patron of Virgil and Horace.

seems to you that, in order to be a Maecenas, it is necessary to be noble, rich, and wise? Look, good Domingo, for want of others, you are excellent. Who will deprive me of calling you, if I want to, more noble than Aeneas, more warlike than Alexander, more wealthy than Croesus, more beautiful than Narcissus, more wise than the seven of Greece, and all the other 'mores' that come to my pen? No one can prevent me from doing so, except for the truth; and this, you must know, does not tie the hands of authors; rather, they are in the habit of tying her hands and cutting off her legs, and snatching out her eyes, and covering up her mouth. Accept, then, this literary courtesy: let posterity know that Domingo de Domingos, of genealogy immemorial, water-boy from the most famous fountains of Madrid, has been, is, and shall be, the only patron, protector, and promoter of this work.

"Future generations, families of the coming centuries, foreign peoples, nations unknown, worlds not yet discovered--venerate ye this work, not for its small and trivial merit, but for the sublime, illustrious, excellent, distinguished, lofty, and never sufficiently applauded name, title, and noble qualities of my Maecenas.

"You, horrible monster, envy, fury so well depicted by Ovid, portrayed better only on the faces of some of my friends, gnaw with your very own black teeth your slanderous and rabid lips and your poisonous and slandering tongue; direct back to your infernal breast the envenomed spit that was going to give hideous movement to your slanderous mouth, more horrible than that of Hell, since this is only frightening to the wicked and yours is even more so to the good.

"Pardon, Domingo, this mouthful of things that the lofty felicity of your favor inspires in me. But who does not become vain when at the height of the wheel of Fortune? Who does not become conceited with the flattering breath of luck? Who from the heights of prosperity does not judge himself superior to those who, only a short time ago, found themselves on the bottom? You, yes you, whom I consider greater than many heroes who are not water-boys--does not your heart feel full of a noble pride when you arrive with your pitcher at the fountain, and everyone makes way for you? With what generous ardor have I seen your eyes light up when you receive this deference from your workmates, such worthy workmates! Deference you richly deserve for your gray hairs derived from going up and down the stairs at my house and others. Woe to yon fellow who resisted you, what a mighty blow your pitcher carried! If everyone opposed you, you would knock them all down with your pitcher and your fist, as Jupiter did to the giants with his thunderbolts. To the philosophers, it would seem to be ridiculous excess, this vanity (and that of other heroes of other classes). But--who are the philosophers? A few upright and amiable men, who wanted to make all men amiable, whose tongues are in unison with their hearts, and other similar absurdities. Return, then, the philosophers to their garrets, and let the ball of the world roll on through those airy realms of God so that, by dint of going around in circles, the few heads that are still firmly maintained will be made dizzy, and the whole world will be converted into a spacious lunatic asylum."

LETTER 7

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Failure in education of youth.)

In the Moroccan empire, we are all equally contemptible in the opinion of the emperor and in that of the common people. Or, to be more precise, we are all commoners, it being quite accidental the distinction between one individual and another for oneself, and with no hope of any for his children; but in Europe, there are several classes of vassals in the dominion of each monarchy.

The first consists of men who possess the inheritances of their fathers and for this reason leave to their sons considerable wealth. Certain professions are given up to these alone, and they enjoy with more immediacy the favor of the sovereign. After this hierarchy follows another of nobles less decorated and powerful. Its great number fills the employment of troops, armadas, tribunals, magistracies and others which the monarchical government is not accustomed to giving to the plebeians, except for some outstanding merit.

Among ourselves, everyone being equal, and dignities and possessions not being durable, there is no difference needed in the method of raising sons; but in Europe, the education of the young must be seen as an object of primary importance. He who is born in the lowest of the three classes, and who will spend his life in it, does not need studies, except for knowing the occupation of his father in the terms in which he will find himself working at it. Nowadays, he of the

second class needs other education, in order to hold the positions which he will occupy in time. Those of the first class are seen compelled to this very one with stronger obligation because, at the age of twenty-five, or earlier, they will govern their estates, which are quite vast, have at their disposal immense revenues, command military corps, meet with ambassadors, frequent the palace, and be the example for those of the second class.

This theory is not always verified with the necessary exactitude. In this century is noted some lack of this in Spain. Between laughter and weeping, Nuño related to me an episode that seems to come from a novel, in which is found, and evidently proves, this lack, so much more regrettable inasmuch as in it is proven the quick-wittedness of the talents of Spanish youth, particularly in some provinces; but before telling it to me, he laid out the following introduction:

* * *

Since a few days ago, I have been living in the world as though I were outside of it. In this regard, I do not know how many of us are receiving public education; and what is more, neither do I want to know. When I used to be a captain of infantry, I met frequently with people of all classes: I observed the same sad state of affairs and, wanting to remedy it in my sons, if God gave me any, I read, listened, meditated, and spoke much concerning this subject. I found differing opinions: some upon who was suited to a given education, some upon who was suited to another, and also some upon who was not suited to any.

* * *

But I remember that, whilst going to Cadiz, where my regiment was on garrison duty, I went astray and got lost on a hill. It was growing dark when I encountered a caballerete[17] almost twenty-two years old, of good bearing and presence. He was riding a gallant horse and wearing two fine pistols, breeches and a close-fitting jacket with dozens of silver buttons on the front, his hair in a white net, a summer cape which fell across the croup of his horse, a splendid white sombrero, and a purple silk neckerchief.[18] We greeted each other, as is common; and, asking him for the highway in that region, he answered that it was far away; that night was already upon us and it was preparing to thunder; that the hill was not very safe; that my horse was growing weary; and that, in view of all this, he advised and implored me to go with him to one of his grandfather's cortijos,[19] which was but a scant half-league away. He said everything with so much frankness and

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[17] Caballerete: A dandy, young gentleman, fashionable fellow. According to the Diccionario de Autoridades (1726-39), the word is the diminutive form of caballero (nobleman, knight or cavalier, gentleman): "El joven Caballéro mozo, que presúme mucho de serlo, aunque tenga poco con que ostentarlo" ["young man who very much thinks that he is a gentleman, although he has little qualification yet for boasting about it"].

[18] Wearing. . . .: Cadalso's description of the young dandy's attire depicts that of the majo, in this case that of the son of an upper-class family who is attempting to imitate the lower-class majo--not an uncommon occurrence in eighteenth-century Spain.

[19] Cortijo: Variously defined as a "country estate," a "cattle ranch in Andalusia," or a "plot of land with houses and accessories in southern Spain."

kindness, and urged it with so much persistence, that I accepted the offer. The conversation turned, according to custom, upon the weather and similar things; but in it the young man manifested a very clear natural learning in several sallies of quick-wittedness and felicitous penetration which, along with a most agreeable voice and very suitable way of gesture, showed in him all the natural requisites of an orator; but, of the artificial ones, that is to say, those that art teaches through study, there were none. Later on, we were coming off the hill when, unable to do anything but observe the beauty of the trees we had just seen, I asked him if they cut wood from them for the construction of ships.

"How should I know anything about that?" he responded promptly. "For that, my uncle the Comendador.[20] All day long, he talks of nothing but warships, fire ships, frigates, and galleys. Good heavens!--and how tiresome the good caballero is! Only 'rarely' have we heard from his mouth, a bit tremulous on account of his excess of years and his missing teeth, the battle of Toulon,[21] the

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[20] Comendador: A knight commander of a military order (such as Alcántara, Calatrava or Santiago).

[21] Battle of Toulon: On 11 February 1744, during the War of the Austrian Succession, a combined French and Spanish fleet under Admiral de la Bruyere de Court left the port of Toulon and headed south, attempting to break a two-year British blockade. The blockading British fleet under Admiral Thomas Matthews attacked immediately, since Matthews feared that the Franco-Spanish maneuver was designed to draw him out of position, allowing a troop convoy to reach Italy. The ensuing battle was indecisive, although the British suffered the most damage. Matthews was dismissed from the Navy for failing to obey official instructions for the battle.

taking of the ships La princesa[22] and El glorioso,[23] the arrangement of Lesso's ships at Cartagena.[24] My head is stuffed with Dutch and English admirals. Not for anything in the world will he cease praying every night to St. Elmo[25] for the seamen; and then follows a long-winded discourse on the dangers of the sea, upon which follows another about the loss of the entire fleet, in which the good señor escaped by swimming, and then a quite natural and worn-out digression upon the utility of knowing how to swim. Ever since I can remember, I never saw him correspond in writing with anyone else but the Marqués de la Victoria,[26] nor have I known him to be more grief-stricken than when he learned of the death of Don

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[22] La princesa: A Spanish ship of the line (battleship) carrying seventy guns which was captured by the British in 1740, renamed Princessa, and sold in 1784.

[23] El glorioso: A Spanish ship of the line carrying seventy-four guns which was captured by the British in 1747.

[24] Lesso's ships at Cartagena: From March through May of 1741 the Spanish Admiral Blas de Lesso successfully defended Cartagena de Indias in Nueva Granada (present-day Colombia) with three thousand men against a British force of twenty-eight thousand under Vice-Admiral Edward Vernon. Vernon, expecting a tremendous triumph, had impetuously struck medals commemorating his victory in advance of the battle. However, after losing sixty-five percent of his forces (fifty ships and eighteen thousand soldiers and sailors), he was obliged to withdraw in disastrous defeat. (George Washington's half-brother Lawrence participated in the attack, and later named his estate in Virginia in honor of his former commander: Mt. Vernon.)

[25] St. Elmo: The patron saint of sailors, St. Erasmus of Formiae (also called St. Elmo, the Italian name for St. Erasmus). St. Elmo's fire is an electrical weather condition in which a luminous plasma sometimes appears on ships during thunderstorms, awing sailors with its glowing ball of light.

[26] The Marqués de la Victoria: The commander of the Spanish fleet at the battle of Toulon.

Jorge Juan.[27] The other day, we were quite off our guard while eating; and when the clock struck three, he gave an enormous slap on the table, which should have broken it or his hand, and said, not without a great deal of choler:

"'It was at this hour, when the third English ship moved in close to those of us on La princesa; and, in truth, it was remarkably beautiful: a ninety-gun ship. And what a sailing vessel! I never saw its like. A senior officer was commanding it. If not for him, the other two might not have lived to tell the tale. But what can be done about it?--So many against one!'

"And at this point, he was struck by the gout that he has been suffering from since a few days ago, and which won us a moment of respite because, if not, he showed signs of going on recounting to us, one by one, all the seafaring episodes there have been in the world since Noah's Ark."

For a moment, the young fellow ceased disparaging an uncle so venerable, according to what he himself was saying; and upon entering a very flat field, with two small positions discernible a short distance from each other:

"An excellent field," I said, "for lining up seventy thousand men in battle!"

"For those things, my cousin, the cadet in the Guardias," answered the other

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[27] Don Jorge Juan: Jorge Juan y Santacilia (1713-73), Spanish mathematician, scientist, naval officer and mariner. Jorge Juan was given command of a corvette at the age of twenty-two, and participated in the expedition against Oran and in the campaign of Naples. He was a member of the famous expedition to Peru organized by the Academy of Sciences in Paris, which after nine years of observations determined that the earth is not perfectly round, but instead is oblate (flattened at the poles).

with the same ease as before. "He knows how many battles have taken place since the good angels defeated the bad ones. And that is not the half of it, since he also knows the ones that were lost, why they were lost; the ones that were won, why they were won; and why the ones that were neither won nor lost remained indecisive. He now spends an indescribable amount of money on mathematical instruments, and he has a trunk full of some 'maps,' as he calls them, and they are just a few ugly illustrations with neither faces nor bodies."

I endeavored not to speak to him more of the army or of the navy, and only said:

"It must not be far from here where the battle took place in Don Rodrigo's time, and was as costly as history tells us."[28]

"History!" said he. "I would be so glad if my brother, the canon of Seville, were here. I have not learnt it because, in him, God has given me a living library of all the histories in the world. He is a lad who knows what color garment King Don Fernando was wearing when he took Seville."[29]

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[28] It must not be far from here. . .: The Guadalete River is a small stream located in the Sierra de Grazalema at an elevation of about 1000 m, and running for 172 km into the Bay of Cadiz at El Puerto de Santa María, south of the city of Cadiz.

[29] King Don Fernando: St. Ferdinand III (1199-1252). He was King of Castile from 1217 and León from 1230. In 1231, he permanently united Castile and León, and in 1248 conquered Seville. He was canonized in 1671, and in Spanish is known as Fernando el Santo, San Fernando or San Fernando Rey. He was the father of Alfonso X, the famous patron of the arts and learning, who was called Alfonso el Sabio ("Alfonso the Wise").

We were now drawing near the cortijo, without the caballero having answered whatever question I put to him on any subject. My natural sincerity led me to ask him how they had educated him, and he responded:

"At my pleasure, from my mother and from my grandfather, who was a very old man who loved me as the apple of his eye. He died at around one hundred years of age. He had been a captain of lancers under Carlos II,[30] in whose palace he had been raised. My father very much wanted me to study, but he had too short a lifetime and too little authority to accomplish it. He died without having the pleasure of seeing me write. He had sought a tutor for me, and the business was moving along in earnest, when a certain little accident upset everything."

"What were your first lessons?" I asked.

"None," responded the youth. "I already knew how to read a romance[31] and play a few seguidillas.[32] For what does a caballero need more? My Latin tutor

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[30] Carlos II: The Habsburg King Carlos II of Spain (1661-1700) was unfortunately degenerated with an enormous misshapen head, a jaw which jutted out so far that his two rows of teeth could not meet and thus left him unable to chew, and a tongue so large that he could hardly speak. By the age of thirty-five, he was lame, epileptic and bald. His death in 1700 started the War of the Spanish Succession.

[31] Romance: A ballad or tale of chivalry drawing its inspiration from Spanish history and legend, from French chansons de geste, and from Greek and Roman stories. The Spanish romances are noted for their rhythmical sixteen-syllable lines and for their fascinating tales of heroism, honor, treachery and tragic love.

[32] Seguidillas: Flamenco songs and dances.

insisted in messing things up for me, but it went very badly for him, and turned out even worse. What happened was that some friends and I took part in a penning of bulls. The good teacher found out about it, and came following on my heels to thwart me. He arrived precisely at the moment when the cowhands were teaching me how the picador's lance is gripped. He could not have met his misfortune on a worse occasion. At the second word he tried to say, I gave him a most powerful blow with the lance, smack on his head, which I split open into more slices than an orange. Thank goodness I held myself back, because my first thought was to prick him with the lance the same way I would a ten-year-old bull; but, for the first time, I contented myself with the aforesaid. Everyone shouted:

"'Long live the señorito!'

"And even tío Gregorio,[33] who is a man of few words, exclaimed:

"'You did it, Your Lordship, just like an angel from Heaven.'"

"Who is this tío Gregorio fellow?" I asked him, astonished that the man approved of such insolence, and he answered:

"Tío Gregorio is a butcher from the city who is in the habit of accompanying us in eating, smoking, and gambling. Oh, how we caballeros around here love him so! On the occasion of my cousin Jaime María leaving for Granada and I for Seville, we had to draw our swords over which one of us took the fellow

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[33] Tío: Spanish for "uncle." It can mean "sir," as a title of respect for an elderly man. It can also mean "guy" or "fellow." Translate "tío Gregorio": "good fellow Gregorio" or "good old Gregorio."

along with him; and the matter might have ended there, if at that very moment the police had not arrested him on account of a few little knife-pricks or some such thing that he handed out in the market place, and other such trifles, all of which landed him in jail for a month."

Giving me an account of the character of tío Gregorio and other equal personages, we arrived at the cortijo. He introduced me to those there, who were his friends and relatives of the same age, class, and upbringing, and who had gathered together to go hunting. Waiting for the appropriate hour, they were spending the night gambling, eating, singing, and dancing--for all of which they were quite well provided--because some gypsy maids had attended, along with their venerable fathers, worthy husbands, and beautiful children. There, I had the felicity of meeting señor tío Gregorio. With his raucous and resounding voice, long side whiskers, round belly, rough manners, frequent oaths, and familiar ways, he stood out from all the others. His job was to make cigars, giving them already lighted from his mouth to the young caballeros, to tend to the lamps, to call out the name and merits of each gypsy girl, to keep time by clapping his hands whenever one of his most enthusiastic patrons was dancing, and to drink to their health with half-pitchers of wine. Knowing that I was growing tired, they had me eat supper, and took me to a somewhat secluded room to sleep, assigning a servant-boy to call on me and guide me to the highway.

To tell you the words and deeds of that august community would be impossible, or perhaps indecent. I will only say that the cigar smoke, the shouting

and hand clapping of tío Gregorio, the hubbub of so many voices, the noise of the castanets, the dissonance of the guitar, the screeching of the gypsy girls,[34] the quarrel among the gypsy men over which one had to play the polo[35] so that Preciosilla[36] might dance it, the barking of the dogs, and the loudness of those who were singing did not let me sleep a wink all night long. The time of departure arrived, I mounted a horse, saying to myself in a low voice: Is this the way young people are raised, who could be most useful, if only their education were equal to their talent? And, hearing me, an earnest man, who apparently disapproved of that way of life, said to me with tears in his eyes:

"Sí, señor."

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[34] The noise of the castanets, the dissonance of the guitar, the screeching of the gypsy girls. . .: This passage is, according to some, the first description of flamenco in Spanish literature.

[35] Polo: An Andalusian popular dance and song.

[36] Preciosilla: Preciosa is the name of Cervantes's gypsy girl in the Novelas ejemplares, in the tale "La gitanilla."

LETTER 8

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Nuño's new Castilian dictionary concerning proper and incorrect meaning of words.)

The odd nature of my friend Nuño's dedicatory to his water-boy Domingo, and the singularity of his character, born from the variety of things which he has undergone, caused me to importune him to show me the work--but in vain. I expressed another desire, which was that he at least tell me about it, seeing that he did not want to exhibit it to me. I asked him several questions.

"Is it about philosophy?"

"No, certainly not," he replied. "Because of the use of this term, it has become jaded. Judging by the diversity of men who are called philosophers,[37] I do not know what philosophy is. There is no extravagance which is not invested with that most sublime name."

"Mathematics?"

"Not at all. That wants a very continuous study, and I abandoned it from the beginning. To publish in quartos what others do in octavos, on parchment what

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[37] Philosophers: The French word for "philosopher" is philosophe, a term many French Enlightenment intellectuals applied to themselves, although few of them were first and foremost philosophers. They wrote for a broad educated public upon a variety of subjects, from art to current affairs, from education to politics. Many, such as Voltaire and Rousseau, promoted progress, tolerance and intellectual cooperation that crossed national boundaries.

others do on wood pulp, or to assemble a little of this, of another, and of that, is to label oneself a more or less accurate copyist, and not an author. It is deceiving the public, and earning money which becomes material that should be refunded."

"Jurisprudence?"

"Even less so. At the same time that the authors of this science have gone on multiplying, justice itself has gone on growing less clear. At this rate, any given new writer on law seems as delinquent to me as the one who violates the law. *It is as much a crime to comment upon them as it is to break them*. Commentaries, interpretations, glosses, notes, etc., are just so many other artifices of forensic war. If it were up to me, all new works upon this subject should be prohibited for the very same reason."

"Poetry?"

"Not that, either. Parnassus cultivates flowers which ought not be cultivated except by the hands of the young. The muses are not only frightened by gray hairs on the head, but even by wrinkles on the face. An old man is unseemly wearing garlands and myrtle and violets, inviting the echoes and birds to sing about the rigors and favors of Amarylis."

"Theology?"

"Not in the slightest. I worship the essence of my Creator; let others treat of his attributes. His magnificence, his justice, his goodness, fill my soul with reverence for worshiping him, not my pen with pride for trying to understand him."

"The State?"

"I do not pretend to it. Each kingdom has its fundamental laws, its constitution, its history, *its tribunals*, and knowledge of its strengths, climate, products, and alliances. From all this is born the science of government. Let them study it who will govern; I was born to obey, and for this it suffices to love ones king and ones country--two things in which no one has outdone me up to now."

"Well, then, what do you deal with in your work?" I pressed, not without some impatience. "It has to be about something. What other matter can be worthy of application and study? Do you undertake, perhaps, some moral work capable of reforming the human race?"

"Do not be vexed," he responded. "My work was nothing more than a Castilian dictionary in which was distinguished the original meaning of each word and the incorrect use that men have given it in its application. Either invent a new language, or recast the old one, because it is no longer good. I still conserve in memory the introductory preface which shows the true use of my dictionary; I said it, upon my honor, in more or less this way:

"'Introductory preface on the use of this new Castilian dictionary: I present to the reader a new dictionary, different from all those known until now. I am not intent on putting into it a thousand words more or less than in another; nor in ascertaining if a word is from Solís, or from Saavedra, or from Cervantes, or from Mariana, or from Juan de Mena, or from the Alfonso of the Partidas; nor in

knowing if this or another word comes from Arabic, from Latin, from Cantabrian, from Phoenician, from Carthaginian; nor in saying if a certain term is now antiquated, or is current, or newly admitted, or if a certain expression is low, middle or sublime; or if it is prosaic or if it is poetic. I do not undertake a work upon these things, but rather another less lucid to me, although more useful to all my fellow men. My intention is to explain frankly and openly the original, genuine, and real meaning of each word, and the misuse of it which has occurred, that is, its misapplication in civil discourse.'"

"'And what is the purpose of this work?'" says to me a señorito, wrapt in looking at the lace trimmings on the cuffs of his shirt sleeves.

"'So that no one is deceived,'" I reply, looking at him eye-to-eye, "'as I have been deceived, by believing that the verbs to love, to serve, to favor, to esteem, and other such ones do not have more than one meaning, it being thus that there are so many that do not have less than two. Where is found the patience for a poor fellow such as myself who, for example, says farewell to his family, leaves his village, comes to Madrid, is here for years and years, expends his wealth, goes up and down stairs, makes appointments for which he is kept waiting, embraces pages, greets porters, goes through illnesses, and at the end is worse off than when he came? And all because he did not understand a few clauses that he read in a letter received around Christmas time, but instead took literally that talk about "I shall look forward to our seeing each other here as soon as possible, since the particular

knowledge that we have in the Court of your appreciable individual qualities, abundant merit, the service of your ancestors, and your aptitude for discharging whatever duty, would be just reasons for gratifying you in the aspirations you wanted to initiate, concurring in me with other and greater obligations of serving you, for the particular favors that I owe to your noble parents (may they be in saintly glory) and the connections of my family with your own, whose life, in the company of your wife and mine, God save you for many and most felicitous years, as I desire and beg for. Madrid, such-and-such a day of such-and-such a month, etc. And then, lower down: B.L.M. de vuestra merced,[38] your most humble servant and devoted friend, who wishes to see you, Fulano de Tal."[39]

"'For the undeceiving, then, of the few remaining fools in the world capable of believing that words mean something, I composed this beneficial dictionary, so that not only should they not depend upon the deceptive meaning of the language, but also so that with this aid and a little practice, they can speak to each one in his own phraseology, too. If the public only knew the utility of this work, I would be encouraged to compose a grammar analogous to the dictionary; and it could be such a stimulus that I might determine to compose a rhetoric, a logic, and a metaphysics of the same nature: a project which, if it comes to be carried out, can certainly

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[38] B.L.M. de vuestra merced: A rhetorical flourish in the closing of a letter, meaning: "I kiss the hands of Your Grace." A more modern interpretation in English would be something like "respectfully yours."

[39] Fulano de Tal: "So-and-So;" "John Doe."

establish a new system of public education, and give me among all my fellow citizens more fame and veneration than Confucius acquired among his own for the moral precepts that he left them.'"

My friend fell silent, and we went out for our accustomed walk. I am convinced that the Christian is right, and that in all the languages of Europe there is the want of a similar dictionary.

LETTER 9

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Continuation of Letter 5, apologia of Cortés. Retaliation for declamations of foreigners.)

I have just read some of what is written by non-Spaniards about the conquest of America. If from the side of the Spaniards are heard nothing but religion, heroism, vassalage, and other words meriting respect, from the side of the foreigners are mentioned nothing but cupidity, tyranny, perfidy, and others no less dreadful.[40] I could not help but remark upon this to my friend Nuño, who told me that it was a subject quite worthy of fine discernment, judicious critical

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[40] [. . .] from the side of the foreigners are mentioned nothing but cupidity, tyranny, perfidy, and others no less dreadful: This a reference to the notorious leyenda negra ("black legend"), a term representing an unfavorable image of Spain, in which the nation was criticized for cruelty, rapacity and intolerance, especially during the sixteenth century. This negative portrayal was prevalent in the works of many non-Spaniards, particularly Protestant historians.

examination, and mature reflection; but that in the interim, and reserving for myself the right to form in advance the concept which seemed most fair to me, I should reflect for the time being upon the fact that only those countries which cried out so much about the cruelty of the Spaniards in America are exactly the same ones that go to the coasts of Africa, buy rational beings of both sexes[41] from their parents, brothers, friends, or victorious warriors, with no more right than the purchasers being white people and the ones purchased black people. They ship them off like beasts; they transport them for thousands of leagues, nude, hungry, and thirsty; they unload them in America; they sell them off at public market like donkeys, charging more for healthy and robust young men, and much more for the unhappy women with another fruit of misery inside themselves. They take the money, carry it back to their so very humane countries, and with the proceeds from this sale print books filled with elegant invectives, rhetorical insults, and eloquent affronts against Hernán Cortés for what he did. And what did he do? The following:

"I will take out my letter case and read to you something about that:

"1. Hernán Cortés accepts the duty of leading a few soldiers in the conquest of an unknown country, because he receives orders from the general under whose

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[41] [. . .] buy rational beings of both sexes: Compare Cadalso's early description of the evils of slavery, in 1774, with the fact that the newly born and "enlightened" nation of the United States did not even mention this subject in its Declaration of Independence (1776) or its Constitution (1789).

command he was serving. I see no crime here, but rather military subordination and incredible boldness in the undertaking of such an expedition with a handful of men so small that one does not know what to call it.

"2. He proceeds to his destination, notwithstanding the obstacles of his luck and competitors. He arrives at the island of Cozumel (horrible for sacrifices of human blood, which were frequent there), puts his troops in good order, animates them, and succeeds in extirpating those idols, whose cult was so cruel to humanity, bringing peace to the islanders. Up to this point, I believe, is revealed the character of a hero.

"3. He continues his voyage; he picks up a Spaniard captive among the savages, and with the help this one gave him based upon his knowledge of those languages, finds the first sign of his future successes, he and the others being led by that inexplicable chain of events that we Christians call Providence, *the materialists Chance, and the poets Luck or Fate*.

"4. He arrives at the Grijalva River, and has to fight in the water to facilitate the disembarkation, which he achieves. He wins Tabasco against valorous Indians. A battle ensues against a respectable army; he wins a complete victory and continues on his journey. The account of this battle gives cause for many reflections, all quite honorific to the valor of the Spaniards; but, among them, one is as obvious as it is important, that is to say: no matter how much one ponders over the advantage which was given to the Spaniards because of the astonishment caused

by this war apparatus never seen in those climes, of gunpowder, defensive weapons, and the use of horses, a great part of the glory must forever be attributed to the conquerors--due to the disproportionate number of the defeated, their skill at arms, their knowledge of the country, and other such advantages, which always endured, and even increased, whilst at the same time the shock which the first view of the Europeans impressed upon them diminished. The man who has better weapons, if he finds himself against a hundred who have nothing more than sticks, will kill five or six, or fifty, or seventy; but one of them will kill him, although they no more than take advantage of the weakness caused in him by handling his weapons, the heat, the powder smoke, and the milling around of the band of his enemies on all sides. This is the case of the few Spaniards against innumerable Americans, and this same proportion should be remembered in the account of all the battles that the great Cortés won in that conquest.

"5. From the same human weakness Cortés knows how to extract benefit for his aims. A noble Indian lady,[42] of whom he has become passionately fond, serves him as second interpreter, and is exceedingly useful on the expedition--the first woman who has not caused harm to an army, and a notable example of how useful the fair sex can be, provided that it directs its natural subtlety toward great and laudable goals.

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[42] A noble Indian lady: Doña Marina (Malinche), the famous Mexican woman by whom Cortés had a son (Martín Cortés).

"6. He meets the ambassadors of Montezuma, with whom he has discussions that can be a model for statesmen, not only American, but also European.

"7. He hears, not without some admiration, about the magnificence of Montezuma's empire, the account of which is doubtlessly calculated by the ambassadors to terrify him, the principal idea being the thought of yon emperor's power and, consequently, of the difficulty of the enterprise and the glory of the conquest. But far from availing himself of the idea among those peoples that he and his men are deities, he declares, with a magnanimity never heard of, that they are inferior to that species and that they do not go beyond the human. To me, this seems heroism unequaled: to wish to humble oneself in the minds of those who are going to be conquered (when in similar situations it is so advantageous to delude them), calls for a heart more than human. Such a man does not merit the names which are given to him by those who look with more envy than fairness at his deeds.

"8. Seeing the nature of the undertaking, the authority given to him by Governor Velásquez[43] seems insufficient, and he writes directly to his sovereign, telling him part of what he has carried out and is intending to carry out, and accepts

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[43] Governor Velásquez: Diego de Velásquez, the governor of Cuba, Cortés's immediate superior. Technically speaking, Cortés only had permission from Velásquez to explore Mexico, not to conquer it. Cortés had once been Velasquez's secretary.

the baton of authority which his very own men confer upon him. With exceeding prudence, he continues dealing with the American friends, enemies, and neutrals.

"9. He harvests the fruits of the sagacity with which he left his rear well guarded, having constructed and fortified Veracruz on the shores of the sea for this purpose, and as the place of disembarkation upon the continent of Mexico.

"10. His discovers with notable subtlety, and punishes with vigor, those who are hatching a conspiracy against his heroic person and glorious project.

"11. He leaves to posterity a heroic example: burning and destroying the armada in which he made his journey, in order to make return impossible, and places his men in the formal necessity of having to conquer, or die. A phrase uttered by many, and a thing done by few.

"12. He proceeds, conquering obstacles of all kinds, toward the capital of the empire. Knowing the importance of friendship with the Tlaxcalans, he initiates it after conquering the multitudinous army of that warlike republic in two pitched battles, preceded by the routing of an ambush of five thousand men. A friend of mine, versed in the military maneuvers of the Greeks and Romans, has noticed in this war against the Tlaxcalans all the variations of evolutions, stratagems, and tactics found in Xenophon, in Vegetius, and other authors of antiquity. Nevertheless, in order to diminish the glory of Cortés, it is said that his enemies were barbarians.

"13. He dismisses the political persuasions of Montezuma, who wanted to

separate the Tlaxcalans from the friendship of their conquerors. He enters Tlaxcala as an ally and a conqueror, establishes correct discipline in his army; and, in imitation of him, the Tlaxcalans establish it in their own.

"14. He punishes the disloyalty of Cholula; he arrives at the lake of Mexico, and then conveys his embassy to Montezuma on behalf of his king, Carlos.

"15. He makes his natural gifts admired among the wise men and nobles of that empire. But while Montezuma regales him with festivities of extraordinary luster and assembly, Cortés receives news that, with a large army, one of the Mexican[44] generals, under orders of his emperor, has fallen upon the garrison of Veracruz which, commanded by Juan de Escalante, had gone out to pacify those regions; and that, under the guise of festivities, a great multitude was preparing itself for the killing of the Spaniards, distracted by the false entertainment made for them. In this predicament, from which it seemed impossible to escape either by force or by human prudence, he forms a determination of them both which some superior genius inspires in the extraordinary souls. He arrests Montezuma in his own palace, in the midst of his court and in the center of his vast empire; he takes him to his quarters through the innumerable crowd of his vassals, astounded no less at seeing the misfortune of their sovereign than at the audacity of the foreigners. I do not know what name the enemies of Cortés will give to this boldness. I find no

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[44] Mexican: The original name (mexica) of the people known today as the "Aztecs" (a name not applied to them until the nineteenth century).

word in Castilian that expresses the idea it inspires in me.

"16. He uses the terror that this boldness spread throughout Mexico for punishing with death the Mexican general before his emperor, ordering the manacling of Montezuma during the performance of this incredible scene, the emperor denying that it is his order which gave cause to this event, an act that I understand even less than the previous one.

"17. Without spilling more blood than this, Cortés gets the same Montezuma (whose weakness of heart was increasing with that of his spirit, which was making him believe in certain traditions of his empire and family) to acknowledge, with all his vassals, Carlos V as his own successor and legitimate lord of Mexico, in attestation of which he hands over to Cortés a considerable treasure.

"18. He gets ready to go to Veracruz with the intention of awaiting the orders of the Court; and he receives news of some Spanish ships having arrived on the coast, with troops commanded by Pánfilo de Narváez, whose objective was to arrest him.

"19. He finds himself in the perplexing situation of having Spanish enemies, suspicious Mexican friends, the dubious will of the Spanish Court, the risk of not responding to the landing of Narváez, the danger of leaving Mexico--and, betwixt so many perils, he trusts in his fortune, leaving behind one of his subordinates with eighty men, and marches to the coast against Pánfilo. This one,

with double the number of men, attacks him in his camp, but is defeated and a prisoner at the feet of Cortés, in whose favor Fortune has just declared itself with the passing over to the side of the victor eight hundred Spaniards, eighty horses, with twelve artillery pieces, which was the entire army of Narváez: new forces that Providence places in his hands for completing his work.

"20. Cortés returns to Mexico triumphant, and upon his arrival learns that in his absence the vassals of Montezuma, outraged by the weakness and cowardice with which he had suffered the manacles placed upon him by the incredible boldness of the Spaniards, had attempted to destroy the Spaniards.

"21. From here begin the bloody episodes which cause so many declamations. Without a doubt, it is a horrible picture that is revealed, but take note of the whole set of circumstances:

"The Mexicans, seeing him return with this reinforcement, are determined upon the total annihilation of the Spaniards at all costs. From uprising to uprising, from treason to treason, killing their very own sovereign, and sacrificing to their idols the various soldiers of Cortés who had fallen into their hands, they place the Spaniards in the necessity of having to close their eyes to humaneness--and this for preserving their lives, and in natural self-defense of little more than a thousand against an incredible multitude of fiends (since into this the Indians had become). They filled the city with cadavers, combating more with a slaughter of enemies than hope of their own security, since in one of the brief truces which there were, a

Mexican said to Cortés:

"'For every man that you lose, we can lose twenty thousand of our own; and even so, our army will outlast yours.'

"An expression which, verified in fact, was capable of destroying almost any spirit not that of Cortés; and a plight in which no army in the world has been seen until now."

"In Peru, they were less humane," said Nuño, folding the paper, putting away his eyeglasses and pleased with the reading. "Yes, friend, I confess it in good faith, they killed many men in cold blood. But as long as I profess this impartiality, let those who call us barbarians reflect upon the picture I have made of the buying of Negroes, of which those same ones are guilty who are so much moved to compassion by the fate of the Americans. Believe me, Gazel, believe me, that if they told me to choose between dying among the ruins of my homeland in the midst of my magistrates, relatives, friends, and fellow citizens, and being transported with my father, wife, and children for thousands of leagues squashed together between the decks of a ship, eating beans and drinking putrid water, for the purpose of being sold in America in a public market, and afterwards being employed in the most arduous labor until death, hearing always the final moans of so many dying friends, countrymen, or companions of my fatigues--I would lose no time in choosing the fate of the first ones. To which you should add that, the slaughter of the Indians

having ceased so many years ago, such as it may have been, and the selling of Negroes continuing still, with no signs of ever ceasing--in the eyes of any impartial man are surely contemptible all those who tell us about and repeat this accusation, in verse or in prose, in serious or jocose style, in voluminous works and in single sheets: the continuous merchants of human flesh.

LETTER 10

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Laxity of customs.)

Polygamy amongst ourselves is not only authorized by the government but also expressly mandated by religion. Among these Europeans, religion prohibits it but I dare say that public custom tolerates it. This will seem strange to you; it seemed no less so to me. But not only the sight of it, since this usually deceives us by the appearances of things, but also the conversation of a noble Christian lady with whom I was present at a house the other day, confirms for me that it is the truth. The drawing room was full of people, all hanging on the words of a young man of twenty years, who had usurped with inexplicable authority the attention of the assemblage. If rapidity of style, volubility of language, a torrent of words, continuous movement of an elegant body, and majestic gestures formed a perfect orator, no one could be his equal. He was speaking a peculiar idiom; peculiar, I say, because even though all the words were Castilian, the phrasing was not. He

was discussing women, and the object of his harangue was reduced to making a show of his supreme disdain toward that sex. He grew quite tired, after having tired all of us. He pulled out his watch, and said:

"Now is the time--" and in a leap left the room. We were free from that tyrant of the conversation, and we began to enjoy the benefit of speaking, which I intended to do by natural right until experience taught me that there was no such liberty. Just as the young birds return at the end of the storm to the song in which they were interrupted by the thunderclaps, so we returned to talking with each other, and I being the most impatient, I asked the woman nearest to my chair:

"What sort of man is this?"

"What can I say, Gazel, what can I say?" she replied, her face filled with an emotion between shame and pain. "This is a new caste among us; a province newly discovered in the Peninsula; or to put it better, a nation of barbarians who are making a dangerous invasion into Spain, if their first successes are not cut short. It is enough for you to know that the epoch of their coming is recent, although the rapidity of their conquest and the duration of their dominion are astonishing.

"Until then, the women, a little more subordinated in treatment, were placed higher in estimation: old men, young men, and boys used to look at us with respect--now they treat us with indifference. Once upon a time, we were like the household deities that the gentiles guarded locked up inside their houses, but with

supreme veneration. Now we are like the god Terminus,[45] who was not guarded with doors and locks, but stayed out in the countryside, exposed to the irreverence of men, and even of the beasts."

*According to what I tell you, and the same thing which I refrain from mentioning to you, and the Christian lady said to me, you will infer that we Moslems do not treat the beautiful half of the human race worse. From what I have begun to see, I deduce the same result, and I am more supported in it with what I learned a few days ago from another young military man, undoubtedly the brother of the one I have just described in this letter. He asked me how many women composed my seraglio. I replied to him that, in view of the precise social position in which I find myself, and looking after propriety, I had always tried to maintain myself with some ostentation, and that therefore, among many whose names I scarcely know, I have twelve white women and six black.

"Well, friend," said the young man, "I, without being a Moor nor having a seraglio, nor putting up with the vexations which the governing of so many women entails, I can swear to you that, among those whom I take by assault, those who

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[45] Terminus: Terminus was the god of boundaries in Roman mythology. Stones that marked the borders between fields were considered sacred, with divine powers. The feast of the Terminalia was held annually on February 23, during which the people poured sacrificial blood on the stones and placed wreaths to renew the power of the stones. The god Jupiter, also known as Jupiter Terminus or Jupiter Terminalus, also protected borders. In Jupiter's temple on the Capitol, a stone was worshiped as the stone of Terminus. Boundary stones were so sacred that, according to Livy, anyone who removed one was cursed.

wish to capitulate, and those who deliver themselves to me without enduring a siege, I have my way with as many per day as you do in your entire life."

He ceased speaking, applauding himself with, in my opinion, an inopportune little laugh.

Now, friend Ben-Beley, eighteen women per day in the three hundred and sixty-five a year of these Christians, makes 6,500 conquests of the feminine gender by this Hernán Cortés. And counting with what this hero devastates only from the age of sixteen until that of thirty-three in similar exploits, we have to raise the total of his captives in the seventeen useful years of his life to the sum and quantity of 111,690, excepting a clerical error; and making a prudent calculation of those women he can capture in the remainder of his life with less audacity than in the energetic years, adding those who correspond to the days which are a fraction over the three hundred and sixty-five of the regular years in which they call them leap years, I can say that it turns out that the sum total reaches close to 150,000, an astonishing number which cannot be boasted of by any entire series of Moroccan, Turkish, or Persian emperors*.[46]

From this you will conjecture to be quite great the laxity of customs, which is without a doubt, but not total. There still abound matrons incapable of accepting

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[46] Moroccan, Turkish, or Persian emperors: The Oxford English Dictionary, defines the word "emperor" in its third meaning this way: "In a wider sense, as a title of sovereignty considered superior to that of 'king.' In the Middle Ages, and subsequently, the title was often applied to extra-European monarchs ruling over wide territories. We still speak of the Emperors of China, Japan, Morocco, and historically of the Mogul Emperors of India and the Emperor of the Aztecs."

a yoke as cruel as it is ignominious; and their example halts other women upon the same brink of the precipice. The powerless women still conserve the awareness of their own weakness, and profess respect for the fortitude of the others.

LETTER 11

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Courtesies. Familiarities: their usefulness and drawbacks.)

Until now, the rudimentary knowledge that we have had in Morocco of the society and social life of the Spaniards appeared very good to us, since they are quite similar to ours, and it being natural in men to appraise by this rule the merit of the others. Women kept under lock and key, quite reserved conversations of men among each other, conduct most serious, gatherings few (and those subject to a compulsory etiquette), and other customs of this tenor, were not so much the effects of their climate, religion, and government (according to what some want to believe) as much as monuments of our former dominion. In them are seen to remain relics of our rule, even more than in the buildings which continue to exist in Córdoba, Granada, Toledo, and other places. But the openness of these cheerful grandchildren of those solemn grandparents has introduced a certain universal friendship among all the citizens of the populace, and for the foreigners a certain hospitality so generous that, in comparison with ancient Spain, the modern one is a common family in which the relatives are not only all Spaniards, but also all men.

In place of those old brief marks of courtesy which they would say to each other the few times that they spoke, and that in passing and without stopping, if they came across each other; in place of those deliberate and calculated reverences depending on who, by who, and before whom they were made; in place of those ceremonial visits, which were returned with such and such motives; in place of all this has supervened a whirlwind of daily visits, continual impracticable reverences which no one takes seriously, tight embraces, and continual friendly expressions so long to recite that one little accustomed to them such as I must needs take five or six pauses for breath before getting to the finish. It is quite true that, in order to avoid this last obstacle (which it is, even to the most practiced), it is customary to take the middle course of pronouncing half of these long-winded speeches in a mumble--not without great danger of the complimented subject receiving insults instead of praises on the part of the one who compliments.

Last night, Nuño took me to a tertulia[47] (for such is called a certain number of persons who frequently gather for conversation). He introduced me to the lady

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[47] Tertulia: The word is described in the Diccionario de Autordidades (1726-39) as: ". . .la junta de amigos, y familiares para conversación, juego, y otras diversiones honestas" (". . .the meeting of friends and intimates for conversation, cards, and other modest diversions").

In 1770, Cadalso, was by then a friend of the author Nicolás Fernández de Moratín and a regular at the tertulia held in the Fonda de San Sebastián in Madrid, which was near the cemetery where Lope de Vega is buried. In some of the Moroccan letters which follow, he seems to be making references to this famous tertulia, of which he was a member, as well as quoting some of his real-life literary friends at their informal social gatherings.

of the house, for you should know that the husbands play no part in them.

"Señora," he said, "this is a noble Moor, a virtue which suffices for your receiving him; and upright, a moral quality sufficient for my esteeming him. He desires to become acquainted with Spain. He has entrusted me with providing him with all the means of doing so, and I present him to this amiable tertulia."

He said this gazing around the entire drawing room. The lady made to me one of those courtesies to which I have just referred, and the persons in attendance of both sexes repeated other ones. That first night, my conversation and mode of wearing European attire caused no small wonder, but after three or four more nights, I was as familiar to all of them as any of themselves. Some of the men visited me at my lodgings, and the women sent me their congratulations upon my arrival at this Court and offered me their homes. They spoke to me in the avenues, and received me without fright when I went to comply with the obligation of visiting them. The husbands, of course, live in a quarter distinct from that of the women, since in their homes I found no other men but servants and others such as myself, who were visiting. Those whom I met in the street or at the tertulia the second time were now my friends; at the third, the friendship was now ancient; at the fourth, the date had already been forgotten; and at the fifth, I went in and out everywhere without a living soul speaking to me, not even the doorkeeper who, because of the weight of his bandoleer and truncheon, did not find it convenient to leave the brasier and the porter's lodge for so frivolous a reason as that of a Moor entering the house of a Christian.

Even more so than with this example, the openness of the Spaniards is proven with the report of tables continually ready in Madrid for anyone who wishes to sit down to eat. The first time that I was at one of these gatherings, conducted there by Nuño, I thought we were in a public inn judging by the familiarities, although this was quite disproved by the magnificence of its ostentation, the delicacy of the table fare, and the illustriousness of the company. I said as much to my friend, manifesting to him the confusion I was in; and he, recognizing it and smiling, said to me:

"The master of this house is one of the principal men in the kingdom. It must come to two hundred pesos a year,[48] what he himself eats, and he spends a hundred thousand on his table. [49] Others are on the same footing, and he and they are vassals who give luster to the Court; and they are inferior only to the sovereign, whom they serve with as much loyalty as splendor."

I was entranced, as you would be if you were witness to what you are reading in this letter.

"All this is no doubt very good, because it contributes to making men more sociable each day. The continual association and openness mutually reveal hearts

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[48] Two hundred pesos a year: In the late colonial period, the Spanish peso was worth about .20 pounds sterling. A pound in 1776 would be worth about one hundred and sixty pounds in current money. In 2011 the pound is worth 1.63 U. S. Dollars. Thus, in 1776, two hundred pesos would have been worth roughly forty pounds. In modern currency, forty 1776 pounds would be worth approximately £6,400. This is equivalent to about $10,400 in today's US currency.

[49] In 2011 US currency, this would be approximately $10,400,000.

to one another; it makes them communicate to each other the current news and unites their dispositions."

I was speaking in this manner to Nuño, when I noticed that he was hearing with coolness that which I was pondering over with fervor. But, how it surprised me when I heard the following from him!:

"All things are good on one side and bad on the other, like coins which have heads and tails. This openness in association, which so much captivates you, is like a rose which has thorns very close to the bud. Without approving of the excessive rigidity of the sixteenth century, neither can I admit to so many advantages in the modern openness. Do you account for nothing the vexation suffered by the man who wants, for example, to take a solitary stroll one afternoon to distract himself from some sentiment or to reflect upon something important to him?--A convenience he probably achieved in the old days only by passing along without speaking to his friends. And by means of this openness that you praise, he finds himself surrounded by importunate people who assault him with a thousand insipidities about the weather, the coaches out in the avenue, the color of a certain lady's gown, the style of a certain man's livery, and other similar things. Does it not seem a vexation to you that which suffers the man who desires to shut himself up in his chambers one day to put his domestic affairs in order, or to devote himself to a reading which will make him better or wiser?--He must have done likewise in the old days, except on his saint's day or his birthday. And under today's custom, he finds himself with five or six successive visits from idle people to whom nothing

is important, and they do so only so they will not lose, through lack of exercising it, the sublime privilege of coming and going everywhere, without motive or intention.

"If we want to elevate the discourse a little: Do you think it a small vexation, born of this liberty, that a minister with his head full of arduous concerns has to expose himself--for let us call it that--to the speculations of twenty idlers, or spies, who on the occasion of a free table go to visit him at mealtime, and to observe what dish he eats, what wine he drinks, with which guest he familiarizes himself, with which one he speaks a lot, with which one a little, with which one not at all, and to whom in secret, to whom in a loud voice, to whom he takes well, to whom he takes badly, to whom in a middling manner? Think about it, reflect on it, and you will see. The lack of etiquette in today's treatment of women also seems to me to be a subject of little controversy. If you have not forgotten the conversation you had with a lady of no less judgment than virtue, you can infer that the old austerity of our sex used to redound to the honor of her own, although, I do not doubt, some of all that firmness was excessive, from whose extreme we have precipitated ourselves rapidly to the other. I can only recall the description which I heard my grandfather make many times about his love affairs, courting, and wedding, with she who was my grandmother.

"There was certainly some small strictness in the entire enterprise--but there was no part of it that was not a true crucible of the lady's virtue, of the beau's valor, and of the honor of them both: The coincidence of attending a soirée in Burgos; the

conduct of my enamored grandfather from that moment; the mode of introducing conversation, or declaring his love for the lady; her response; the mode of the gentleman's experiencing passion (and here the good old fellow would take pleasure in recounting the tournaments, fiestas, music, rivalries, and three campaigns he made against the Moors to serve her and to prove his constancy); the mode of her permitting him to ask for her from her parents; the legal procedures between the two families, notwithstanding the connection there was between them; and, finally, all the steps toward achieving the desired end--indicated that the lovers mutually merited each other. Certainly, my grandfather used to say, becoming exceedingly solemn, the wedding was on the verge of dissolution, because of the chance finding on that very street, although some distance from the house, on one morning after St. John's Eve,[50] some sort of rope ladder, several pieces of guitars, half of a lantern, apparently from some street serenade, and several other relics of a quarrel that there had been during the night before and had caused no small scandal--until all this disorder was ascertained to have proceeded from a band of young captains recently arrived from Flanders which was getting together on those nights at a gambling house in the neighborhood, in which was living a famous courtesan.

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[50] On one morning after St. John's Eve: On June 22 and 23, bonfires and fireworks light up the skies in Madrid for the celebration of the summer solstice in what is called the Hogueras de San Juan ("Bonfires of St. John"). St. John's Eve is also known as "midsummer night." June 24, St. John's Day, named in honor of St. John the Baptist, is traditionally a day to look for a lover.

LETTER 12

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Hereditary nobility.)

In Morocco, we have no conception of what around here is called hereditary nobility, so you would not understand me if I told you that, in Spain, not only are there noble families, but also provinces which are through inheritance. I myself, witnessing it, do not comprehend it. I shall put before you a practical example, and you will probably understand it less, as it occurs with me; and if not, then read:

A few days ago, I asked if the coach was ready, since my friend Nuño was ill, and I wanted to visit him. They told me no. At the end of half an hour, I asked the same question, and found the same answer. Another half hour gone by, I asked, and they answered the same. Shortly afterwards, they told me that the coach was ready, but that the coachman was busy. When I went downstairs, I inquired into what was occupying him, and he himself enlightened me, coming out to meet me and saying:

"Even though I am a coachman, I am a noble. Some of my vassals have come wanting to pay me their respects in order to take this felicity home with them. So for this they have detained me, but I am done with it now. Where are we going?" And upon saying this, he mounted the mule and brought up the coach.

LETTER 13

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Continuation of the same topic.)

Pressing my Christian friend to explain to me what hereditary nobility is, and after telling me a thousand things which I did not understand, he showed me prints which appeared to be of sorcery,[51] and figures that I considered to be the capricho[52] of some demented painter, and after laughing with me at many things that he said were respectable in the world, he concluded with these words, interrupted by more bellows of laughter:

"Hereditary nobility is the vanity which I found upon the fact that, eight hundred years before my birth, a man died who was named the same as I am named, and he was a useful man, even though I may be useless for everything."

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[51] Prints. . .of sorcery: Pictures showing the escutcheons (coats-of-arms) of various noble families.

[52] Capricho: The most famous examples of this art form are found in the series of eighty etchings by Goya (1797-98), many with aquatint. According to Janis Tomlinson in Francisco Goya y Lucientes: "More than a series, Los Caprichos offers a kaleidoscopic view of evil, encompassing prostitutes, clergy, imagined witches and goblins" (123).

LETTER 14

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Explication of the word "victory" according to Nuño's dictionary.)

Among the words that my friend desires to put in his dictionary, the word victory is one of those which needs more explication, since it is muddled in the modern gazettes.[53]

"Throughout the past war," says Niño, "I was reading gazettes and news periodicals, and never could understand who was winning or losing. The very operations in which I was involved have seemed like dreams to me, judging by reading the published reports that I have read, and I never found out when we ought to be singing the Te Deum or the Miserere.[54] What usually happens is the following:

"Two numerous armies give bloody battle to each other, and one or both are destroyed; but both generals pompously send reports of it to their respective courts.

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[53] Gazettes: A gazette is a newspaper, especially an official public journal published by a government. The term comes from the Italian gazzetta, which was a small Venetian copper coin used to buy early Italian newspapers. The London Gazette, which began publication in 1655, was one of the earliest English newspapers.

[54] The Te Deum or the Miserere: The Te Deum is an old Christian hymn of praise beginning Te Deum laudamus ("We praise thee, O God"). It is sung on special occasions, such as after a great victory or deliverance. The Miserere is from the 51st Psalm of the Bible (50th in the Vulgate) beginning Miserere mei, Domine ("Have mercy on me, O God").

He who gained the most advantage, no matter how small it may be, includes in his account the state of the enemy dead, wounded, and captured, and the cannons, artillery flags, standards, kettledrums, and wagons taken. The victory is announced in his court with the Te Deum, bells, decorative lights, etc. The other assures that it was not a battle, but rather a short skirmish of little or no importance; that, notwithstanding the great superiority of the enemy, he did not refuse the action; that the king's troops performed marvels; that the operation came to a halt at the end of the day and that, not trusting his army to the darkness of the night, he drew back in good order. At his court, the Te Deum is also sung and rockets are fired. And everything remains problematical, except for the deaths of twenty thousand men, which occasions that of so many other orphaned children, decrepit fathers, widowed mothers, etc."

LETTER 15

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Each one scorns the career he does not follow.)

In Spain, as in other countries of the world, the people of each profession depreciate those of the others. The soldier ridicules the scholar, hearing him discuss utrum blictiri sit terminus logicus.[55] This one ridicules the chemist bent on

[55] Utrum blictiri sit terminus logicus: L. = "if blictiri is a logical term." Blictiri is a word invented by the Roman philosopher Boethius (ca. 480-524), who wrote his most famous work, De Consolatione Philosophiae, while in prison.

finding the Philosopher's Stone.[56] This one laughs at the soldier who frets that the trimming of his jacket is three inches wide, and not three and a half. What must we infer from all this?--That in all the human faculties there are ridiculous things.

LETTER 16

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Heroic history of Spain: Nuño's manuscript.)

Among the manuscripts of my friend Nuño, I have found one whose title is: Heroic History of Spain. Asking him what it meant, he told me to continue reading, and I liked the prologue so much that I copied it and am remitting it to you:

"Prologue: I do not find it strange that the ancient nations called demigods the great men who performed exploits superior to common human strength. In each

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awaiting execution. It represents words which mean nothing in themselves, but which can have meaning arbitrarily attached to them.

[56] Philosopher's Stone: In alchemy, the Philosopher's Stone was a legendary substance capable of the transmutation of base metals into gold or silver, as well as the creation of an elixir useful in rejuvenation and achievement of immortality. In spiritual alchemy, it was believed to bring enlightenment to its maker. Sometimes called the materia prima ("first substance"), it originated in the concepts of the eighth-century Islamic alchemist Geber, who believed that a metal could be changed by rearranging its basic qualities through use of a substance called al-iksir ("elixir"), which was a dry powder derived from a mythical stone: the Philosopher's Stone; the stone was believed to be composed of another mythical substance, called carmot. For a long time, the discovery of the Philosopher's Stone was the paramount goal in Western alchemy.

country have flourished in certain times some men whose merit has astounded the others. The fatherland, indebted to them for singular benefits, gave them applause, acclamation, and obsequies. No matter how little patriotism inflamed those spirits, the ceremonies became religion, the sepulcher an altar, the home a temple; and the great man came to be worshiped by the generation immediately following, this progress being so rapid that sometimes his very fellow citizens, acquaintances, and friends were taking up the censer and singing the hymns. The blindness of those peoples regarding the notion of deity multiplied their number. We, more instructed, cannot admit such an absurdity; but there is a great difference between this excess and the ingratitude with which we treat the memory of our heroes. Modern nations do not have enough monuments to the names of their illustrious men. If envy motivates those who today occupy the positions of those from former times, these fearing that their glory is eclipsed by that of their ancestors, they long to surpass them, the efficacy of the desire itself being sufficient to make their merit equal to that of the others.

"Of the nations which flourish today, the English is the only one which seems to adopt this maxim, raising monuments to its heroes in the very temple that serves as a pantheon for its kings--their system reaching such a extent that they sometimes render equal obsequy to the ashes of the heroes of their enemies, in order to enhance the glory of their own.

"Other nations are ungrateful to the memory of those who have graced and defended them. This is one of the sources of universal indolence, or of the lack of

enthusiasm of the modern generals. There is no longer patriotism, for there are no longer fatherlands.[57]

"The French and the Spanish abound in celebrated heroes, greater than many of those I see on the altars of pagan Rome. The reigns of Francis I, Henry IV, and Louis XIV have filled the annals of France with glory; but the French do not have as methodical a history of their heroes as they deserve, and as I should wish, since I have news only of the work of Mr. Perrault, and it treats only the illustrious men of the last of the three reigns that I have mentioned. Instead of filling Europe with such frivolous works as have spewed forth by the thousands in these latest years--how much more worthy they would be of themselves if they had only given us a work of this type, written by a great man from among those they still have in the midst of the great number of authors who do not merit such a name!

"This was one of the matters that I had undertaken," continued Nuño, "when I had some ideas quite opposed to those of quietude and rest which now occupy me. I endeavored to write an heroic history of Spain. This was an account of all the great men the nation has produced since Don Pelayo. In order to lay the foundation of this work, I had to read our histories with consummate care, the general ones as well as the particular ones; and I swear to you that each book was a mine whose abundance filled me with pride. The large number of them created the great

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[57] There is no longer patriotism, for there are no longer fatherlands: This is a pun which does not translate into a pun in English: "Patriotism" comes from the word for "fatherland" (patria in Spanish).

difficulty of the enterprise, since all of them might have filled an enormous volume, and few of them had been difficult to select. Among those celebrated men, if some preference is possible which does not wrong those who are excluded, were standing out as excellent subjects, after Don Pelayo, liberator of his country: Don Ramiro, the father of his vassals; Peláez de Correa, the scourge of the Moors; Alonso Pérez de Guzmán, the prototype of loyalty; Cid Ruy Díaz, the restorer of Valencia; Fernando III, the conqueror of Seville; Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, the enviable vassal; Hernán Cortés, a hero greater than those in fable; Leiva, Pescara and Basto,[58] the victors at Pavia; and Álvaro de Bazán,[59] fortune's favorite.

"What a glorious project it would be to raise statues, monuments, and

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[58] Leiva, Pescara and Basto: Antonio de Leiva; Fernando Francisco de Ávalos, marqués de Pescara; and Alonso de Ávalos, marqués del Vasto, were three famous Spanish military commanders in the sixteenth century. On the morning of 24 February 1525, French and Spanish armies in Italy fought each other in the Battle of Pavia, the decisive engagement of the Italian War of 1521-26. After the four-hour battle was won by the Spaniards, the French commander King Francis I was captured, imprisoned and later was obliged to sign the humiliating Treaty of Madrid, which secured Spanish ascendancy in Italy. Leiva (1480-1536) was commander of the Spanish garrison at Pavia. Pescara (1489-1525), a general in the Spanish army, was chief commander of the Spanish forces in Italy. Basto (1502-46), the nephew of Pescara, succeeded his uncle in command of the troops of Emperor Carlos V.

[59] Álvaro de Bazán: The foremost Spanish naval commander of his day, Álvaro de Bazán, marqués de Santa Cruz (1526-88), was the first proponent and planner of the Spanish Armada which attempted to invade England shortly after his death. Bazán also directed the reserve squadron of thirty-five galleys at Lepanto, the greatest naval battle of the Renaissance. The five-hour engagement at Lepanto occurred on 7 October 1571; a decisive victory was achieved over the Ottoman fleet by the fleet of the Holy League (a coalition consisting of Spain, the Republic of Venice, the Papacy, the Republic of Genoa, the Duchy of Savoy and the Knights of Malta).

columns to these men, situating them in the most public places of the capital city with a short panegyric to each one, reciting the history of his deeds! What better adornment for the Court! What a stimulus for our youth, who would be raised from childhood within sight of such venerable reminders! To such strategems Rome owed, in great part, its dominion of the globe."

LETTER 17

Ben-Beley to Gazel

(Everything vexes us.)

From all your letters I have received until now, I infer that I would go stale in the tumult and glitter of Europe the same as I undergo in the seclusion of Africa, arid and unsociable, as you have called it since growing accustomed to the delights of Europe. Over time, we become weary of the manner of a woman who enchanted us at first sight. We tire of a game that we learned with longing. We are annoyed by music which in the beginning captivated us. We are surfeited by a dish that delighted us the first time. On the first day, the Court enchanted us; afterwards, it disgusts us. Solitude, which seemed delicious to us for the first week, afterwards causes us melancholy. Virtue alone is the thing which is more amiable the more we know and cultivate it.

I wish you to be sufficiently founded in it to praise the Supreme Being with rectitude of the heart; to tolerate the evils of life; to not become dazzled by

possessions; to do good to all, evil to none; to live content; to spread joy among your friends, sharing their griefs in order to alleviate the burthen of them; and to return safe and wise to the bosom of your family, which greets you most heartily with a vigorous desire to embrace you.

LETTER 18

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Lawsuits between fathers and sons.)

Today, I have a most puzzling observation to communicate to you. Since the first moment I disembarked in Europe, I have not observed a thing which has surprised me as much as that which I am going to share with you in this letter. All of the political events in this part of the world, no matter how extraordinary they may be, seem easier to explain than the frequency of lawsuits among close relatives, and even among sons and fathers. Neither the discovery of the East and West Indies, nor the incorporation of the crowns of Castile and Aragon, nor the formation of the Dutch Republic, nor the mixed constitution of Great Britain, nor the misfortunes of the House of Stuart, nor the establishment of that of Braganza, nor the culture of Russia, nor any event of this importance, surprises me as much as seeing the litigation of fathers and sons. On what basis can a son go to court against his father? Or on what basis can a father deny sustenance to his son? It is a thing that I do not understand. The wise men of this country have persisted in

explaining it, as has my understanding in rejecting the explanation, since all my ideas on paternal and filial love are turned upside-down.

Last night, I went to bed with my head full of that which I had heard upon this subject, and in a mad rush there occurred to me all the instructions I heard from your lips when you spoke to me during my childhood of the character of a father and the submission of the son. Venerable Ben-Beley, after raising my hands to Heaven, I shall cover my ears with them to block out the seditious voices of the young, who speak to me so disrespectfully of paternal dignity. On this point I listen to no more than the voice of Nature, so eloquent in my heart, and more when you accompanied it with your wise counsels. I shall not carry this European vice to Africa. I should consider myself more criminal than if I carried to my country the pestilence of Turkey. You shall see me upon my return as humble before your glance and as docile before your words as when you took me from the arms of my dying mother to serve as my father at the death of she who engendered me. *From now on, I shall hasten my return, so that I be not badly infected by so deceptive a thing, which becomes appetizing to the very one who suffers from it. I shall fly to your feet; I shall kiss them a thousand times; prostrated, I shall maintain myself without raising my eyes from the ground, until your benign hands take me to your breast; I shall venerate the image of my father in you; and God, from the height of His throne which, shining like the eyes of the ineffable angels...Here the manuscript is erased...If I looked at you with less respect, I believe that the Almighty Hand would hurl an irresistible ray that reduced me to ashes to the astonishment of the

entire globe, to whom my name would come to be an unhappy admonishment and of eternal memory.

What mockery the young Europeans would make of me if these lines fell into their impious hands! What foolishness would erupt from their insolent lips! What a ridiculous object I would be in their eyes! But even so, I would disdain the derision of the wicked, and I would draw away from them in order to maintain my soul as white as the milk of ewes*.

LETTER 19

Ben-Beley to Gazel.

(Reply to the previous letter.)

As the aroma of the flowers ascends to Heaven, and as the celestial choirs come to mingle with the warbling of the birds, so I have received the expressions of submission which your letter has brought to me, in which you abominate the disrespect of some European youths to their fathers. Hold yourself firm against such horrible principles, as the rocky crag holds out against the waves, and believe me that Allah looks with kindness, from the height of His throne, upon the sons who treat their fathers with reverence, since the others are openly opposing the establishment of the wise economy that shines in Creation.

LETTER 20

Ben-Beley to Nuño

(Character of the Spaniards.)

I see with supreme pleasure the diligence with which Gazel goes traveling through your country, and the progress that his natural talent is making with the assistance of your counsels. His reason alone would be far from useful to him without your direction, because it would serve more to deceive him. If fortune had not placed you in the path of this young man, Gazel might have squandered his time. What could be expected from his travels? My Gazel might have learned, and badly, an infinite number of things; his head would have been filled with hearsay, and he would have returned to his homeland ignorant and presumptuous. But even so, tell me, Nuño: Are many of the things true that he sends me concerning the customs and practices of your countrymen? I shall suspend judgment until seeing your reply. Some things he writes me are incompatible among themselves. I fear that his youth deceives him on some occasions and that he represents to me things not as they are, but rather, such as they appeared to him. Get him to show you whatever letters he remits to me, in order to see whether he writes to me accurately of what happens, or of what he imagines. Do you know whence originates this confusion and confidence of mine in asking you to fetch me out of it, or to at least impede its increase? It originates, Christian friend, it originates in his letters, which I copy with exactitude and am accustomed to reading frequently; and they represent

your nation as different from all others in not having a character of its own, which is the worst character that it can have.

LETTER 21

Nuño to Ben-Beley. Reply to the previous letter.

(Continuation of the same topic.)

It does not appear to me that my nation is in the condition that you infer from Gazel's letters, and according to what he himself has deduced from the customs of Madrid and some other major city. Allow him to write to you what he observes in the provinces, and you shall see how from them you deduce that the nation is the same today as it was three centuries ago. The multitude and variety of dress, customs, languages, and practices is the same in all the courts due to the presence of foreigners at them; but the interior provinces of Spain, because of their scant commerce, bad roads, and total lack of diversion, do not have an equal attendance, and produce today some men composed of the same vices and virtues as their quintos abuelos.[60] If the Spanish character, in general, is composed of religion, valor, and love for its sovereign, on one hand; and on the other, of vanity, contempt for industry (which foreigners call "sloth"), and too much propensity for love, if this collection of good and bad qualities used to compose the national

[60] Quintos abuelos: A quinto abuelo is the great-grandfather of ones great-grandfather.

character of the Spaniards five centuries ago, the same things compose that of the present ones. For each petimetre[61] who is always seen to be changing style because his wigmaker or tailor directs him to do so, there must be one hundred thousand Spaniards who have not altered their mode of dress one whit. For each Spaniard from whom you hear something tepid about the faith, there must be a million who will draw their swords if they hear talk of such matters. For each one who is employed in the mechanical arts, there must be an endless number who want to close up their shops in order to go to Asturias or to the mountains[62] in search of a patent of nobility.

In the midst of this apparent decadence of the national character are discovered from time to time certain signs of the old spirit; nor can it be any other way. Wanting a nation to keep only its own virtues, and to forsake its own defects in order to acquire in their place the virtues of foreign ones, is to feign a republic like that of Plato. Each nation is like each man, who has his good and bad attributes peculiar to his body and soul. It is quite reasonable to try to diminish the latter and to increase the former; but it is impossible to annihilate what is part of its

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[61] Petimetre: A corruption of the French petit maître, used to mock the affected imitation of French manners and fashions. The foppish petimetre was a stock caricature used in the sainetes of Ramón de la Cruz. In many ways, the petimetre, an imitator of foreign customs, is the opposite of the majo, who rejected them.

[62] The mountains: I.e., Cantabria. Cantabria is the northernmost province of Spain. The Cantabrian Mountains are located in the region of Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria and Castilla y León.

constitution. The proverb which says Genio y figura hasta la sepultura[63] is undoubtedly understood of men, much more so of a nation, which is nothing else but an entity of men, in whose group is seen the attributes of each individual. Nevertheless, I am of the opinion that true national moral qualities should be distinguished from ones which are not, but rather are the abuse or preoccupation of some, who are guided by ignorance or sloth. Examples of this abound, and their examination has made me see with much indifference things that other countrymen of mine know not how to observe without their tempers flaring. I shall give you some examples of the many that I could.

I hear affectionate and respectful talk of a certain most uncomfortable costume which is called "in the old Spanish style." The point is that the said costume is not in the old Spanish style, nor in the modern, but rather a costume totally foreign to Spain, since it was brought by the House of Austria. The collar is quite snug and almost like a vise; the thighs, tight-fitting; the waist, narrow and weighed down with a long sword and another much shorter; the abdomen, exposed by the contour of the frock; the shoulders, unprotected; the head, uncovered; and all this, which is neither good nor Spanish, is generally celebrated because they say it is Spanish and good; and it is applauded to such an extent that a play whose personages are dressed in this manner will probably take in, regardless of how bad

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[63] Genio y figura hasta la sepultura: An idiomatic expression meaning roughly "you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear" or "the leopard never changes its spots."

it may be, greater box-office receipts than some other one, regardless of how well it is written, if it lacks this ornament.

Aristotelian philosophy, with all its subtleties, banished now from the whole of Europe, and which has found asylum only in this corner of it, is defended by some of our old men with such meticulousness--and I was going to say, such faith--as the symbol of our religion. Why? Because they say it is a doctrine always defended in Spain, and that to abandon it is to tarnish the memory of our ancestors. This seems quite plausible. But you must know, wise African, that in this preoccupation are involved two absurdities, each one great. The first is that, the European nations having maintained peripatetism[64] for some time, and afterwards casting it aside for other systems less strident and more certain, our leaving it behind as well would not be an insult to our ancestors, since the French and English did not endeavor to insult their own in this matter. The second is that such a fabric of subtleties, precisions, transcendences, and other similar scholastic pastimes that have so much influence in other fields of study, have come to us from outside, since many a learned Spaniard complains of this, as much a friend of true science as an enemy of pedantic conceits, and exceedingly enlightened about what was or was not truly from Spain, and who were writing when studies in our universities were beginning to be corrupted by the scholastic method that had come from outside; the which can be seen very slowly in the apologia of Spanish literature, written by the

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[64] Peripatetism: The philosophy of Aristotle.

celebrated man of letters Alfonso García Matamoros,[65] a native of Seville, a teacher of rhetoric at the University of Alcalá de Henares, and one of the major men who flourished in our Siglo de Oro,[66] that is to say, the sixteenth century.

In the same way, some of our disabled soldiers cried out when the introduction of the maneuvers, evolutions, firing, and mechanical regimen of Prussian discipline was tried out in our army, saying: that this was a manifest affront to the Spanish army; that, without the oblique, regular, short, and double-time step, they had placed Felipe V on his throne, Carlos on that of Naples, and his brother in power in Parma; that, without officers brought into the divisions, they had taken Oran and defended Cartagena; that they had done all this and were prepared to do it with the former Spanish discipline; and that, therefore, it seemed nothing less than tyranny to get rid of it. But you must know that the said discipline was not Spanish, since at the beginning of the century there no longer remained memory of the famous and truly wise discipline which made the Spanish armies successful in Flanders and Italy in the time of Carlos V and Felipe II, and much less the invincible one of the Great Captain[67] in Naples; but rather, another equally

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[65] Alfonso García Matamoros: (1490-1550). The book referred to is Apologia pro adseranda hispanorum eruditione (published, 1769).

[66] Siglo de Oro: "Golden Age."

[67] The Great Captain: Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, the "enviable vassal" mentioned in Letter XVI, the Spanish general who distinguished himself in the service of Fernando and Isabel during the Italian Wars (1495-1498). In 1498, he expelled the French from Naples.

foreign one as the Prussian, since it was the French, and it was reasonable in those days to standardize our troops with those of France, not only because it was convenient for the allies to maneuver in the same manner, but also because the armies of Louis XIV were the pattern for all of Europe at that time, as those of Frederick are in our own.

Do you know the sad consequence that is obtained from all this? It is nothing else but that badly understood patriotism, instead of being a virtue, comes to be a ridiculous defect often harmful to the very same country. Yes, Ben-Beley, so small a thing is human understanding that, if one wishes to be a bit efficacious, he converts the nature of things from good to bad, regardless of how good they be. Very extreme economy is avarice; excessive prudence, cowardice; and precipitate valor, foolhardiness.

Fortunate you, who, separated from the hubbub of the world, employ your time in innocent occupations, and do not have to endure as much of the delirium, vice, and moral weakness as abounds among men, without the wise being able to scarcely distinguish which is vice and which is virtue, among the various motives that disquiet them.

LETTER 22

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Letters for announcing a wedding.)

As long as nuptial agreements are not entered into between persons of equal wealth, temperament, and birth, it seems to me that, if there were less hypocrisy in the world, the letters in which these ceremonies are announced to the relatives and friends of the families could be reduced to these words: "Because our family is poor and noble, we send our daughter to that of Creso, which is wealthy and plebeian;" or else to these: "Because our son is foolish, badly brought up, and wealthy, we ask for him the hand of N., who is discreet, well-brought-up, and poor;" or else to these: "Because the burden of three daughters in one family is unbearable, we send them to be the loving and the beloved of three men who neither know them nor are known by them;" or to other similar phrases, except, however, you cannot dispense with the customary courtesy of: "So that it merits your approbation, nothing to your liking is omitted from this contract," because this is a most essential clause.

LETTER 23

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Conclusions.)

In this country, there are men who have disputation for their occupation. Recently, I attended some assemblies of learned men which are called

Conclusions.[68] I know not what they are, nor what they said, nor if they understood each other, nor if they reconciled to each other afterwards, nor whether they maintained the rancor that they manifested before a multitude of people, from among whom not one man rose to calm them, notwithstanding the danger that they might cut each other to pieces, judging by the gestures and insults they traded; before, the nonpartisans were observing with great tranquility, and even with pleasure, the quarrel of the two adversaries. One of them, who had three yards in height, almost an equal amount of girth, powerful lungs, the voice of a giant, and frenzied manners, defended in the morning the proposition that a thing was black, and in the afternoon that it was white.

I pondered over it exceedingly; it seemed to be an effect of docility uncommon among learned men. But I became aware of my error when I saw that the same ones who in the morning had been arguing against each other with all their vigor, which was not scant, that the thing in question was black, were arguing against each other in the afternoon that the very same thing was white. A grave man sitting by my side told me that this was called defending a thing problematically; that the person who was displaying his problematic cleverness was a young man of many talents and great expectations; but that this was, as we might say, his baptism of fire, and that they who were combating him were men already

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[68] Conclusions: According to the Diccionario de Autoridades: "Theological, juristic, canonical, philosophical, or medical points or propositions, which are defended publicly in the schools."

inured to these contests, with fifty years of equal vexations, veteran soldiers, wary and battle-hardened.

"Seventy years," he said to me, "have I spent, and I have grown these gray hairs," he added, removing from his head a species of small black academician's cap, "attending these polemical discussions. But not once, in all the times that these questions have come up, have I seen them treated with the same tenacity as today."

I understood none of all this. I cannot comprehend what utility can be obtained from disputing the same thing for seventy years without the pleasure, not even the hope, of clarifying it. And, communicating this incident to Nuño, he told me that in his life he had disputed for two successive minutes because, in those human matters which are incapable of demonstration, such obstinate controversy is useless, since in man's vanity, ignorance, and preoccupation, all arguments remain indecisive, each disputant persisting in the conviction that his antagonist does not understand the question or does not want to confess himself defeated. I am of the opinion of Nuño, and do not doubt that you would be, if you heard the literary disputes of Europe.

LETTER 24

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Harm of persistence of plebeians in obtaining nobility.)

One of the reasons for the decadence of the arts in Spain is, undoubtedly, the repugnance all sons hold toward following the profession of their fathers. In London, for example, there is a shoe shop which has passed from fathers to sons for five or six generations, the wealth of each possessor increasing over that left by his father, until obtaining country houses and estates in the provinces, these estates being governed by the possessor from the small stool where he presides over the workers of his shoe shop in the capital. But, in this country, each father wants to place his son much higher and, if not, the son takes great care to leave his father much lower--with which method no family establishes itself in any definite guild among those which contribute to the general good of the realm through industry, commerce, and labor–endeavoring everything with an incredibly ardent desire to situate themselves, by this means or that, among the class of nobles, damaging the realm in which they would produce, if they worked. If their ambition to ennoble themselves were at least reduced to the desire for a life of repose and felicity, this political defect would have some moral excuse--but they usually work more after becoming ennobled.

In the same place where I lodge, there is a gentleman who has just arrived from the Indies with a considerable fortune. Anyone endowed with reason would

infer that, his money now obtained, the means for all the repose in the world, the indiano[69] would plan for nothing more than to enjoy that which he acquired through various means at a distance of many thousands of leagues. Certainly not, friend. He has communicated to me his plan of operations for his entire life, even though he may live to be two hundred.

"Now, I am going," he told me, "to seek entry into a military order;[70] then, a title in Castile; then, a position at the Court; with this, I shall seek an advantageous marriage for my daughter; I shall situate one son in some place, another somewhere else; I shall marry one daughter to a marquis, another to a count. Then I shall bring a lawsuit against a cousin of mine over four houses which are falling down in Vizcaya; afterwards, another against a second uncle over a sum of money left by one of my grandfather's second cousins."

I interrupted his series of projects, saying:

"Sir, if it is true that you have six hundred thousand pesos duros[71] in gold or silver, that you are now a full fifty years old and your health somewhat damaged by

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[69] Indiano: A person who has been to the Indies, and afterwards returns to Spain; a rich and powerful man (Diccionario de Autoridades). By implication, a Spaniard who has "struck it rich" in the Americas, and returns to Spain, to live as a wealthy gentleman.

[70] Military order: One of the orders of monk-soldiers (such as Alcántara, Calatrava or Santiago).

[71] Pesos duros: Pieces of eight, the obsolete Spanish or Spanish American silver dollar, equal to eight reales.

your travels and hardships--would it not be more prudently advisable to choose the most salutary province in the world, to settle there, to seek out all the comforts of life and spend in repose that which remains to you of it, to aid poor relatives, to do good for your neighbors, and to wait with tranquility the end of your days without bringing it upon yourself with so many projects--all of ambition and avarice?"

"No, señor," he responded furiously. "As I have won it, let others win it. Becoming well-acquainted with and defrauding the wealthy, taking advantage of the misery of some unfortunate family by meddling in its affairs, and to get filthy rich, these are the three aims a man like myself must achieve."

And, with this, he went out to speak with a throng of notaries, attorneys, agents, and others, who greeted him with the form of address that the legal profession designates for grandees of the realm--flattery which, naturally, will completely consume the fruits of his travels and vexation--and which were the foundation of his expectation and folly.

LETTER 25

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Difference in treatment of the same person in diverse periods.)

In my travels throughout different provinces of Spain, I have had occasion to pass many times through a place whose name I now forget. In it, I observed that the same person on my first journey was called Pedro Fernández; on my second, I

heard his neighbors call him Señor Fernández; on my third, I heard that his name was Don Pedro Fernández. This difference in style of address for the same man surprised me.

"No matter," said Nuño. "Pedro Fernández will always be Pedro Fernández."

LETTER 26

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Diversity of the provinces of Spain.)

From your last letter, I see how strange the diversity of the provinces which make up this monarchy seems to you. After visiting them, I find quite true the report Nuño had given me of this diversity.

In effect: the Cantabrians, understanding by this name all those who speak the Basque language, are a simple people of incredible probity. They were they first mariners of Europe, and have always maintained the fame of excellent seamen. Their region, although exceedingly rugged, has a most numerous population, which does not appear to diminish, even with the continual colonies that it sends to America. Even though a Basque be absent from his homeland, he always finds himself in it when he encounters fellow countrymen. They have such unity among themselves that the greatest praise one can have toward another is the mere fact of being Basque, with no more difference among several of them for obtaining the

favor of the powerful than the greater or lesser immediacy of respective locations. The seigniory of Vizcaya, Guipúzcoa, Álava, and the Kingdom of Navarra have such agreement among themselves that some people call them the United Provinces of Spain.

Those of Asturias and Cantabria have an utmost appreciation for their genealogy, and of the memory of having been that region which produced the re-conquest of all Spain, with the expulsion of our forefathers. Its population, more than enough for the niggardliness and austerity of the land, ensures that a considerable number of them are continually employed in the capital of Spain as pages, which is a class inferior to servants. Thus, if I were in Madrid with a coach, I would examine most prudently the papers of my coachmen and lackeys, so as not to have someday the mortification of seeing a cousin of mine tossing barley to my mules, or one of my uncles cleaning my shoes. In spite of all this, several respectable families of this province maintain themselves with the proper splendor, deserving the greatest consideration, and continually produce officers of exceptional merit in the army and navy.

The Galicians, in the midst of the poverty of their land, are robust; they scatter throughout the Peninsula to undertake the hardest work in order to take home some ready money, at the cost of quite arduous industry. Their soldiers, although lacking that exterior polish of other nations, are excellent as infantrymen because of their subordination, toughness of body, and habit of enduring the discomforts of hunger, thirst, and fatigue.

The Castilians are, of all the peoples in the world, the ones who earn primacy in the line of loyalty. When the army of the first Spanish king from the house of France was devastated in the battle of Zaragoza, the single province of Soria gave the king a new army with which to go out into the field, and it was the one that won the victories from which resulted the destruction of the Austrian army and faction. The illustrious historian who relates the revolutions at the beginning of this century, with all the rigor and truth history requires for distinguishing itself from fable, overpraises the fidelity of these people so much that he says they will be eternal in the memory of the kings. This province still maintains a certain pride born of its ancient greatness, which is today conserved only in the ruins of its cities and in the integrity of its inhabitants.

Extremadura produced the conquistadors of the New World, and has continued to be the mother of distinguished warriors. Its people are little inclined to letters; but those among their number who have cultivated them have had no less success than their compatriots in the field of arms.

The Andalusians, born and raised in an abundant, delicious, and ardent region, are famous for being somewhat arrogant; but if this defect is true, their climate should serve them as an excuse, the influence of the physical over the moral being so notorious. The advantages with which Nature has endowed those provinces makes them look with contempt upon the poverty of Galicia, the harshness of Vizcaya, and the simplicity of Castile; however, there have been celebrated men among them who have given all Spain much honor; and in ancient

times, the Trajans, Senecas, and others like them, who can flatter the vanity of the country in which they were born. The liveliness, astuteness, and attractiveness of the Andalusian women makes them incomparable. I assure you that one of them would be sufficient to fill the Moroccan empire with confusion, so that we killed each other.

The Murcians have a share of the character of the Andalusians and the Valencians. These last are held by men of excessive fickleness, this being attributed to the climate and the soil, some claiming that even in the very foodstuffs is lacking that substance found in those of other regions. My impartiality does not allow me to surrender myself to this preconception, no matter how general it may be; rather, I must observe that the Valencians of this century are the Spaniards who make the most progress in the positive sciences and dead languages.

The Catalonians are the most industrious people of Spain. Manufactures, fishing, navigation, commerce, and provisioning the army are matters scarcely known to other peoples of the Peninsula in comparison with those of Catalonia. Not only are they of great utility during peacetime, but also during wartime. The casting of cannons, the manufacture of weapons, uniforms, and saddles and harnesses for the army, the conveyance of artillery, munitions, and victuals, the formation of light troops of excellent quality--all these come from Catalonia. The fields are cultivated, the population increases, the wealth grows and, in short, this people seems to be a thousand leagues distant from the Galicians, Andalusians and Castilians. But, solely dedicated to their own profit and interest, their

temperaments are not very tractable. Some call them the Hollanders of Spain. My friend Nuño tells me that this province will flourish whilst there is not introduced in it personal luxury and the mania of artisans for becoming ennobled: two vices which are opposed to the temperament that has, until now, enriched them.

The Aragonese are men of valor and spirit, honest, tenacious in their opinions, fond of the province, and notably inclined in favor of their own folk. In other times, they cultivated the sciences with success, and wielded arms with great glory against the French in Naples and against our forefathers in Spain. Their region, as in the rest of the Peninsula, was densely populated in antiquity and, to such a degree that it is a common tradition among them--and even, I believe, a point of their history--that at the wedding of one of their kings, ten thousand noblemen entered Zaragoza, each one with a servant, the twenty thousand of them riding an equal number of horses of that land.

Because of the many centuries that these peoples were divided, they waged war against each other, spoke different languages, governed themselves by different laws, wore different dress and, in sum, were separate nations, maintained a certain hate among each other which has, undoubtedly, lessened and even been extinguished.

But a certain lack of affection still endures among the distant provinces; and if this can harm in times of peace because it is a considerable obstacle to perfect union, it can be most advantageous in times of war, due to the desire to equal or

surpass each other. A regiment of all Aragonese will not look indiferently at the glory acquired by a troop of all Castilians, and a ship manned by Basques will not surrender whilst one full of Catalonians is defended.

LETTER 27

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Posthumous fame.)

All last night, my friend Nuño was talking to me of something they call posthumous fame. This is an illusion that has agitated numerous provinces and stolen the sleep of many persons, to the point of drying up their brains and causing them to lose their wits. It cost me some difficulty to understand what it was, but what I cannot comprehend, even now, is that there are men who hunger for such fame. A thing I will not enjoy; I know not why I should hunger for it. If after dying illustrious in the opinion of men, I should have to return to a second life, in which I derived benefit from the fame that the actions of the first merited, and if this were inevitable, it would be quite sensible to work in the present for the second one--a species of economy even greater and more plausible than that of the young man who saves for his old age. But, Ben-Beley--What good would it do me? What can be this desire that we see in some so efficacious in acquiring so useless a benefit? In our religion and in the Christian one, the man who dies no longer holds a temporal connection with those who remain living. The palaces he built will not

give him lodging, nor will he eat the fruit of the tree he left planted, nor will he embrace the sons he left behind. What good, then, do the sons, the orchards, and the palaces do him? Can this desire to leave a name to posterity be, perhaps, the quintessence of our pride? I suspect so.

A man who succeeded in attracting the consideration of his country or century realizes that he will lose the smoke of so much flattering incense from the moment he expires; he realizes that he will be equal with the least of his slaves. His pride suffers at this moment a dejection as great as was the sum of all the flattery received whilst he was acquiring fame. "Why will I not live eternally," he says to himself, "receiving the applause that I am going to lose? Words so agreeable--shall they not flatter my ears once more? The pleasing spectacle of so much genuflection before me--shall it no more delight my eyes? The crowd of those who need me--shall they turn their backs on me? Shall they now regard as an object of disgust and horror that which was for them a tutelary god, before whom they trembled with vexation, and clamored with piety?"

Similar reflections torment him at death, but his pride makes its last effort, and deceives him, saying: "Your deeds shall carry your name for ages to come, to the most remote posterity; your fame shall not be obscured by the smoke from the funeral pile, nor shall it be corrupted by the dust of the sepulcher. As a man, death shall embrace you; as a hero, you shall conquer her. She herself shall become the first slave of your triumph, and her scythe the first of your trophies. The tomb is a new birthplace for demigods such as you; in its vaulted chamber shall resonate the

praise sung to you by future generations. Your spirit shall be venerated by the sons of the living as was your presence among their fathers. Hercules, Alexander, and others do not live?--Can their names possibly be forgotten?" With these and other equal delusions is the man annihilated; many of this character infect the entire species; and some yearn to become immortal who were not even well-known in life.

LETTER 28

Ben-Beley to Gazel. Reply to the previous letter.

(Continuation of the same topic.)

I have read many times the account you give me of that species of madness they call the desire for posthumous fame. I discern what you tell me of the excess of pride, whence originates that folly of wanting to survive beyond oneself. I believe, as you do, that posthumous fame is of no use to the dead, but that it can serve the living with the stimulus of the example left by the one who has died. Perhaps this is the political reason of the applause that he attains.

In this supposition, no posthumous fame is estimable but that which is left by the hombre de bien. Let a warrior transmit to posterity the fame of a conqueror, with monuments for cities assaulted, ships burned, fields devastated, provinces depopulated--What benefits will his renown produce? The coming centuries will know that there was a man who destroyed half a million of his brothers--nothing

more. If anything else is produced from this inhuman piece of information, it would possibly be to inflame the tender breast of some young prince, to fill his head with ambition and his heart with severity, to make him abandon the government of his people and neglect the administration of justice in order to place himself at the head of a hundred thousand men who spread terror and weeping throughout all the neighboring provinces. Let a savant be mentioned with veneration for many centuries because of some discovery in the sciences--What benefit will derive from it?--to give cause for laughter to other later learned men, who will demonstrate that what he took to be a certainty is an error--nothing more. If anything else comes from this, it is that men grow conceited because of the little that they know, without considering the great deal that they do not know.

The posthumous fame of the good and the just has another, greater and better, influence in the hearts of men, and can cause superior effects in the human race. If we had devoted ourselves to the cultivation of virtue as much as to that of arms and letters, and if, in place of the histories of warriors and savants, the lives of good men were written with exactitude, such a work--How much more beneficial it would be! Children in the schools, judges in the tribunals, kings in the palaces, fathers in the bosoms of their families, reading a few pages of such a book, would increase their own kindness and that of their neighbors, and with the same hand would uproot their own wickedness and that of their neighbors.

The tyrant, when preparing to commit a horrible act, would pause at the memory of rulers who reckoned as lost the day of their reign which did not stand

out with some effect of benignity. What mother would prostitute her daughters? What husband would become the executioner of his wife? What insolent person would take advantage of the weakness of an innocent virgin? What father would maltreat his son? What son would not worship his father? What wife would violate the conjugal bed? And, finally, who would be bad, accustomed to seeing so many acts of kindness? The usual books of the world scarcely treat of anything other than vengeance, rancor, cruelty, and other like defects, which are the celebrated actions of the heroes whose posthumous fame we so much admire. If I had been one of these illustrious men centuries ago, and were to rise from the dead now to garner the fruits of the name that I left behind which still endures, I should much regret hearing these or similar words:

"Ben-Beley was one of the main conquerors who crossed the sea with Tarif. His scimitar left the Christian hosts as the reaping leaves the field in which there was wheat. The waters of the Guadalete turned red with the Gothic blood that he alone spilled. Many leagues of conquered terrain fell to his lot; he had them cultivated by many thousands of enslaved Spaniards. With the toil of as many more, the building of two sumptuous castles was ordered: one in the fertile fields of Córdoba, the other in delightful Granada; he adorned them both with the gold and silver that had fallen his share in the distribution of the plunder. A thousand Spanish women of singular beauty were occupied in his service and delight. Reaching a glorious old age, he was consoled by many sons worthy of kissing the hand of such a father. Instructed by him, they carried our banners as far as the

foothills of the Pyrenees, and they made their father the ancestor of a numerous progeny, which Heaven seemed to multiply for the total annihilation of the Spanish name. In these pages, in these stones, in these bronze statues, are recorded the deeds of Ben-Beley. With this lance, he ran through Atanagild; with this sword, he beheaded Endeca; with this dagger, he cut the throat of Wallia, etc."[72]

None of this would please my ears. Such words would make my heart shudder. My breast would part open like the cloud which hurls a thunderbolt. What different effects it would cause me to hear: "Here lies Ben-Beley, who was a good son, good father, good husband, good friend, good citizen. The poor loved him because he alleviated their misery; the high and the mighty also, because he had not the pride to compete with them. The foreigners loved him because they found in him proper hospitality; his own people weep for him because they have lost a living model of virtues. After a long life, spent entirely in doing good, he died not only tranquil, but happy, surrounded by sons, nephews, and friends, who cried repeating: 'He did not deserve to live in such a wicked world. His death was like the setting of the sun, which is glorious and resplendent, always leaving light to the stars which remain in its absence.'"

Yes, Gazel, on the day that the human race realizes that its true glory and science consist in virtue, men will look with tedium at that which now leaves them

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[72] Atanagild....etc.: The historical Atanagild was the king who established the Visigothic capital in Spain at Toledo in the sixth century. The historical Endeca was a king of the Suevians (another Germanic people); he ruled briefly in Galicia in the sixth century. Wallia was the king of the Visigoths from 415-19.

dumbfounded. These Achilles, Cyruses, Alexanders, and other heroes of arms, and their equals in letters, will cease being frequently mentioned; and the savants (who will then merit this name) will go on investigating at the cost of much diligence the names of those who cultivate the virtues that make man felicitous. If your journeys do not improve them in you, if the virtue which since childhood began to shine in your heart like the hue of a tender flower does not increase with what you see and hear, you shall probably return more erudite in the European sciences, or more full of barrack-room furor and enthusiasm; but I shall regard as lost the time of your absence. If on the contrary, as I beg Allah, your virtues have kept on growing whilst you approach your homeland, similar to the river that grows notably larger whilst it reaches the sea, the years that you have spent on your journeys shall seem to me like an equal number of years of life bestowed upon my old age.

LETTER 29

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Character of the French.)

When I first traveled through Europe, I informed you about a country they call France, which is beyond the Pyrenees. From England, I found the passage quite easy and brief. I inspected its northern provinces; I arrived at the capital, but could not examine it as I wished, the time that I was able to spend there being short, and there being much needed for executing it to advantage. I have now seen the

southern region, leaving Spain from Catalonia and entering through Guipúzcoa, trending toward Lyon on one side and Bordeaux on the other.

The French are as badly loved in this century as the Spaniards were in the previous one, undoubtedly because both centuries have been preceded by the respective glorious eras of each nation, which was that of Carlos I for Spain, and that of Louis XIV for France. The latter is the most recent; so that its effect is much stronger; but after closely examining the cause, I believe that I find much prejudice on the part of all Europeans against the French. I am aware that the licentiousness of its youth, the bad conduct of some who travel outside their country professing an utmost contempt for everything that is not French, the luxury that has corrupted Europe, and other similar reasons, cause repugnance in all its more moderate neighbors, that is to say: in the religious Spaniard, in the political Italian, in the haughty Englishman, in the avaricious Hollander, and in the harsh German--but the entire nation need not suffer opprobrium for the fault of some individuals.

During both tours that I have taken through France, I have found in its provinces (which always maintain more pure customs than in the capital) humane, courteous, and affable treatment of foreigners, not produced from the vanity resulting from being visited and admired (as can happen in Paris), but instead, truly originating in a frank and sincere heart, which finds pleasure in giving itself to the stranger. Not even within the capital, painted by some as the center of all disorder, confusion, and luxury, is there a lack of genuinely respectable men. All those who reach a certain age are, without a doubt, the most sociable men in the universe

because, the tempests of youth having disappeared, there remains to them the endowment of a sincere character, an extensive education (which in this country is common), and an agreeable exterior, without the shrewdness of the Italian, the haughtiness of the Englishman, the harshness of the German, the avarice of the Hollander, or the indifference of the Spaniard. After reaching the age of forty, the Frenchman transforms into another man, different from what he was at twenty. The military man engages in civil dealings with consummate urbanity, the magistrate with simplicity, and the private person with tranquility; and all of them with attentive manners toward the foreigner who is modestly presented at court by his ambassador, quality, talent, or other reason. All this is understood among the people in such a way that, with the average and common person, the mere fact of being a foreigner is a recommendation superior to any that a traveler can carry with him.

The same naturalness of the young people, insufferable to one not acquainted with them, has a certain something that makes them amiable. Through this is revealed all the inner man, incapable of rancor, lowly cunning, or harmful intention. Since I endeavor to investigate precisely the true character of things, and to not judge them by appearances, which almost always deceive, that bustle and impudence do not seem to me so odious, on account of what I have said. My friend Nuño is of the same opinion, notwithstanding the vexation arising from the fact that the French are not as equally impartial when they speak of the Spaniards. The other day, we were in a public gathering place where they serve coffee and chocolate,

with a young Frenchman of the type I have just described, and who certainly did not prove the portrait false in any way. Remarking upon those common defects of his youth, Nuño said to me:

"You see all that clamor, uproar, leaping, shouting, swearing, turning up his nose at Spain, speaking badly about Spaniards, and planning to kill all of us here? Well, let us wager that if any one of us stands up and asks him for his last peseta,[73] he will give it to him with a thousand embraces. How much more amiable is his heart than the one of that other stranger who has been making so many flattering comments about our nation, regarding the same things that we know to be imperfect! Listen to him, and you shall hear him say a thousand beautiful things about our roads, inns, carriages, spectacles, etc. He just said that it would be a great felicity to him to die in Spain, that he considers as lost all the years of his life that he has not spent there. Yesterday, he was at the play El negro más prodigioso.[74] How he praised it! This morning, he nearly tumbled down the stairs wrapped up in a cape because he does not know how to manage it, and he told us very mildly that it is a mode of dress most comfortable, stylish, and quite suited to his taste. I like my Frenchman more, who told us yesterday that he had read fourteen thousand Spanish plays and had not found even one fairly good scene.

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[73] Peseta: the monetary unit of Spain.

[74] El negro más prodigioso: a play by Juan Bautista Diamante (1674), noted by some for its illogical plot.

"Friend Gazel," added Nuño, "those French youth, with all their superficiality and impulsiveness, have always performed prodigies of valor in the service of their king and the defense of their country. Entire military corps of that very type you see form the nerve of the French army. It seems incredible, but it is incontrovertible that, with all the luxury of the Persians, they possess all the valor of the Macedonians. They have demonstrated it upon several occasions, but with singular glory in the battle of Fontenoy,[75] throwing themselves with swords in hand against a formidable infantry, composed of hard and warlike nations, totally routing it, performing then what their entire army could not achieve, filled with officers and soldiers of great merit."

From this you may infer that each nation has its character, a mixture of vices and virtues, in which the vices can scarcely be called such if in reality they produce some good effects, and these are seen only in practical incidents, which are usually quite distinct from those that were expected by means of mere speculation.

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[75] Battle of Fontenoy: a village in Belgium, near the Mons road. The battle referred to occurred in 1745, during the War of the Austrian Succession. The commander of the British contingent was the Duke of Cumberland, who in the next year earned the title of "Butcher Cumberland" when his forces defeated those of the Stuarts under "Bonnie Prince Charlie," the Young Pretender, at the Battle of Culloden, in Scotland. At Fontenoy, the French commander was Marshal Saxe. According to Winston Churchill, in A History of the English Speaking Peoples (Vol. 3, p. 129), Cumberland was outnumbered by nearly twenty to one by the French army.

LETTER 30

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Complacency of some who speak before those they consider ignorant.)

I notice that some men have a singular complacency in speaking before those they believe to be ignorant, as the oracles who would speak to the foolish and gullible common people. Even though it were my humor to speak a lot, I think that it would be a greater pleasure to me to feign stupidity and listen to the discourse of one who believes himself to be wise, or to utter from time to time some foolish remark, with which I would give great encouragement to his vanity and to my diversion.

LETTER 31

Ben-Beley to Gazel

(Liberty of civil dealings.)

From the letters I have received from you since you have been in Spain, and from those you wrote to me on other travels, I infer a great contradiction in the Spaniards, common to all Europeans. Each day they extol the liberty born to them from civil and sociable manners, they overpraise it, and are conceited about it; but at the same time, they are building for themselves the most distressing slavery. Nature imposes laws upon them, as upon all men; religion adds others for them; the nation, others; the career of honor and fortune, others; and, as if all these chains

were not sufficient for enslaving them, they spontaneously impose upon themselves many other precepts in civil and daily dealings, in the mode of dress, in the time to eat, in the species of diversion, in the quality of pastimes, in love and in friendship. But--what exactitude in observing them! How much greater than in the observance of the others!

LETTER 32

Ben-Beley to Gazel

(Selection of books.)

I have just finished reading the last of the books that you sent me during your European travels, this one making it several hundred European works from different nations and eras that I have read. Gazel, Gazel, you will no doubt regard what I am going to tell you as most absurd, and if you broadcast my opinion, there will be no European who will not call me a barbaric African; but the friendship I hold for you is too great to cease corresponding with my reactions to your observations, and my sincerity is such that, nothing can make my tongue betray my heart.

With this in mind, I will say that I have segregated the books I have referred to, in the following manner: I have chosen four on mathematics, in which I admire the extent and good judgment of human understanding when it is well-directed; an equal number on scholastic philosophy, in which I am astonished at the variety of

extraordinary witticisms men are capable of when they do not proceed according to certain and evident principles; one on medicine, lacking a complete treatise on the simples,[76] the knowledge of which is a thousand times greater in Africa; another on anatomy, the reading of which undoubtedly inspired the tale about the madman who imagined himself to be as fragile as glass;[77] two on reforming customs, in which I observe the many things still needing reform; four on the knowledge of nature, a science they call physics, in which I observe the many things which escaped our ancestors and the many things that our descendants need to learn; some on poetry, the delightful delirium of the soul--which proves ferociousness in the man who abhors it, puerility if he practices it all his life, and suavity if he cultivates it for some time. I have either discarded or shared out all of the other works, for being in my judgment useless extracts, defective compendiums, and imperfect copies of what has already been said and repeated a thousand and one times.

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[76] The simples: medicinal herbs or medicines obtained from herbs; called "simples" because each vegetable was believed to possess its particular virtue, making it a simple remedy.

[77] The tale about the madman who imagined himself to be as fragile as glass: "La novela del licenciado Vidriera," by Cervantes, from his Novelas ejemplares (1613). The protagonist, Tomás Rodaja, is served a "love potion" by a woman who tries to seduce him. Rodaja has a bad reaction to the potion, and then suffers from melancholy, which dries out his body. In this condition, he seems to be more imaginative and astute than usual, but is regarded by others as a madman because he imagines himself to be as brittle and fragile as glass, and cannot suffer to be touched by anyone. Eventually he is cured by a priest, who exorcizes him.

LETTER 33

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Tiresome conversations.)

In my travels throughout the Peninsula, from time to time I have come across letters from my friend Nuño, who resides in Madrid. I am sending you a copy of some of them, and I shall begin with the following one, in which he speaks about you without being acquainted with you:

Copy:

"Beloved Gazel: I expect that you are continuing your journey throughout the Peninsula felicitously. I do not find it strange that you tarry in Granada: it is a city full of antiquities from the time of your ancestors, the land is delightful, and its inhabitants are amiable. I continue living the life you know, and visiting the tertulia that you are acquainted with. I could frequent others--but for what purpose? I have lived with men of all classes, ages, and temperaments; my years, my humor, and my career oblige me to deal with and get along with various types of people in succession; military life, lawsuits, pretensions, and love affairs have made me enter and leave with frequency in the world. The difficult situations of all the events I have witnessed, either as an individual in a farce or as a member of the audience, have caused me to find tedium in the hubbub of people, danger in the lower spheres of the republic, and delight in moderately comfortable circumstances.

"Can there be anything more vexatious than the conversation of those who

weigh a man's merit by the gold and silver he possesses? These are the wealthy. Can there be anything more tiresome than the company of those who esteem a man, not for what he is, but rather for who were his ancestors? These are the nobles. Anything more vain than the gathering of those who scarcely call a man rational who does not know calculus or the Chaldean language? These are the savants. Anything more insufferable than the gathering of those who ground all the benefits of human understanding in assembling a collection of medals or in knowing the age of Catullus when he composed Pervigilium Veneris,[78] if it was his, or someone else's? These are the erudite. Nature has not entrusted to any concourse of these the common weal of men. Envy, rancor, and vanity occupy such hearts too much for them to have room for true joy, festive conversation, innocent jest, mutual benevolence, tokens of sincere esteem and friendship, in short, the source of all social good. This is found only among men who regard each other without competitiveness.

"Last week, I sent to Cadiz the letters you entrusted to me on the subject of that city, which you have asked me to direct to Ben-Beley. I shall also write to this elder, as you have requested. I await with great anxiety his reply, in order to confirm the concept you have caused me to form of his virtues, less for the account you have given me of them than for those that I see in your person. Moral gifts

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[78] Pervigilium Veneris: The Vigil of Venus, a celebration of spring, attributed to the early fourth-century poet Tiberianus.

whose origin can only be attributed in great part to his counsels and upbringing."

LETTER 34

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Planners of projects.)

I have seen the Christians of this century, with more rapidity than that with which the law of our prophet Mohammed overran Africa and Asia, spreading throughout their countries a sect of extraordinary men who are called project planners. These are peculiar characters who, without a patrimony of their own, endeavor to enrich the countries in which they are found, whether as natives, or as immigrants. Even in Spain, whose inhabitants have not ceased being at times too tenacious in conserving their old customs, there can be found several of these professional innovators. My friend Nuño was telling me, speaking of this sect, that he had never been able to look at one of them without laughing or crying, according to the disposition of humors[79] in which he found himself.

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[79] Disposition of humors: The quasi-psychological theories of the humoralism, derived from the theories of Hippocrates, Empedocles, Aristotle, Avicenna and others, were not toppled until 1858, with the publication of Rudolf Virchow's Cellular Pathology. In humoralism, man has four temperaments (choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic and melancholic) which are due to the excess of a humor (fluid in the blood: yellow bile, blood, phlegm or black bile) which rises to the brain. Through temperance and moderation, it was believed, one could maintain a healthy balance, or equilibrium, among the humors, and attain the "golden mean." At the other end of the spectrum was the mercurial person who, although quick-witted, was considered volatile and undependable, because he was subject to a wavering instability among all four humors. Excess humors were

"I am fully aware," my friend was telling a project planner yesterday, "I am fully aware that, since the sixteenth century, we Spaniards have lost ground whilst other nations have made advances in various arts and sciences. Long wars, distant conquests, the ambitions of the first Austrian monarchs, the indolence of the last ones, the division of Spain at the beginning of the century, the continual extraction of men for the Americas, and other causes undoubtedly checked the growth of the flourishing state in which the sovereigns Don Fernando V and Doña Isabel left this monarchy; so that, far from being on the footing in which those sovereigns could expect, in view of their wise government and the seeds for a group of great men which they had planted and left behind, Felipe V found his inheritance in a most infelicitous state: without an army, a navy, commerce, revenues, or agriculture, and with the vexation of having to abandon all ideas not related to war, enduring this almost without cessation in the forty-six years of his reign. I am well aware that, in order to make our country equal to other nations, it is necessary to sever a lot of rotten branches from its venerable trunk, to graft on new ones, and to give it continual fostering; but this is not why we must saw it in half, nor sever its roots--nor even less will you make me believe that, in order to give it its former splendor, it is sufficient to place on it artificial leaves and fruits. In order to make a building in which to live, an abundance of materials and workers is not enough; it is

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removed and the patient "cured' through such practices as bloodletting and leeching. Perhaps the most famous work related to humoralism is Robert Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy (1621), purportedly a medical textbook on melancolia (called "clinical depression" today); Burton's recommendation as the best "cure" for melancolia: laughter.

necessary to examine the ground for foundations, the temperaments of those who will inhabit it, the quality of its neighbors, and a thousand other circumstances, such as not preferring the beauty of the façade over the comfort of its way of living."

"The canals," said the project planner, interrupting Nuño, "are of such great utility, that the mere act of denying it would brand anyone as a blockhead. I have a project to build one in Spain, which will be called the San Andrés Canal, because it will be shaped like the crosses of that sainted martyr. From La Coruña, it will reach to Cartagena, and from the Cabo de Rosas to that of San Vicente. These two lines will be severed at Castilla la Nueva,[80] forming an island, to which shall be given my name, in order to immortalize the proto-project planner. On it, a monument shall be raised to me when I die, and all the project planners in the world will come on pilgrimage to ask Heaven to enlighten them. (Pardon a man desirous of posthumous fame for this short digression.) We now have, in addition to the civil and political advantages of this arch-canal, a geographical division of Spain, most conveniently done, into northern, southern, western, and eastern. I call southern the region comprised from the Island[81] to Gibraltar; western that which is contained

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[80] Castilla la Nueva: Since the death of General Francisco Franco in 1975, the name has been Castilla la Mancha.

[81] The Island: The Isla de Perejil ("Parsley Island") is near Ceuta, about two hundred yards off Morocco's northern coast in the Mediterranean near the Strait of Gibraltar. In Berber, the island is called Tura ("Empty") and in Arabic Leila (a distorted pronunciation of the Spanish "La Isla"). This rocky island, about the size of a football field, has long been a disputed territory between Spain and Morocco, in spite of the fact that it is uninhabited except for a few goats. Perejil was the subject of an armed incident in 2002 when Spain dislodged some Moroccan navy cadets who had occupied the island; as a result, Morocco agreed to return it to its

from the aforementioned place to the shores of the Ocean Sea[82] along the coasts of Portugal and Galicia; eastern that which extends to the Mediterranean through Catalonia and Valencia; and northern the fourth remaining region. Up to this point, the material part of my project.

"Now enters the sublime part of my speculations, directed towards the better efficiency of the given provinces, easier administration of justice, and the greater felicity of the towns. I want one language and a customary style of dress in each of these regions. In the northern, Basque will perforce be spoken; in the southern, closed Andalusian; in the eastern, Catalonian; and in the western, Galician.[83] The style of dress in the western shall be like that of the Maragatos,[84] neither more nor less; in the second, a tall Granadan montera,[85] a capote[86] with two folds and

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deserted status.

[82] Ocean Sea: "The vast body of water on the surface of the globe, which surrounds the land; the main or great sea. (Down to 1630, commonly ocean sea; before 1400 also sea ocean, sea of ocean = L. mare oceanum) [Oxford English Dictionary] In this Letter, Gazel is referring to that part of the Ocean Sea called the Atlantic.

[83] In the northern. . . .: This is what has been happening since Franco's death in 1975.

[84] Maragatos: the natives of a region called Maragatería, in the province of León.

[85] Montera: a bullfighter's hat.

[86] Capote: a topcoat or cloak; a military greatcoat.

adjusting in front; in the third, a Catalonian gambeto[87] and a pink cap; in the fourth, long white breeches, with all the rest of the accoutrements worn by Galician harvesters. Item:[88] in each of the said, cited, mentioned, and referred-to four constituent parts of thePeninsula, I want there to be its patriarchal Church, major university, captaincy general,[89] chancery,[90] intendancy,[91] casa de contratación,[92] seminary of nobles, poorhouse, naval department, treasury, mint, factories for wools and silks and linens, general customs office. Item: the Court will be moved around through the four regions according to the four seasons of the year, the winter

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[87] Gambeto: a quilted greatcoat.

[88] Item: "And furthermore" (Latin for "also").

[89] Captaincy general: the post, offices, or jurisdiction of a captain general. According to John M. Hill, in his edition of Palacio Valdes's La hermana San Sulpicio (New York: D. C. Heath and Company, 1925, pg. 162, note 30-31): "For the purposes of military administration Spain is divided into eight capitanías generales, the commanding officer of each of which is called capitán general. Andalusia is one of these eight military districts."

[90] Chancery: a high official invested with judicial powers, and particularly with the superintendence of all letters and official writings of a monarch; sometimes an office of public registry.

[91] Intendancy: the office of an intendant, a superintendent who has the charge, oversight, direction, or management of some public business.

[92] Casa de contratación: House of Trade. The original Casa de Contratación was created in 1503, during the reign of Carlos I and established in Sevilla, from where it directed all colonial commerce. It had dictatorial powers and was charged with the direction of voyages to the Americas and American trade, as well as with the settlement of lawsuits arising from those activities.

in the southern, the summer in the northern, et sic de caeteris."[93]

So great was the blather that the man kept on spouting about his project that his dry lips were suffering notable injury, like that noticed in the contortions of the mouth, the convulsions of the body, the rolling of the eyes, the movement of the tongue, and all the signs of genuine frenzy. Nuño stood up, to give no further encouragement to the ravings of the poor maniac, and simply said, by way of farewell:

"Do you know what is needed in each part of our four-part Spain? A lunatic asylum for the project planners of the north, south, east, and west." Turning his back on the other, he said to me: "Do you know the evil of this? The evil thing is that the people, spoiled by so many frivolous projects, are prejudiced against useful innovations, and these, received with repugnance, do not provide the good effects they would produce, if their spirits were calmer."

"You are right, Nuño," I responded. "If I were compelled to wash my face with turpentine, and then with oil, and then with ink, and then with tar, washing would nauseate me so much that, afterwards, it would not be pleasurable, not even in the most crystalline spring."

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[93] Et sic de caeteris: Latin: "and in the same way with the others."

LETTER 35

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Mutability of language in Spain.)

In Spain, as in all places, language changes at the same pace as customs; but, since words are inventions to represent ideas, it is necessary that words are invented to explain the impression made by newly introduced customs. A Spaniard of this century spends each minute of the twenty-four hours in things totally distinct from those in which his great-grandfather used to consume his time. This present-day Spaniard, consequently, does not speak a single word like those of his predecessor.

"If today they gave me to read," Nuño was saying, "a paper written by a gallant from the time of Enrique el Enfermo,[94] relating to his lady his sorrow at being absent from her, I would not understand a single phrase, regardless of its being written in excellent modern penmanship, even though it were from the best of the Escuelas Pías.[95] But in recompense--how disappointed one of my great-great grandfathers would be if he found, as happened to me a few days ago, a paper from my sister to her girlfriend, who lives in Burgos! Oh, Moor of mine, I shall read it to

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[94] Enrique el Enfermo: Enrique III ("el Doliente"), king of Castile (1379-1406).

[95] Escuelas Pías: the Scuole Pie, religious schools in Rome.

you, you must hear it, and if you understand it, you will consider me an eccentric. I myself, who am Spanish to the core, and who, if I must not boast of knowing the language of my homeland, can at least guarantee that I study it carefully--I myself did not understand half of what the letter contained. In vain I kept a copy of the said paper. Carried away by curiosity, I hurried to summarize it, and marking the most notable words and phrases, I took my new vocabulary from door to door, supplicating all my friends to lend a hand in the great enterprise of explaining it to me. Neither my anticipation nor their desire to aid me were sufficient. All of them were as baffled as I, no matter how much time they spent in consulting calepinos[96] and dictionaries. Only a nephew of mine who is twenty years old, who carves a hare, dances a minuet, and uncorks a bottle of champagne with more elegance than all the men born of women, was able to explain some of the words to me. Nevertheless, the date of the letter was from this very same year."

These reasons so moved me to wish to read the letter, that I begged Nuño to do so. Taking it from his letter case, and putting on his eyeglasses, he said to me:

"My friend, how do I know that, if in reading it to you, I do not reveal moral weaknesses of my sister and secrets of my family? I shall be consoled by the fact

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[96] Calepinos: Multilingual dictionaries. Ambrosio Calepino (c. 1440-1512), one of the earliest Italian lexicographers, compiled a multilingual dictionary (published in 1502) which incorporated several other languages besides Latin. His dictionary was so popular that his name came to be used as an ordinary word for "dictionary."

that you will not understand it. She says, in this manner:[97] 'Today it has not been day in my apartment until noon and a half. I had two cups of thé.[98] I put on a deshabillé[99] and a night bonnet. I made a tour in my garden, and I read nearly eight lines from the second act of Zaira.[100] Monsieur Lavanda came by, and I began my toilette.[101] The abbé[102] was not there. I ordered paid my modiste.[103] I passed into the salle de compagnie.[104] I was dried out all alone.[105] A few of the world came in;

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[97] She says, in this manner: This letter is a parody of afrancesados ("frenchified persons"). Nuño's sister uses a mixture of French words, and Spanish words used incorrectly because they sound like French words (false cognates). A successful translation into English should result in its being almost unintelligible.

[98] Thé: French for "tea."

[99] Deshabillé: a morning wrapper (partially dressed or in night clothes).

[100] Zaira: La Zaire (1732), a tragedy by Voltaire about the Crusades.

[101] Toilette: a word not found in the Diccionario de Autodidades (1726). From the French faire su toilette ("to dress or groom oneself").

[102] Abbé: Nuño's sister uses the Spanish version of this word (abate). Abbé is a French word for priest.

[103] Modiste: a dressmaker. (Nuño's sister uses the Spanish version of this word: modista).

[104] Salle de compagnie: Nuño's sister writes in Spanish sala de compañía, using compañía because its cognate in French, if used in the phrase salle de séjour, means "living room" or "parlor."

[105] I was dried out all alone: Translate this to: "I was bored to death all alone."

I played a round of mediator;[106] I threw the cards;[107] I played at piquete.[108] The maître d'hotel[109] advised. My new head chef is divine; he comes to arrive from Paris. The crapaudina,[110] my favorite dish, was delicious. I had coffee and liqueur. Another round of quinze; I lost my everything. I went to the spectacle;[111] the piece they have given is exécrable,[112] the small piece they have announced for Monday

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[106] Mediator: a game of Spanish origin (also called ombre, for the word hombre), played with forty cards by three players. It was popular in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

[107] I threw the cards: I dealt the cards.

[108] Piquete: In Spanish, the word means a group carrying placards with slogans. In French, it can mean the game of quinze, in which the goal is to accumulate cards that total as near to fifteen as possible, without exceeding it. Nuño's sister is using a false cognate in her attempt to sound French.

[109] Maître d'hotel: steward, or head-waiter.

[110] Crapaudina: a non-existent word in Spanish. Nuño's sister is apparently using the French word crapaudine and trying to make it sound Spanish. Usually chicken or pigeon, crushed and grilled.

[111] Spectacle: theater.

[112] Exécrable: horrible.

and Friday is quite gallant[113] but the actors are pitoyables;[114] the costumes, horrible; the decorations, sad. La Mayorita[115] sang a cavatina[116] passably well. The actor who does the parts of the servants is a bit excessive; otherwise, he would be passable. The actor who does the parts of the amorosos[117] probably did not play badly, but his figure is not prudent.[118] It is necessary to take patience, because it is necessary to kill time. I left at the third act, and I returned from there to home. I drank of lemonade. I entered my study to write this, because I am your véritable[119]

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[113] Gallant: Nuño's sister incorrectly uses the Spanish word galante ("gallant") because it sounds like the French word élégant ("elegant").

[114] Pitoyables: pitiable.

[115] La Mayorita: a soprano popular in Madrid in the 1770s.

[116] Cavatina: a short, simple aria.

[117] Amoroso: incorrect use of the Spanish adjective amoroso ("loving") because it sounds like the French noun amoureux ("lovers").

[118] Prudent: Niño's sister uses the Spanish word preveniente ("prudent") because it sounds like the French word prévenant ("agreeable").

[119] Véritable: Nuño's sister spells the word veritable, without an accent, but it is not a Spanish word. The French word (accented) means "veritable" or "real."

friend. My brother has not abandoned his misanthropic[120] humor; he still feels[121] furiously of the past century; I have never put him in a state of shining;[122] at this moment he wants to leave for his province. My cousin has left the young girl he was entertaining.[123] My uncle has given in the devotion; it has been in vain that I have attempted to make him understand the reason. Goodbye, my dear friend, until the next post. I cease, because they are bringing me a new dominó[124] to rehearse.'"[125]

Having just finished reading, Nuño asked me:

"What have you understood from all this? As far as I am concerned, I

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[120] Misanthropic: misántropo (noun), misantrópico (adjective), words not appearing in the Diccionario de Autoridades of Cadalso's time. Presumably, Nuño's sister is borrowing another word from French.

[121] Feels: incorrect use of the Spanish verb sentir ("to feel") because the French verb sentir means "to smell of." She apparently intends to say that her brother Nuño still looks, dresses, and thinks like a person of the last century = he is something of a "fuddy-duddy."

[122] Put him in a state of shining: been able to polish his manners.

[123] Entertaining: Nuño's sister incorrectly uses the Spanish verb entretener ("to entertain") because it sounds like the French verb entretenir ("to maintain or support").

[124] Dominó: a loose hooded cloak worn to conceal a person's identity at masquerades.

[125] Rehearse: Nuño's sister incorrectly uses the Spanish verb ensayar ("to rehearse") because it sounds like the French verb essayer ("to try on [clothing]").

assure you that, before humiliating myself by asking my friends the meaning of these phrases, I would have subjected myself to studying them, even though four hours in the morning and four in the afternoon for four months had been necessary. With that thing about noon and a half, and that it had not been day until noon, I was going mad, and the whole thing was causing me to gaze at the sun, to see if that star was presenting a new phenomenon. The phrase about deshabillé also vexed me, and I was vanquished. That about the night bonnet, or day, I could never comprehend what use it had on a woman's head. To make a tour may be a very well and good thing, but I suspend judgment until finding out. She says that she read some eight lines from La Zaire; felicitous that may be, but I do not know what La Zaire is. Monsieur Lavanda . . . she says he came; Monsieur Lavanda may be welcome, but I do not know him. She began her toilette, this I already understand, thanks to my nephew, who explained it to me, not without sufficient effort, owing to my dull intellect, laughing at the fact that his uncle is a man ignorant of what is toilette. He also told me the meaning of modiste, piquete, maître d'hotel, and other similar Frenchisms. What he could never explain, so that I might then grasp it well, was that about the head chef is divine. Also, that about to kill time, since time is what kills everyone, was something not easy for me to understand, although my interpreter spoke a lot, and undoubtedly quite well, about this particular. Another friend, who knows Greek, or at least says that he knows it, explained to me what misanthropic is, whose meaning I inquired about with consummate care, it being a thing which touched upon me personally. And to tell the truth, one of two things:

either my friend did not explain to me what it means, or my sister did not understand it; and both things being possible, and not middlingly but rather exceedingly possible, I feel myself obligated to suspend judgment for now, until having better information. The rest I understood so-so, using my wits here in my own way, and studying with patience, constancy, and effort.

"Of course," proceeded Nuño, "how would Count Fernán Gonzalo[126] have understood this letter, if in his time there were no thé, no deshabillé, no night bonnet, if there were no Zaire, no Monsieur Vandas, no toilettes, no modistes, no chefs being divine, no being acquainted with crapaudinas, no coffee, nor more liquids than water and wine?"

Here Nuño dropped the subject. But I assure you, friend Ben-Beley, that this changing of customs is most vexatious, even including the use of words, one of the greatest benefits endowed to us by Nature. These mutations being so frequent and so arbitrary, not a single Spaniard, regardless of how well he speaks his language this month, can say: Next month, I shall understand the language my neighbors, friends, relatives, and servants speak to me.

"All because of which," says Nuño, "my opinion and judgment, salvo meliori,[127] is that each year customs are set for the following one, and consequently,

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[126] Fernán Gonzalo: Fernán González, the first Count of Castile, and the subject of many ballads in the Romancero.

[127] Salvo meliori: Latin, meaning "but for a better opinion" or "but for greater wisdom."

the language is established which will be spoken during its three hundred and sixty-five days. But whatever way this change emanates in great part or in all from the caprices, inventions, and cupidities of tailors, shoemakers, valets, dressmakers, pastry cooks, cooks, hairdressers, and other individuals useful for the vigor and glory of our States, it would be advisable that a certain equal number from each guild held several meetings in which these abandoned customs were agreed upon. As a result of these respectable sessions, the blind men will sell, in the public streets, during the final months of each year, at the same time as the calendar, almanac, and piscator,[128] a paper which is titled, more or less: New Vocabulary for the Use of Those Who Want to Get Along With and Communicate With People of Fashion, for the Year Seventeen Hundred Odd and Following, Enlarged, Revised, and Corrected by a Society of Illustrious Men, With Portraits of the Most Renowned."

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[128] Piscator: Meteorological forecasts. According to the Diccionario de Autoridades,it is issued every year, and "It takes its name from an ancient astrologer of Milan, who issued his forecasts under the name of Piscator of Sarrabál, and which is distinguished today with the name of Piscator of Andalucía, of Salamanca, etc." Diego de Torres Villarroel (1694-1770), author of the popular semi-autobiographical, semi-picaresque novel Vida (1743-1758) gained fame as a diviner and astrologer through the publication of almanacs and prognostications under the name Piscator de Salamanca.

LETTER 36

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Antithesis: corruption of the current style.)

Dispensing with the corruption of language, resulting from that of customs, the most universal stylistic vice of our times is the frequent use of a species of antithesis, as that of equivocation was in the past century. In those days, an orator did not hesitate to utter a foolish remark of whatever class it might be, so as not to squander the opportunity to make a little puerile and ridiculous equivocation; nowadays, he runs the same risk to himself by employing a comparison, many times falsely. For example, in the year 1670, at the funeral oration of someone named, by chance, Fulano Vivo,[129] a panegyrist would say: "I come to praise vehemently the death of Vivo, who died for the world, and with moribund accents the life of the dead man, who shall live on the tongues of fame." But in 1770, a gazeteer who wrote about a Spanish expedition in America would not hesitate a moment in saying: "These Spaniards performed in these conquests the same deeds as those of the soldiers of Cortés, without committing the cruelties carried out by those men."

[129] Fulano Vivo: A living so-and-so; a living John Doe.

LETTER 37

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Obscurity of European languages, especially the Castilian.)

Reflecting upon the nature of the dictionary that my friend Nuño wished to publish, I see that, in effect, the European languages have become quite obscure and confusing. Spanish is no longer intelligible. The strangest thing is that the two adjectives good and bad are no longer used. In their stead, others have been placed which, far from being equivalents, can cause much confusion in common social intercourse.

One day, I was passing in front of a regiment in parade formation, whose appearance inspired terror. Officers of distinction and experience, veteran soldiers, weapons in fine condition, flags that showed signs of the bullets which they had received, and all the rest of the ostentation, truly warlike, gave the highest idea of the power of the one who maintained it. I marveled at the strength manifested by such a good regiment. But the people passing by were praising it for something else.

"What pretty officers!" a Christian lady was saying from her coach.

"Beautiful regiment!" said a general, galloping in front of the flags.

"What a gorgeous troop!" some were saying.

"Beautiful people!" others were saying. But not a single person said:

"This is a good regiment."

A few days ago, I found myself at a gathering in which they were talking about a man who delighted in fomenting discord in families, provoking lawsuits among his neighbors, scandalizing innocent maidens, and promoting all sorts of vices. Some people were saying:

"This man is deadly."

Others:

"What a shame that he does those things!"

But no one was saying:

"This is a bad man."

Now, I ask you, Ben-Beley--what do you think of a language in which they have done away with the words <u>good</u> and <u>bad</u>? What can you think of some customs which have made such a reform in the language?

LETTER 38

<u>Gazel to Ben-Beley</u>

(<u>Pride of the Spaniards.</u>)

One of the defects of the Spanish nation, according to the opinion of the rest of the Europeans, is that of pride. If this is so, the proportion in which this vice is observed among Spaniards is quite unusual, since it increases as the status of the

person diminishes, similar in some respect to what physicists say they have found in the descent of deep tones toward the center: a tendency which increases whilst the body that contains them dwindles. The king washes the feet of twelve poor men upon certain days of the year, accompanied by his sons, with so much humility that I, without understanding the religious meaning of this ceremony when I attended it, burst into tears. The magnates or nobles of the first rank, although they speak of their ancestors from time to time, are on familiar terms with even the humblest of their servants.

The less-elevated nobles speak more frequently of their connections, blood relationships, and kinships. Nowadays the caballeros of the cities are somewhat vexatious upon the subject of nobility. Before visiting a stranger or admitting him into their homes, they inquire into who was his quinto abuelo,[130] taking great care not to drop one point of this etiquette, even though it may be in favor of a magistrate of the highest merit and erudition, or in favor of a military man replete with wounds and services. The most important thing is that, although the outsider's origin may be of the most illustrious, it is always regarded as an inexcusable blemish not having been born in the city in which he chances to find himself, since as a general rule it is considered that there is not in the entire kingdom nobility like theirs.

All of the aforesaid pales in comparison with the vanity of a village

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[130] Quinto abuelo: the great-grandfather of ones great-grandfather.

hidalgo.[131] This type strolls majestically in the miserable plaza of his poor hamlet, muffled in his shabby cape, contemplating the coat-of-arms which covers the door of his partially dilapidated house, and giving thanks to Divine Providence for having made him Don Fulano de Tal.[132] He will not doff his hat in greeting (although he could do so without uncovering his face); he will not greet the stranger who arrives at the inn, even though he may be the general of the province or the president of its first tribunal. The most that he condescends to do is to ask if the outsider is of an ancestral house acknowledged by the fuero[133] of Castile, what his coat-of-arms is, and if he has relatives known in that vicinity.

But what will astound you is the degree in which this vice is found in the poor beggars. They ask for charity; if it is denied to them with the slightest asperity, they insult the very one they were just supplicating. There is a proverb around here, which goes: "The German begs for alms singing, the Frenchman crying, and the Spaniard reprimanding."

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[131] Hidalgo: A member of the lower-ranking nobility. The word is a contraction of hijo de algo ("son of somebody").

[132] Don Fulano de Tal: Don So-and-So; Don John Doe.

[133] Fuero: rules and privileges granted to a province or a city; similar to English common law.

LETTER 39

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Disorder of the world.)

One morning a few days ago, I entered the room of my friend Nuño before he rose from bed. I found his table littered with papers and, approaching them with the liberty that our friendship permitted, I opened a small notebook which had as its title Sundry Observations and Reflections. While I expected to find something middling at the least, I discovered that it was a labyrinth of unconnected subject matter. Right beside a most serious reflection upon the immortality of the soul, I found another about French dancing, and betwixt two relating to patria potestas,[134] one upon tuna fishing. I could do no less than wonder at this disorder, and even said so to Nuño who, without becoming irritated or doing anything more than suspending the action of putting on a stocking (the movement in which my remark caught him), replied:

"See here, Gazel . . . When I endeavored to write my observations upon

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[134] Patria potestas: in Latin, the legal concept of parental authority. Briefly, it meant the absolute and perpetual dominion of the Roman father over his children. In public life, the adult son of a Roman citizen was legally a person; in his father's house, however, he was legally nothing but a thing that his father could dispose of in any way he wished, as he did with his slaves and cattle. The Roman father could punish his children at his own discretion; he was even legally armed with the power of life and death over them. Nothing could exempt even the most illustrious citizen from the bonds of filial subjection: neither age, nor rank, nor the consular office, nor the honors of a triumph.

worldly matters and the reflections inspired by them, I, too, believed it would be fitting to arrange them in various orderly series, such as religion, politics, morality, philosophy, criticism, etc. But when I saw the total lack of method with which the world looks after its affairs, it did not seem worth thinking much about the writing on them. Thus as we see the world mixing the sacred with the profane, passing from the important to the frivolous, confusing the bad and the good, dropping one matter to take up another, retreating and going forward at one time, working eagerly and being negligent, changing opinions and feigning constancy, being firm and appearing fickle--I, too, want to write with equal disorder."

After saying this, he continued dressing, whilst I went on leafing through the manuscript. I also wondered that a man so loving of his country had written so little upon its governance, about which he said to me:

"So much has been written, with such variety, in such diverse times, and with such distinct purposes about the governance of the monarchies, that now little can be said anew which may be useful to the states, or safe for the authors."

LETTER 40

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Veneration of the elderly.)

The other afternoon, I was out strolling with Nuño along the principal street of the Court, quite amused at seeing the variety of people who were speaking to

him and to whom he was replying.

"All my acquaintances are my friends," he was telling me, "because, since everyone knows that I wish him well, everyone returns me the favor. The human race is not as bad as others are accustomed to depicting it, and as bad as those who are bad themselves actually do find it. One who continually desires and yearns to become exalted and enrich himself at the expense of any of his neighbors--what right has he to find or even seek the least vestige of humanity among his fellow men? What happens? That he finds nothing but reciprocal injustices from the very ones who might have showered him with good, if only he had not sowed rancor in their hearts. What is natural vexes him, and he declaims against what he himself has caused. Hence so many invectives against Man, who is by nature a timid, sociable, worried animal."

We continued our walk, without the thread of our conversation interrupting my friend in his compliments, with his hat or with his hand, to everyone we encountered, on foot or in a coach. Considering this urbanity, which is almost a religion for Nuño, what seemed exceedingly unusual to me was his lack of civility towards an old man of venerable presence who passed by us, without my friend greeting him or making the slightest obsequy, when his aspect merited it so much. He was past eighty years of age; abundant white hair covered his majestic head and wrinkled brow; he was leaning on an expensive cane; a lackey in magnificent livery was holding him up respectfully; he went receiving the reverence of the people, and in every way was giving the impression of a respectable character.

"The worship with which we venerate the elderly," said Nuño to me, "is accustomed to be at times more superstitious than obligatory. When I see an old man who has spent his life in some career useful to the nation, I most certainly regard him with veneration. But when the man is no more than an old character who has served in no way whatsoever, I am very far from venerating his white hairs."

LETTER 41

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Remedies for luxury.)

We dress the same way as did our predecessors two thousand years ago; the furnishings in our houses are of the same antiquity as the clothing; our table-settings, servants' costumes, and all the rest, have the same appearance; because of all these reasons, it would be impossible to explain to you the meaning of this word: luxury. But in Europe, where clothing is put aside before becoming old, and where the vilest artisans of the realm are the most respected legislators, this word is quite common; and so that you do not read several pages of this letter without understanding the subject in question: consider that luxury is the abundance and variety of the superfluous things in life.

European authors are divided upon whether this abundance and variety is advantageous or not. Both sides bring specious arguments in their support. The

nations who, by their inventive genius, mechanical industry, and surplus of inhabitants, have influenced the customs of their neighbors--not only approving of luxury, but rather overpraising it to them and impoverishing them--have persuaded them that what leaves them without money is useful. The nations which do not have this natural advantage cry out against the introduction of everything in foreign trade clashing with their simplicity and dress, and in domestic trade making them poor.

It is a harsh fact that men, so fond of distinction and accuracy in some matters, proceed much like one big lump in others. Be they distinguished by luxury, and they shall be in agreement. Encourage each nation the luxuries arising from their own countries, and nothing shall be injurious. There is no country which does not have some commodities capable of improvement and alteration. From these modifications variety is born; from this, vanity is created; this fosters industry, and from this results luxury beneficial to the people, since it achieves its true object: which is that the cash of the wealthy and the powerful does not stagnate in their coffers, but rather, is spread among the artisans and the poor.

This species of luxury probably harms the great commerce, that is to say, the general. But notice that such general commerce in fashion now consists much less in necessary articles than in superfluous ones. For each fanega[135] of wheat,

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[135] Fanega: 1.6 bushels.

each vara[136] of flannel or linen cloth that enters Spain--how many watch chains, lace trimmings, toothpick holders, ladies' fans, ribbons, scented waters, and other things of this nature, are sold! The Spanish temperament not being given to these manufactures, nor the population of Spain being sufficient to supply workers for them, it is impossible for her to ever compete with foreigners in this commerce. So, this commerce will always be injurious to Spain, since it will impoverish her and enslave her to the caprice of foreign industry; and this, finding its continual support from the extraction of the metals gold and silver (the only balance against the introduction of foreign fashions), the effect will be each day more perfect and, as a consequence, more capable of exhausting the gold and silver of the Spaniards. Because of this, whilst the attraction of refined and finished luxury items deceives the very same ones who realize that it is injurious, these two factors together will cause no end of harm. There remain only two means for preventing luxury from being the total ruin of this nation: either surpass foreign industry, or abstain from consumption of their goods, inventing a national luxury which will flatter the pride of the wealthy and will equally oblige them to make the poor participants in their abundance.

The first method seems impossible because the advantages that foreign manufactures have over the Spanish ones are so many that, it is not possible that the latter will replace the former in affection. The ones established later, and the

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[136] Vara: .84 meters.

development of the ones now established, will cost the kingdom great expenditures. They cannot recoup their losses except from the production of goods manufactured here, which will always be proportionately more expensive than the ones manufactured abroad; thus, the foreign ones will always have more distribution, because the buyer is always attracted to where the same money finds the greater advantage in quantity and quality, or both. If, by some accident that does not fit into the speculation, these manufacturers could give in the first year the same type of goods, and for the same price as the foreign ones, then those from abroad, in view of the ascendancy they have enjoyed for so many years on account of the wealth acquired, and in view of the profits already made, can quite easily cut their prices, reducing them drastically in a few years. In this case, our own cannot compete.[137]

The second method, which is the invention of national luxury, probably seems to many as impossible as the first, because the epidemic of imitation has been reigning for a long time, and because men conform their thinking to the opinion of others, and not each one to his own. But even so, going back two centuries in history, we shall see that imitation has become what today passes for invention.

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[137] In this case, our own cannot compete: Gazel, the supposed author of this letter, makes the mistake of saying "our" when referring to the Spaniards. Either he has been in Spain for so long that he has forgotten his national identity, or Cadalso, so involved in composing this criticism of Spain's penchant for foreign luxury items, has temporarily forgotten his.

Provided that profusion, novelty and refinement suffice for constituting luxury, I say that there has been for two centuries (and consequently it is not impossible for there to be now) a national luxury, which seems to me demonstrable in this way. In the times immediate to the conquest of America, there were no foreign goods in which are swallowed up today the product of the mines, because the establishment of the said goods is quite modern with respect to that epoch; and notwithstanding this, there was luxury, since there was profusion, abundance, and refinement (considering that if there had been none, then nothing but what was necessary would have been spent). Thus, there was in that time a considerable, purely national, luxury--this is to say, having as its source the articles which nature offers without passing the Pyrenees. Why, then, can it not be today the way it was back then? And what was that luxury? Look at what constituted the magnificence of those grandees of Castile. Spaniards should not be ashamed of their antiquity, because that was a truly venerable century. Let them dedicate themselves to reviving the good from it, and they will remedy the situation through the extraction, by easy and laudable means, of as much money as they throw away each year, to whose loss they add the repute of being considered mere administrators of the mines that their ancestors won at the expense of so much blood and hardships.

Strange fate, that of America! It seems that she is destined to never produce the least benefit to her possessors! Before the arrival of the Europeans, her inhabitants used to eat human flesh, went around nude, and the owners of all the world's silver and gold did not have the least of life's comforts. After the conquest,

the new owners, the Spaniards, are the ones who least realized benefit from all that abundance.

Returning to foreign and national luxury, the national one, in the antiquity that I have mentioned, consisted in more than various now-forgotten articles: the perfection of their weapons, the abundance and excellence of their horses, the magnificence of their houses, the banquets with incredible numbers of dishes for each meal, goods from Segovia and Córdoba, personal voluntary service to the sovereign, private libraries, etc., all of which were the products of Spain and manufactured by Spanish hands. They should return to fostering this species of luxury and, attaining the political end of luxury (which, as has already been said, is the reflux of the excessive wealth of the rich to the poor), in a few years shall be seen the multiplication of the population, the escape from the misery of necessities, the cultivation of the fields, the adornment of the cities, the training of the youth, and the regaining of its old vigor by the State. This is the portrait of ancient luxury. How shall we portray the modern?--Let us imitate the things offered to our view, without flattering or offending.

The wealthy man of this century (I am speaking of the moneybags whose hard cash is the object of luxury)--on what does he spend his income? Two beautifully groomed and dressed valets awaken him. He drinks exquisite Mocha coffee in a cup brought from China, through London. He puts on an infinitely fine shirt from Holland, then a most pleasing robe woven in Lyons, France. He reads a book bound in Paris. He dresses at the direction of a French tailor and wig-maker.

He goes out in a coach which was painted where the book was bound. He will eat hot food on dishes wrought in Paris or London, and fruits and sweets on plates from Saxony or China. He pays a maestro of music, and another of dance, both foreigners. He attends an Italian opera, well or badly performed, or a French tragedy, well or badly translated. And at bedtime, he can say this prayer: "I give thanks to Heaven that all my actions today have been directed towards throwing out of my country all the gold and silver in my possession."

Until now, I have spoken in relation to politics because, considering customs only, and speaking not as a statistician but as a philosopher, I mean to say this: All luxury is injurious, since it multiplies the necessities of life, employs human understanding in frivolous things, beautifies vices, and makes virtue--this being the only thing produced by true wealth and pleasures--insignificant.

LETTER 42

From Nuño to Ben-Beley

(Education of Gazel. Difficulties in one Spaniard writing to another.)

According to the information Gazel has given me about you, I know that you are an hombre de bien[1] living in Africa and, according to what he has given you about me, you must know that I am an hombre de bien living in Europe. I do not believe that any other requisite is necessary for us to mutually form a good concept of each other. We esteem each other without having met; no matter how little we

were in contact, we would be friends.

The manner of this young man and the knowledge you have inculcated in him impel me to leave Europe and go to Africa, where you reside. I wish to speak with a wise African, as I vow to you that I am weary of all the wise Europeans, except for some few who live in Europe as though they were in Africa. I should like for you to tell me the method you followed and what object you had in mind with the education of Gazel. To tell the truth, I have found his understanding quite uncultivated, but his heart inclined towards the good; and as I appreciate very little all the erudition of the world with respect to virtue, I should like that some few dozen tutors such as you might come to us from Africa to take charge of the education of our youth, in place of European tutors, who neglect the direction of the hearts of their students by filling their heads with information on heraldry, French courtesies, Spanish vanity, Italian arias, and other items of this perfection and importance--things which are undoubtedly quite good, since they charge so much money for teaching them, but which seem to me quite inferior to the maxims whose practice I observe in Gazel.

By means of these few lines, I fulfill his request and my desire: all this has been quite easy for me. How difficult it would have been for me to do the same with respect to a European! In the country of the world where there is the most facility for one man learning from another, due to the promptness and the security of the mails, is found the greatest difficulty for one writing to the other. If--since you are a Moor who has never seen me, nor I you, who lives two hundred leagues

from my house, and who are different from me in everything--you were a Christian residing ten leagues from me, it would be a most serious task for me to write to you for the first time. First, I would have to consider prudently the width of the margin of the letter. Second, the distance that I had to leave between the first line and the edge of the paper would be a matter of much reflection. Third, I would meditate very slowly about the mark of courtesy with which I had to begin. Fourth, with no less application would I study the corresponding expression for the ending. Fifth, knowing how to address you in the body of the letter would merit equal attention; or, if I had to direct the discourse as if speaking with you alone, or with many, or with a third party, or to the seignory you hold in some place, or to your excellence over several people who hold seignories, or to other similar qualities without taking notice of your person--arising from all this so much terrible confusion--which many Spaniards often avoid entering into by not writing to each other.

The Supreme Being, whom we call God and you call Allah, and who made Africa, Europe, America, and Asia, may He bless you with the years and felicity that I wish for you--for you and all Americans, Africans, Asians, and Europeans.

LETTER 43

From Gazel to Nuño

(Respect for antiquity.)

The city in which I now find myself is the only one of all I have seen that resembles those of the old Spain, which you have described to me many times. The color of the clothing, sad; the gatherings of people, few; the division of the sexes, observed with fidelity; the women, sequestered; the men, jealous; the elderly, exceedingly serious; the young men, quarrelsome, and all the rest of the cultural panorama cause me to gaze at the calendar a thousand times to see if we are really in the year that you call 1768, or if it is 1500, or 1600 at the most. Their conversation corresponds to their customs. Here they do not speak of the events we see today, nor of the people who live today, but rather of the events and men of the past. I have come to question whether perhaps by magic art some sorcerer is not representing to me the generations gone by. If this is so--May Allah grant that the science of the magician managed to bring before my eyes the future ages! But without further vexing myself in this letter, and reserving the matter for when we shall see each other, I assure you that I admire as a singular merit the reverence these inhabitants continually demonstrate towards the ashes of their ancestors. It is a species of perpetual gratitude for the life that they have received from them. But, since in this there can be excess, as in the moral qualities of all men, whose nature usually vitiates their very own virtues, reply to me with what occurs to you on this

subject.

LETTER 44

From Nuño to Gazel. (Reply to the previous letter.)

I shall begin responding to your last letter at the point where you finished. You may rest assured with the idea that man's nature is so corrupt that, to avail myself of your expression, it usually vitiates its very own virtues. Economy is, undoubtedly, a moral virtue, and the man who is excessive in it converts it into the vice called avarice; liberality changes into prodigality, and so on with all the rest. Love of one's country is as blind as any other love; and if not guided by understanding, one can quite easily applaud the bad, reject the good, venerate the ridiculous, and depreciate the respectable. From this it arises that, speaking with blind affection of antiquity, the Spaniard is exposed to many errors as long as the following distinction is not made. I divide Spaniards into two classes who speak enthusiastically of their nation's antiquity: those who understand "antiquity" as the past century, and those who understand this word to mean the preceding century and the ones preceding it.

The past century offers us nothing that can delight us. I imagine Spain since the end of the 1500s as a large house which has been magnificent and solid, but due to the course of centuries is falling and collapsing upon its inhabitants. Here, a piece of the roof is toppling; there, two walls are collapsing; farther on, two

columns are crumbling; throughout this section, a foundation is lacking; throughout that one over there, water has come in; throughout another, the floor is cracking. The residents groan, not knowing where to turn; here, the sweet fruit of faithful matrimony is drowning in the cradle; over there, one is being stoned to death by the falling ruins--and even more than the pain of seeing this spectacle, it is the patriarch of the family; farther on, thieves are coming in to take advantage of the misfortune; close by, their own servants are stealing--by being better informed--whatever the thieves, in their ignorance, are leaving untouched.

If this picture seems more poetic than true to you, look at history, and you shall see how fair is the comparison. At the beginning of this century, all the Spanish monarchy, composed of the two Americas, half of Italy and Flanders, could scarcely maintain twenty thousand men, and those badly paid and worse disciplined. Six ships of appalling construction, called galleons, which would bring from the Indies the money that escaped the pirates and corsairs; six useless galleys in Cartagena; and some ships that were rented, according to necessity, for transport from Spain to Italy, and from Italy to Spain--used to form the entire royal armada. Royal revenues, without being sufficient to maintain the crown, were more than enough to annihilate the vassal, due to the confusion introduced in their collection and distribution. Agriculture, totally ruined; commerce, merely passive; and the factories, destroyed; were useless to the monarchy. The sciences were on a still more despicable footing: continued tedious and vain disputes which were called philosophy; in poetry, ridiculous and puerile ambiguities were permitted; the

weather forecasts, which were done together with the almanac, full of inanities of judicial astrology,[138] used to form almost all the mathematics that were known; bombastic and high-sounding words, dislocated phrases, theatrical gestures, used to form practical and speculative oratory. Even the great men produced by that era had to conform to the bad taste of the century, like the beautiful slaves of most ugly tyrants. Who, then, can applaud such a century?

But who is not proud at the mentioning of the century before it, in which every Spaniard was an honorable soldier?--the century in which our arms were conquering the two Americas and the islands of Asia, terrifying Africa and vexing all of Europe with armies small in number and great in glory, maintained in Italy, Germany, France, and Flanders, and covering the seas with squadrons and armadas of ships, galleons, and galleys--the century in which the academy of Salamanca was playing the leading role among the universities of the worl--the century in which our language was spoken by all the learned men and nobles of Europe. And who can judge in critical matters, which confuse two different eras, two eras so different that in them the nation seems to be two diverse peoples? Will a middling understanding confuse a third of the Spaniards before Tunis, sent by Carlos I, with

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[138] Judicial astrology: giving judgments regarding the supposed influence of the planets, stars, etc. on future events.

the halberdiers of Carlos II? Garcilaso[139] with Villamediana?[140] Brocense[141] with any of the humanists of Felipe IV? Don Juan de Austria,[142] the brother of Felipe II, with Don Juan de Austria, the son of Felipe IV? I believe that the word "antiquity" is too comprehensive, as are the greater part of the ones that men utter with excessive indiscretion.

The predilection with which all ancient things are mentioned, without critical distinction, is less the effect of love towards them than of odium towards our contemporaries. Almost any virtue of our contemporaries vexes us, because we see it as a strong argument against our own defects; and we call on the moral qualities of our ancestors, so as not to admit those of our brethren, with such zeal that we do not distinguish between the ancestor who died in his bed, without having left it, and the one who died on the field of battle, having always lived carrying his arms; nor do we cease confusing our ancestor, who had no idea how many leagues a

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[139] Garcilaso: Garcilaso de la Vega (1503-36) Spanish poet of the Renaissance who made the sonnet popular.

[140] Villamediana: don Juan de Tassis, conde de Villamediana, a disciple of the Baroque poet Luis de Góngora (1561-1627).

[141] Brocense: Francisco Sánchez de las Brozas, a humanist of the Renaissance and colleague at the University of Salamanca of Luis de León.

[142] Don Juan de Austria: illegitimate son of Carlos V (Charles I) and brother of Felipe II, who commanded the combined fleets of Spain, the Republic of Venice, and the Pope, in their great victory over the Turkish navy in the battle of Lepanto (1571), and in which Miguel de Cervantes had his left hand shattered by a musket-ball.

geographical gradient has, with the Álavas[143] and others, who presaged the mathematical discoveries made a century later by the greatest men of that faculty. It is enough that we have not known them for us to love them, just as it is enough for us to associate with our contemporaries to make them the object of our odium or contempt.

This indiscreet passion for antiquity is so blind and so absurd that, a friend of mine, certainly witty enough, played an exquisite jest upon one of those who suffer from this infirmity. He showed him one of the most beautiful sonnets of Hernando de Herrera,[144] telling him that one of his fellow students had just composed it. The impartial critic tossed it to the floor, saying that one could not read from anything completely weak and insipid. A few days later, the same lad composed an octava, vapid if ever there was one, and took it to the oracle, saying that he had found the composition in a manuscript in the handwriting of the Mexican nun.[145] After listening to it, the other exclaimed:

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[143] Álavas: Probably a reference to Diego de Álava y Viamont, author of a book on artillery science (1590): El perfecto capitán, instruido en la disciplina militar,y nueva ciencia de la artillería.

[144] Hernando de Herrera: (ca. 1534-97) humanistic poet of Seville who annotated Garcilaso in 1580. His Algunas obras de Fernando de Herrera (1582) established the style of the "Sevillan School" of poetry, characterized by erudition, musicality, pagan mythology, stoicism, and interest in classical ruins.

[145] The Mexican nun: the poetess sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-95), a Jeronymite nun; the only woman and only native of the New World to become distinguished in the Baroque period in Spanish literature.

"This is indeed poetry, invention, language, harmony, dulcification, fluency, elegance, elevation!"--and so many other things which I forget, but not my nephew, who learned them by heart; and when he hears or reads about some infelicity of the past century before one of the partisans of that era, he always exclaims with an incredibly ironic enthusiasm:

"This is indeed invention, poetry, language, harmony, dulcification, fluency, elegance, elevation!"

I await letters from Ben-Beley; and you--write to Nuño.

LETTER 45

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(News from Barcelona. Cadets of the Spanish Guards.)

I have just arrived in Barcelona. The little that I have seen of it assures me of the truth of Nuño's report, and of the judgment I formed through his instruction concerning the temperament of the Catalonians and the usefulness of this principality. For a pair of similar provinces the king of the Christians could exchange his two Americas. More benefit redounds to the Crown from the industry of these peoples than from the poverty of so many millions of Indians. If I were lord of all Spain, and they obliged me to choose its different peoples for my servants, I would make the Catalonians my majordomos.

This stronghold is one of the most important of the Peninsula and, therefore,

its garrison is numerous and magnificent, since among other troops here are those that they call guards of the Spanish infantry. An individual of this corps has been in the same lodging as I since the night before I arrived. He has been exceedingly congenial with me through his frankness, courtesy, and person, is quite young, his dress the same as that of the common soldiers; but his manners easily distinguish him from the ordinary barrack-room soldier. I marveled at this contradiction; and yesterday, at the table, which these inns call redonda,[146] because they do not have preferential seating, seeing him so familiar with and so well-treated by the oldest officers of the corps, who are most respectable, I could not endure a minute more my curiosity about his class, and thus I asked him who he was.

"I am," he told me, "a cadet of this corps, and of the company of that gentleman over there,"--indicating a venerable old man of warlike aspect, with gray hair covering his head, and his body replete with wounds.

"Sí, señor, and of my company," responded the old one. "He is the grandson and heir of a comrade-in-arms of mine they killed at my side in the Battle of Campo Santo;[147] he is twenty years old and has been in the service for five. He drills better than all the grenadiers of the battalion. He is a bit mischievous, like those of his age and class, but we old ones do not find him strange, since they are

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[146] Redonda: round. At a round table, as with the famous one of the legendary King Arthur, no one outranks another; all are equal.

[147] Campo Santo: 1743, in Italy, a battle in which the Spaniards were defeated by the Austrians during the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48).

what we were, and will be what we are."

"I do not know what rank is that of a cadet," I said.

"This boils down to," said another officer, "the fact that a young man of good family enlists. He serves twelve or fourteen years, always drilling like a common soldier, and after having comported himself in the regular manner, he gives proof of his birth, is promoted to the honor of carrying the flag with the escutcheon of the king and the insignia of the regiment. In all this time, they customarily consume their patrimonies because of the indispensable propriety with which they comport themselves, and because of the occasions for expenses which they are faced with, their residence being in this city, which is sumptuous and delightful, or at the Court, which is costly."

"They must enjoy a good salary," said I, "to be for so long without the status of officers, and with expenses as if they were ones."

"A common soldier's salary and no more," said the first. "They are distinguished in nothing, except in not using even that, since they leave it with some added gratuity to the soldiers who take care of their weapons and cartridge belts."

"There must be few," I replied, "who sacrifice in this way their youth and their patrimony."

"Why a few?" The young man leaped up. "We are nearly two hundred, and if the ones who attempt to be admitted were admitted, we would reach two

thousand. The main thing is that we are in each other's way for promotion, because of the small number of vacancies and the great number of cadets. But we would rather wait doing sentry duty with this jacket than abandon it. The most that some of us do is to purchase companies of cavalry and dragoons, when the occasion arises, if they are now impatient of waiting; and even so, they remain as affectionate towards the regiment as if they lived in it."

"Glorious corps," I exclaimed, "in which two hundred nobles occupy the positions of the same number of plebeians, with no more payment than the honor of the nation! Glorious nation, which produces nobles so fond of their king! Powerful king, who commands a nation whose individual nobles long to do nothing more than to serve him, caring neither in what class nor with what reward!"

LETTER 46

Ben-Beley to Nuño

(Honesty.)

Each day I am further pleased by news of the continuation of your friendship with my disciple Gazel. From it I conclude that you are both hombres de bien. Wicked men cannot be friends. In vain they swear mutual friendship and intimacy a thousand times; in vain they standardize their action; in vain they work united for some common goal: never shall I believe that they love each other. The one deceives the other, and this one the first, through mutual interests of fortune, or

hope of it. For this, they undoubtedly need to make a show of most firm friendship with seeming trust. But because the first one knows the frauds of the second, they distrust no one more than one does the other, unless they mutually conceal themselves--in which case there will be less frankness and, consequently, a lesser friendship. I doubt not that both unite most earnestly in injuring a third; but this one being destroyed, the two quarrel immediately, so that one remains in sole possession of the morsel that they snatched from the hands of the destroyed one; just as two highwaymen join forces to rob a traveler, but later knock each other about over the division of what they have stolen.

Hence it follows that the ignorant public is surprised when the friendship which seemed so firm and pure turns into hatred. "Hey! Hey!" they say. "Who could have believed that those two might part company after so many years? What a heart man has! How inconstant! Where did you take refuge, sacred friendship? Where shall we find you? We thought that your sanctuary was in the hearts of either one of these two--and both of them banish you!" But let the circumstances of this case be considered, and it shall be perceived that all of these are false harangues and affronts to the human heart. If the common people (so discreetly called profane by a philosophical Latin poet,[148] whose works Gazel sent to me), if the common, I say, profane people, knew the true key to this and other marvels, they would not be frightened by so many. They would understand that it was not

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[148] A philosophical Latin poet: Horace, who in Odes 3.1, says: Odi profanum vulgo et arceo ("I hate the profane crowd and shun it").

friendship at all, nor did it merit more than the name of mutual treachery recognized by both parties, and maintained by the very same whilst it seemed propitious.

On the contrary, among upright hearts, friendship grows with association. The reciprocal acquaintance of good moral qualities which they keep discovering in each other over time increases mutual esteem. The delight which a good man receives upon seeing his friend's goodness bearing fruit stimulates him to cultivate his own more and more. This delight, which so much elevates the virtuous, the wicked man can never enjoy, nor even be acquainted with. Nature denies him a great number of pure and innocent pleasures, in exchange for the iniquitous satisfactions which he endeavors to invent with his perversely directed talent. Finally, the two wicked men, happy by dint of transgressions, regard one another with envy, and the portion of prosperity enjoyed by one is a torment for the other. But when two upright men are in a felicitous situation, each one enjoys not only his own good fortune, but also that of the other. From which it is concluded that wickedness, even at the height of fortune, is a seed abundant with mistrust and fear; and that, on the contrary, goodness, even when it appears unblest by fortune, is a continual fount of pleasures, delights, and quietude. This is my judgment of the good and the bad; and I base it not only upon this speculation, which to me appears reasonable, but also upon the repeated examples which abound in the world.

LETTER 47

Nuño to Ben-Beley.

(Reply to the previous letter.)

I see that we quite agree with each other on the ideas of virtue, friendship and vice, as well as on the justice we do to the heart of man in the midst of the universal satire from which humanity suffers in our time. Your letter proves it to me well, but if it were published, few would understand it. The majority of readers would consider it an abstract moral piece and of almost no service in human intercourse. The very same who sometimes weep as the result of not observing a similar doctrine would laugh at it. This is another of our moral weaknesses, and one of the most ancient, since the century of Augustus was not the first to give cause for saying: Video meliora, proboque; deteriora sequor,[149] and from that one to our own, many have passed, all of them quite similar to one another.

LETTER 48

Nuño to Ben-Beley

(Impartial judgment of the present century.)

In one of the letters that Gazel writes to you, I have seen a dreadful description of the present century, and the ridiculous defense of it made by an

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[149] "I see the better way, and approve it; I follow the worse": Ovid, Metamorphoses 7.20-21.

ignorant and superficial man. Let us, you and I, split the difference between the two views; and without ceasing to recognize that the era is neither as good nor as bad as they say, let us confess that the worst thing about this century is that similar advocates defend it as their very own. The one in this letter who knows how to oppose the excessively rigorous criticism of Gazel is capable of losing the most certain case. He begins the defense, as do many others, with the aspect which shows the most weakness and fatuity. If, instead of trying to maintain these absurdities, he understood what merits true applause, he doubtlessly might have given the African a better impression of the era in which he came to Europe. Another result might have been to elicit from Gazel an account of the suavity of customs, the humaneness in war, the noble use of victory, the leniency of governments, the advancements in mathematics and physics, the mutual exchange of talents by means of the translations which in all languages are made of whatever work stands out in any of them. Even though each of these advantages may not be as real as they seem, they can at least provide an equilibrium to the misfortunes which Gazel enumerates; and as long as the good and the bad, the transgressions and the virtues, are in equal balance, the century in which is noted this equality cannot be called so infelicitous, with respect to the numerous miseries and horrors history shows us--and without at least an epoch that consoles mankind.

LETTER 49

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Pitiful decadence of the Castilian language.)

Who might have believed that the language universally considered the most beautiful of all the living ones two centuries ago is today one of the least worthy of esteem? Such is the haste with which the Spaniards have devoted themselves to vitiating it. The abuse of its flexibility (let us call it that), the scant economy of figures and phrases of many authors of the past century, the slavishness of current translators to their originals, have despoiled this language of its natural beauties, which were conciseness, abundance and energy. The French have beautified their own, whilst the Spaniards have disfigured that which they had so much perfected. Paragraphs of Voltaire, Montesquieu and others of their contemporaries have such an abundance of the three aforementioned beauties that they do not seem possible in the French tongue; and the authors who have written in good Castilian more than a century ago, whilst the fashionable Spaniards today appear to have made it a formal matter to humiliate the language of their forefathers. The translators and imitators of foreigners are those who have most excelled in this enterprise. Since they do not know their own language, because they do not trouble themselves by taking on the task of studying it, when they find a little beauty in some original French, Italian or English, they heap together Gallicisms, Italianisms and Anglicisms, with which they achieve all of the following:

1. They deprive the original of its true merit, since they do not give the true idea of it in their translation. 2. They add a thousand impertinent phrases to Castilian. 3. They flatter the foreigner, making him believe that the Spanish language is inferior to the others. 4. They delude many Spanish youth, dissuading them from the indispensable study of their native language.

Upon these particulars Nuño is accustomed to telling me:

"When I was a boy, I sometimes set myself to translating various pieces of foreign literature because, since some nations did not consider it beneath their dignity to translate our works during the centuries in which they merited it, thus we ought to do the same with theirs in the present. The method I followed was this: I would read a paragraph in the original with utmost care; I would endeavor to take the exact meaning from it; I would ponder on it greatly, and then I would ask myself, 'If I had to put into Castilian the idea which this statement that I have read has produced in me--how would I do it?' Afterwards, I would consider whether some ancient Spanish author had said a similar thing; if I imagined so, I would go to read it, gathering everything which seemed analogous to what I desired. This familiarity with the Spaniards of the sixteenth century, and some of the seventeenth, delivered me from many difficulties in not perpetrating the stylistic vices which are so common; without this assistance, it would have been impossible to get out of them.

"I shall tell you more. Believing in the transmigration of the arts as firmly

as any good Pythagorean believes in that of souls, I have fancied that I saw in the Castilian and Latin of Luis Vives, Alonso Matamoros, Pedro Ciruelo, Francisco Sánchez (called 'El Brocense'), Hurtado de Mendoza, Ercilla, Fray Luis de Granada, Fray Luis de León, Garcilaso, Argensola, Herrera, Álava, Cervantes, and others, the seeds so felicitously cultivated by the French of the last half of the past century, from which so much fruit has been derived by those of the present one. In the midst of the just respect that Spanish pens have always observed on the subjects of religion and government, I have seen in the aforementioned authors excellent passages, in thought as well as in expression, even on the frivolous subjects of amusing pastimes. And in those pieces in which the critic with excessive liberty usually mixes the frivolous with the serious--and which is precisely the genre which appeals most to foreigners of the modern period--I find much in the ancient national writing,[150] in the published as well as the unpublished. And finally, I conclude that, our language well understood and practiced, according to how the aforementioned masters have handled it, needs no more vitiation in the translation from what is written, good or bad, in the rest of Europe; and to tell the truth, except for advances in physics and mathematics, translations for the rest of them are not in any way necessary."

This Nuño usually says when he speaks seriously on this point.

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[150] Ancient national writing: a reference to the comedia of Spain, which mixes the comic with the tragic in order to approach verisimilitude. In Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo (New Art of Writing Plays, 1609), Lope de Vega advises: lo trágico y lo cómico mezclado ("the tragic and the comic mixed").

LETTER 50

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Translations.)

The facile use of printing, great commerce, alliances among rulers, and other causes, have made common to all of Europe the productions of each of her kingdoms. Nevertheless, what has most united the learned Europeans of different countries is the number of translations from some languages into others; but do not suppose that this convenience is as great as you might imagine. In the positive sciences, I do not doubt that it is, because the words and phrases for dealing with them are nearly the same in all the countries, the latter differing very little in syntax, and the former only in the terminations, or perhaps in the pronunciation of the terminations. But on subjects strictly about morality, criticism, history, or amusement, there are usually a thousand errors in the translations, due to the various characteristics of each language.

A phrase, when seeming to be the same, is usually in reality quite different, since in one language it is sublime, in another it is ordinary, and in another average. Hence, not only does it not give the true meaning that it has in one if it is translated literally, but also its own translator does not understand it; and it therefore gives his nation a distorted idea of the foreign author, this harm sometimes followed with so much excess that many things are left untranslated, because they sound bad to he who undertook the translation quite happily if they sounded good to him, as though

he were accompanied by the things necessary for this unrewarding task, which are, to wit: his language, the foreign one, the subject matter, and also the customs of both nations. From this arises the sheer impossibility of translating some works. The burlesque poem of the English titled Hudibras[151] cannot be brought over into any language of the European continent. For the same reason, the satirical letrillas[152] of Góngora never crossed the Pyrenees, and for the same reason many of Molière's comedies never pleased except in France, even though the lines of all are perfectly composed.

This, which appears to be a misfortune, I have ever regarded as fortune. It is sufficient that men know how to share with each other the benefits they derive from the useful arts and sciences, without also communicating to each other their extravagances. The French nobility has a certain species of vanity; let it be expressed, then, in the comical censorious character of the comedy Le Glorieux,[153] without this foolishness being communicated to the Spanish nobility--because the latter, which is at least as vain as the other, is quite well reprimanded for the same vice, in its own way, on account of the noble pretensions in the drama titled El

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[151] Hudibras: a burlesque epic poem written by Samuel Butler (1612-80) concerning the English Civil War between the Cavaliers (royalists) and the Roundheads (Puritans). Written between 1663 and 1678.

[152] Letrillas: a lyrical composition (also called rondels), usually humorous or sarcastic, with lines of six or eight syllables. Each strophe leads back to the refrain.

[153] Le Glorieux: a comedy (1732) by Pierre Néricault Destouches (1680-1754) on the subject of marriages between the poor nobility and the nouveau riche.

dómine Lucas[154] without succumbing to the equal folly of the French work. Each nation has more than enough absurdities without copying foreign ones. The imperfection in which the meritorious faculties of human society are still found today proves the need for the united efforts of all the nations which recognize the usefulness of culture.

LETTER 51

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Meaning of the word "politics.")

One of the terms whose explication occupies the most space in my friend Nuño's dictionary is the word politics, and its derived word political. I want to copy the entire paragraph for you. It says:

"Politics comes from the Greek word which means city,[155] from which it is inferred that its true meaning is the science of governing towns, and that politicians are those who are employed in tasks of that kind or, at least, in the career of getting to be in them. Upon this supposition, here would end this article, inasmuch as the

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[154] El dómine Lucas: a comedy (1716) by José de Cañizares (1676-1750) of the type known as comedia de figurón. A figurón was a pretentious nobody type of character frequently appearing in Spanish satires of the sixteenth century. A dómine was a teacher of Latin grammar (i.e., a pedant).

[155] The Greek word which means city: i.e., polis.

character of the word; but this name has been usurped by persons who are far from being in such a situation nor in meriting such respect. And from the corruption of this word badly appropriated by these persons is born the necessity of my explaining further. Politicians of this second species are various men who by night dream and by day think of nothing but making a fortune by whatever means that present themselves. The three faculties of the rational soul[156] and the five senses of the human body are reduced to an unrestrained ambition in this type of men. They neither want, nor understand, nor remember, anything not directed toward this end. Nature loses all its beauty in their hearts. A garden is not fragrant, nor is a fruit delicious, nor is a countryside agreeable, nor is a forest luxuriant, nor do diversions hold any attraction, nor does food have flavor, nor does conversation offer them pleasure, nor does health produce joy in them, nor does friendship give them consolation, nor does love present them delight, nor does youth give them fortitude. Of no importance are worldly things in which they do not advance a step on the road to fortune, by the day, the hour, the minute. Other men pass through various alterations in pleasures and vexations; but these know only one pleasure, and this is of advancing themselves; and they have it thus, not as vexation, but as unbearable torments, all the many hazards and fortuities of human existence.

"For them, every inferior is a slave, every equal is an enemy, every superior is a tyrant. Laughter and weeping in these men are like river waters which have

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[156] The three faculties of the rational soul: Reason, memory and will.

passed through swampy places: they become so turbid that it is not possible to distinguish their true taste or color. Continual artifice, which now becomes second nature in them, makes them insufferable even to themselves. They ask for themselves an accounting of the little time they have left to them to employ in following among precipices the phantasm of ambition which guides them. In their judgment, the day is too short for their ideas, and too long for those of others. They despise the simple man; they abhor the discreet one; they appear to be oracles to the public, but are so inept that a lowly servant knows all their weaknesses, absurdities, vices and, perhaps, their crimes, as in the quite true French proverb that no man is a hero to his valet.[157] As a result, many secrets are revealed, many machinations are uncovered and, in substance, men are shewn to be men, no matter how much they wish to be seen as demigods."

In the midst of the rancor which is and must be the common lot of mankind, he who is agitated by such delirium, and who, like the frenetic should be put in chains so that he cannot do injury to every man, woman, and child that he encounters in the streets, is usually amusing in his dealings for one who sees him from afar. That diversity of tricks, ruses, and artifices is an amusing spectacle for one who does not fear it. However, what exceeds human patience is seeing all these machinations directed by an ignorant blind man, who conceives of himself as

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[157] No man is a hero to his valet: A famous saying of Madame Cornuel ('Il n'y a point de héros pour son valet de chambre). From Lettres de Mlle. Aïssé, 1728.

incomprehensibly as others perceive him to be a fool. Many of these men believe that bad intentions can take the place of talent, quick-wittedness, and the other related merits which one sees in many books, but in few persons.

LETTER 52

Nuño to Gazel

(There is no middle course in being an "hombre de bien.")

Betwixt being an hombre de bien and not being an hombre de bien there is no middle course. If there were, the number of rogues would not be so great. The alternative of not doing harm to anyone, or of lagging behind by not doing harm to another, is of a tyranny so despotic that it can only be resisted by the invincible strength of virtue. But in a corrupted world, virtue is quite unsuccessful in holding any attraction. Its greatest triumph is the respect of the minority of men.

LETTER 53

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Misery of man at all ages.)

Yesterday Nuño and I were on the balcony of my lodgings watching a boy playing with a cane adorned with ribbons and gold paper.

"A felicitous age!" I exclaimed, "when the heart still does not know the true

vexations and false pleasures of life! What do the great concerns of the world matter to this boy? What high honors would he need to be satisfied? What injury can wicked people cause him? What impression can the fickleness of prosperous or adverse fortune make on his tender heart? He is indifferent to the caprices of fortune. Felicitous the man, if he were ever a child."

"You are mistaken," Nuño said to me. "If he breaks that cane he is playing with; if another playmate takes it away from him; if his mother scolds him because he is amusing himself with it--you will surely see him as despondent as a general at the loss of a battle, or a minister at his downfall. Believe me, Gazel, human misery is proportionate to a man's age; it changes form as the body ages, but man is wretched from the cradle to the grave."

LETTER 54

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Meaning of the word "fortune" and means of obtaining it.)

The word fortune and the phrase to make a fortune in Nuño's dictionary have pleased me. After explaining them, he adds the following:

"He who aspires to make a fortune by honorable means, has only one thing on which to found his hopes, to wit: merit. He who may be less scrupulous has a greater number from which to choose, that is to say: all the vices and the appearances of all the virtues. He may choose, according to circumstances, that

which is most advantageous, either all together, or individually; secretly, or openly; with moderation, or without it."

LETTER 55

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Why do men want wealth?)

"Why does a man want to make a fortune?" Nuño was saying to one who thinks of nothing else. "I understand that the poor indigent yearns to have something to eat and that he who is in mediocre circumstances aspires to give himself more conveniences. But I do not see the point of so much endeavor and anxiety for acquiring rank and position. In the moderately comfortable state in which I find myself, I live tranquilly and untroubled, without my operations being the object of the criticism of others, nor cause for my own heart's remorse. Situated in the eminence that you crave for, I shall not eat more, nor shall I sleep better, nor shall I have more friends, nor shall I have to preserve myself from the infirmities common to all men; as a consequence, I shall not have a more pleasant life than I have right now. Only one reflection in other times made me think of sometime declaring myself a courtier of fortune and soliciting her favors. How pleased I would be, I said to myself, to have in my hands the means of doing good for my friends! And then my memory would call up the names and natural gifts of my bosom friends, and the positions I would give them when I were prime minister. I

yearned for nothing less, because with nothing less would my officious ambition be contented. . . .

"This one is a young man of excellent customs and virtues, selective erudition, and affable temperament: I want to give him a bishopric. Another person of consummate prudence, altruistic disposition, and what is called winning ways: I shall make him Viceroy of Mexico. That one over there is a soldier by vocation; his personal valor is obvious; and his head is no less warlike than his arm: I shall give him a general's baton. That other one over there, in addition to coming from one of the most distinguished families in the kingdom, is educated in international law, has a substantial inheritance, knows how to dissimulate vexation and pleasure, has had the curiosity to read all the peace treaties, and has the most complete collection of these works: I shall send him to one of the embassies of the first rank; and the same way with my other friends.

"What a comfort for me when I can look at myself as the second Creator of all these! Not only will my friends be participants in my fortune, but also with even stronger reason shall be my relatives and servants also. How many cousins, nephews, and uncles shall come from my village and the ones nearby to take refuge under my protection! I shall not be like many wealthy men who ignore their poor relations. Quite to the contrary, I shall introduce these novices of fortune in public until they are situated, without denying the bonds with which Nature has tied me to them. Upon their arrival, they will need my aid; and afterwards, they shall make a place for themselves through their gifts and talents, and more through the obligation

of leaving my efforts crowned with success.

"My servants, too, who will have known how to attend my person loyally and industriously, to pass through bad nights, to carry out my orders and to do my will--how deserving they are of my beneficence! I shall place them in various positions of honor and advancement. By the tenth year of my elevation to high position, half of the empire shall be my creation, and I shall die with the complacency of having showered every man I know with riches.

"This consideration is undoubtedly quite agreeable to one who has a heart naturally benign and inclined to friendship; it is capable of moving the least ambitious breast and drawing out from his seclusion the most withdrawn man in order to make him enter the careers of fortune and authority. But two reflections cooled down the ardor which had caused in me this desire to do good for others. The first is the frequent and almost universal ingratitude found in one's creations, even though they be under the most immediate obligation--of which each person can see sufficient examples in his respective sphere; and the second is that the powerful man thus situated cannot dispense employments and positions according to his caprice or will, but rather according to the merit of the competitors. He is not the master, but instead the administrator of the positions, and he must consider himself as a man from out of the blue, without bonds of kinship, friendship, or gratitude; and therefore, he will have to deny a thousand times his protection to persons of his highest esteem in order not to cause offence to a worthy unknown. He can only apportion his choice," added Nuño, "from the salaries that he enjoys,

depending on the occupations that he practices, and from his own patrimony."

LETTER 56

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(True reason for the decadence of Spain.)

On post days or visiting days, after dining, I usually drop by the house adjoining mine, where quite a number of persons gather together to form a charming tertulia. I have always found in their conversation something which frees me from melancholy and distracts me from serious and tiresome matters. But today's incident I have found most amusing.

I entered when they had just finished taking coffee and were starting to converse. A lady was about to set up the harpsichord; on the balcony, two quite young señoritos were very mysteriously reading a piece of paper; another lady was making a cockade; a young officer was standing with his back to the chimney; an elderly man seated in an armchair by the fire was beginning to snore; an abbé was gazing at the garden whilst reading something in a black and gold book; and other people were speaking. Everyone greeted me when I entered, except for three ladies and as many young men who were absorbed in an apparently most serious conversation.

"My dears," one of the ladies was saying, "our Spain shall never be more than what it is. Heaven knows full well that I am dying of grief, because I dearly

love my country."

"I am ashamed to be Spanish," said the second lady.

"What will the foreign nations say! Good heavens! and how much better were I to have remained in the convent in France and not to have come to Spain to see these miseries!" said she who had not yet spoken.

"I am a lieutenant colonel, and with some extraordinary merits--but I should wish to be a second lieutenant of Hussars in Hungary, rather than to live in Spain," said one of the three men who were with the three women.

"Well, I have said it a thousand times," said another of the male triumvirate. "I have said it: the monarchy cannot last out what remains of the century. Decadence is rapid. Ruin is imminent. What a sorry plight! May God have mercy!"

"But, senor," said the third young man, "are not measures taken for such calamities? I am stunned. You can take it for granted that in these cases people regret knowing how to read and write. What will they say of us beyond the Pyrenees!"

Everyone was frightened upon hearing such lamentations.

"What is this?" some were saying.

"What is the matter?" others were repeating.

The three pairs proceeded with their wailing and groaning, each one anxious

to excel in stridence. I, too, felt disturbed upon hearing so much deliberation about disasters and, although less interested than the others in the events of this nation, asked what was the cause of so much lament.

"Is it, perhaps," said I, "some news of the Algerians having landed on the coast of Andalusía and having devastated those beautiful provinces?"

"No, no," one of the ladies said to me. "No, no. We are weeping over something more important."

"Has some new nation of belligerent Indians appeared and invaded New Mexico from the north?"

"It is not that, either, but rather something much more important," said another of the patriotic ladies.

"Some epidemic," I pressed, "has killed off all the livestock in Spain, so that the nation finds itself deprived of its most precious woolen?"

"That would matter little," said one of the most zealous men, "compared to what is happening to us."

I went on mentioning to them another infinity of public catastrophes to which monarchies are exposed, asking if any of them had occurred when, at the end of a long interval of tears, sobs, sighs, complaints, laments, weeping, and even invectives against the stars themselves, the woman who had grown silent, and who seemed the most judicious of all, exclaimed in a very anguished voice:

"Can you believe, Gazel, that in all of Madrid it is impossible to find a

ribbon of this color, no matter how much one searches for it?"

LETTER 57

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Defects of so-called "universal" histories.)

If the vices common in the European method of writing histories are such serious sins as I have advised you, you will be shocked by another much greater and more common one in the histories they call universal. There is scarcely a nation in Europe which has not produced a writer, either compendious enough or extensive enough, of universal history. But what are the signs of being universal? In addition to the preoccupations which guide their pens, and the deference which ties the hands of these general historians, shared with the equal obstacles of historians who work as specialists, they have a most singular and peculiar one of theirs, which is that each one, writing in particular the chronicles of his nation, the glorious annals of its kings and generals, the progress made by its learned men in the sciences, relating each of these things with some minute details which in reality are insignificant, firmly believes that he is fulfilling his obligations to other nations by referring to four or five notable epochs and naming four or five great men, although mutilating their names. The universal English historian spends many pages on information about who was one of their corsairs, and scarcely mentions that there

was a Turenne[158] in the world. The Frenchman will readily tell us with equal exactitude who was the first actor to change his hat in favor of a helmet in the heroic roles of the French theater, and will almost forget who was the Duke of Marlborough.[159]

"What a disappointment I have just had!" Nuño said to me a few days ago. "What a disappointment when, deceived by the title of a work in which the author promised us the lives of all the world's great men, I went looking for some of my most esteemed friends, and did not even find their names! I go through the alphabetical index to find the Ordoños, Sanchos, Fernandos de Castilla, the Jaimes de Aragón--and nothing, nothing, is said about them.

"Among so many great men who shed their blood during eight centuries of helping their country throw off the yoke of your ancestors, scarcely two or three have merited the attention of this historian. Renowned botanists, humanists, statesmen, poets, orators from more than a century ago, and some two at the French academies, remain buried in oblivion if one reads no more histories than these. Basque, Andalusian, and Portuguese pilots, who sailed with as much daring as proficiency, and thus, deserving of society's merit, are covered with an equal veil. The Catalonian and Aragonese soldiers, so illustrious in both Sicilies and their seas

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[158] Turena: Henri de la Tour d'Auvergne, Vicomte de Turenne (1611-75), marshal of France.

[159] Duke of Marlborough: John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough (1650-1722), an English general and statesman.

around the year 1280, have not seemed worthy of posthumous fame to such compositors. Cordovan doctors of your religion and descendants of your country, who preserved science in Spain whilst the Peninsula was ablaze with sanguinary wars, do not occupy a page in such a work, either.

"Surely other nations will complain of the same negligence, except that of the author. What merit, then, for being called universal? If a learned man of Siam-China[160] applied himself to understanding some European language and were made responsible by his sovereign for reading one of these histories and informing him of its contents, I presume that he would confine his comments to these few lines: 'I have read the universal history whose examination you have committed me to, and from its reading I infer that in that small part of the world which they call Europe there is only one cultured nation: namely, the country of the author. The other countries are uncivilized, or nearly so, since each one barely has half a dozen illustrious men, however much they may have left to us traditions from fathers to sons, through which we know that, hundreds of years ago, some ships arrived on our coasts with Europeans, who made it known that their countries in different eras had produced men worthy of the admiration of posterity. I say that such travelers ought to be scorned as suspect as to the truth of what they told about their countries and countrymen, because scarcely any of them nor their sons are mentioned in this universal history, written by a European, whom we must suppose to be completely

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[160] Siam-China: Thailand (so called until 1939).

familiar with all European letters, since he speaks about all of them.'"

In effect, friend Ben-Beley, I do not believe that a complete universal history will ever be seen, whilst the method of writing it is followed by one alone, or by many, of the same country.

Did not astronomers from all countries gather together to observe the passage of Venus across the disk of the sun?[161] Do not all the academies of Europe communicate to each other their astronomical observations, their physical experiments, and their advances in all the sciences? Well, then let each nation designate four or five of its most enlightened men, the least prejudiced, most active, and most industrious--and let these work on the annals respective to their countries, let them later join together the works resulting from the labor of each nation, and from this may be formed a true universal history, worthy of all the same credit that the works of the men deserve.

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[161] The passage of Venus across the disk of the sun: The transit of Venus across the sun on June 3, 1769, was an event of international scientific interest. It was witnessed by 151 professional observing teams at 77 sites around the world. Two Spanish astronomers, Vicente de Doz and El Salvador de Medina, and the Frenchman, the Abbé Jean-Baptiste Chappé d'Auterohe, were able to see the transit from a mission at Cabo San Lucas in Baja California. English astronomers watched from Hudson's Bay, and the English explorer James Cook was despatched to make observations from Tahiti in the South Pacific. Also, the Czarina Catherine II invited astronomers from Germany, Switzerland, and Sweden to set up observation posts in Russia. Theirs, combined with the observations of others, resulted in calculating the first good values for the sun's distance. Chappé's truncated account of the transit was published in Paris, in 1772 (he died in a typhus epidemic in Baja California, in August, 1769): Voyage en Californie pour l'Observation du Passage de Venus sur le Disque du Soleil, le 3 juin 1769.

LETTER 58

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Critics.)

In the Republic of Letters[162] there is a sect whose members are savants at little cost. These are the critics. A man needs many years for knowing something in the human sciences; but in criticism (such is the custom) one is an expert from the first day. To submit oneself to slow progress in the understanding of mathematical speculation, in the experiments of physics, in the labyrinths of history, in the misinterpretations of jurisprudence, is to forget the shortness of our lives, which usually does not go beyond sixty years, minus from these what is taken up by the debility of childhood, the wantonness of youth, and the infirmities of old age. Our pride is quite humbled with this reflection: the time that I will live, compared with what I need for knowing, is such that it hardly merits being called time.--How much more this determination pleases us!: If for this reason I cannot learn any science or art, I shall persuade the world and myself that I am master of

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[162] Republic of Letters: The term first appeared in Latin form in the fifteenth century. It was located, not in a place, but in the relations among scholars and other people, according to Anne Goldgar (Impolite Learning, Yale University Press, 1995). It fostered an identity as an international community of scholars based upon the code of civility. It was egalitarian, ignoring distinctions of nationality and religion, and consisted of lending books, sharing information, and traveling to foreign countries to meet others interested in similar projects.

them all, and I shall pronounce my opinions, ex tripode,[163] on whatever I may hear, see, or read.

But do not think that in this class are included the true critics. They are most worthy of total respect. Well, then, you will surely ask, in what way are they different and how are the differences among them to be seen? The fixed rule for not confusing them is this: the good ones speak little on definite subjects, and with moderation; the others are like bulls, who form a vicious intent, close their eyes, and charge at everything in front of them: a man, a horse, a dog, even though they thrust themselves upon the sword right up to the heart. If the comparison should seem vulgar to you, for being one of a rational being with a beast, be assured that it is not so much so, since I can scarcely call men those who do not cultivate their reason, and only make use of a species of instinct which they have for causing harm to whatever appears before them, friend or enemy, weak or strong, innocent or guilty.

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[163] Ex tripode: According to the Oxford English Dictionary,a tripode is a three-legged vessel; a pot or cauldron resting on three legs; a similar ornamental vessel, often presented as a prize or as a votive offering. In a more specific sense, the reference is to a vessel of this kind at the shrine of Apollo at Delphi, on which the priestess seated herself to deliver oracles; hence, allusively, the Delphic Oracle, any oracle, or oracular seat. Thus, ex tripode = "from the oracle's seat."

LETTER 59

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Method of writing history.)

In Europe, they say that history is the book of kings. If this is so, and history continues being written as it has been until now, I firmly believe that the kings are destined to read many lies in addition to the ones they hear. I do not doubt that a precise account of the principal deeds of men, and information on the formation, apogee, decadence, and ruin of states, would in a few pages give to a ruler lessons on what he has to do, based upon what others have done. But where can one find this account and this information? There are none, Ben-Beley, there are none, nor can there be any. This last statement must astonish you, but it will be easy for you to believe if you reflect upon it. A deed cannot be written down but at the time in which it occurs, or after it occurs. At the time of the event, what pen will be responsible for it, without being hampered by some concern or reason of state? After the event, upon what will the historian work that he will leave to posterity, except upon that left written by the authors to whom I have referred?

"Quite happily would I burn," I was saying to my friend Nuño at a tertulia a few evenings ago, "all the histories except that of the present century. I would give the task of writing this to a man of ample discernment, impartiality, and judgment. The unadorned facts, without the reflections which commonly make the merit of the historian more important than the history in the minds of the readers, would

form the entire work."

"And where would it be published?" said Nuño. "And who would read it? And what effects would it produce? And what payment would the writer receive? It used to be necessary," he added lightheartedly, "it used to be necessary to publish it near Cape Horn or the Cape of Good Hope, and to read it to the Hottentots or to the Patagonians; and even so, I suspect that some savants who, according to their fashion, are surely among those people that we are kind enough to call savages, would, upon hearing about so many such events, say to anyone who might be reading them: 'How extraordinary!--Do not read these fables full of rubbish and absurdities.' And the young people would continue with their dancing, hunting, or fishing, without dreaming that there might be some place in the known world where such things could happen.

"Let history, then, go on being written as it is done today. Let them leave to posterity information about our century, with more or less the same authority that antiquity transmitted to us concerning the labors of Hercules and the conquest of the Golden Fleece. Mistake fable for history, with no more difference than this one being written in prose and the other in verse; let the harmony be different, but the truth the same, and let our sons be as ignorant about what happens in our century as we are about what happened in that of Aeneas."

One of the tertulianos[164] attempted to split the difference betwixt the ironic

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[164] Tertulianos: Persons who attend a tertulia.

project of Nuño and the one formerly shewn, opining that three types of history should be written in each century: one for the people, in which there might actually be horses filled with men and weapons, friendly and adverse gods, and marvelous events;[165] another more authentic, but not as sincere, which might reveal all the springs which move great machines (this one would be for the use of the bourgeoisie); and another, loaded with political and moral reflections, in small print runs, solely reserved ad usum Principum.[166]

This scheme in the political realm does not seem bad to me, and I believe that some Spanish historians have carried it out, namely: Garibay with the first purpose, Mariana with the second, and Solís[167] with the third. But I am not a politician, nor do I aspire to be one; I wish only to be a philosopher, and in this spirit I say that the truth alone is worthy of filling the time and occupying the attention of all men, although especially in regard to those who command others.

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[165] One for the people. . . .and marvelous events: In the platonic conception of history, that intended for the common people should be mythological.

[166] Ad usum Principum: (L. "for the use of rulers").

[167] Garibay . . . Mariana . . . Solís: Three prominent Spanish historians. Esteban de Garibay y Zamalloa (1533-99) was the official historian of Felipe II. Garibay edited a forty-volume universal history of Spain, known as the Compendio historial (1570-72). Juan de Mariana (1536-1624) was a Jesuit priest and a Scholastic. His thirty-volume work Historiae de rebus Hispaniae (1592) was a history of Spain from its earliest times. Antonio de Solís y Ribadeneyra (1610-86) was a dramatist, historian and private secretary to Felipe IV. Solís is regarded as one of the last great writers of the Spanish Baroque period. His Historia de la conquista de México (1684) was the most important European source on Latin America until the early nineteenth century.

LETTER 60

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Conversation concerning nations.)

If men saw the difference betwixt the use of abuse and the fact of law, obstinate and insufferable controversies in their familiar conversations would not be so frequent. The contrary, which is what is practiced, causes continual confusion which mixes much bitterness into the sweetness of society. The preoccupations of each individual make denser the darkness, and men are bent upon seeing more clearly whilst the more they close their eyes.

But where the abuse of this custom is most evident is in the conversation of nations, whether speaking of their temperaments, or of their customs, or of their languages.

"I recall my father telling me," says Nuño, speaking of this very thing, "that at the end of the past century, during the time of the illness of Carlos II, when Louis XIV was taking all measures for gaining the love of the Spaniards as the principal step for his grandson's ascension to the Spanish throne, all French squadrons were ordered to conform as much as they could to Spanish customs whenever they arrived at a Peninsular port. This formed a most principal point of the instructions carried by the commanders of squadrons, ships, and galleys. It was quite in accordance with good politics, and could open the way very well for future projects; but the abuse of this wise precaution had a bad effect upon an incident which

occurred in Cartagena. What happened is that a small French squadron arrived at that port. Its commander assigned an officer with a launch to introduce himself to the governor and to render him his compliments. He ordered him to observe, before landing at the wharf, if there were some particular in the dress of the Spaniards which could be imitated by the French officers, in order to conform as much as they could with the customs of the country, and to report to him immediately before landing.

"The officer arrived at the wharf at two in the afternoon, the hottest time during a July siesta. He saw that people were present at the disembarkation; but the rigor of the season had kept many persons away from the wharf, and there was only by chance a grave religious man wearing eyeglasses, and not far away, an old caballero, also with eyeglasses. The French officer, an intrepid young man, more apt for leading a fire ship to burn a squadron or to board an enemy vessel than to make moral speculations upon the customs of peoples, inferred that all vassals of the Spanish crown, of whatever sex, age, or class they might be, were obligated by some law or by some pragmatic sanction with the force of law,[168] to wear by night and day at least a pair of eyeglasses. He went back on board his commander's vessel and reported to him what he had observed. To say just what was the haste of the officers for finding so many pairs of eyeglasses for however many noses there

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[168] Some pragmatic sanction with the force of law: A pragmatic sanction, according to the Diccionario de Autoridades (1726-39) is: "the law or statute, which is promulgated and published, in order to remedy some excess, abuse or harm that is experienced in the republic."

were, is inexplicable. By coincidence, one of the officer's servants, who was engaged in some sort of commerce, was transporting a few dozen eyeglasses, and at once the officer put on his own, as did many of those who accompanied him, and the crew of the launch, for the return trip to the wharf.

"When they returned to it, news of the French squadron's arrival had filled the wharf with people, whose surprise at the disembarkation of the French officers was not to be compared with anything in this world: nearly all young men, resplendent in their uniforms, cheerful in their behavior, and laughing in their conversation--but with such inconvenient accessories. Two or three companies of galley soldiers, who composed part of the garrison, had come out with the people; and since that type of amphibious troops is comprised of the most heartless people in Spain, they could not keep from laughing. The French, with little patience, asked for the cause of the mockery with more desire to punish than to inquire. The Spaniards doubled their outbursts of laughter, and the situation ended in what can be expected betwixt common soldiers. The governor of the plaza and the commander of the squadron responded to the tumult. The prudence of both men, knowing whence originated the cause of the disorder, and the consequences it could have, with some trouble calmed the people, the two leaders little able to understand each other, since neither the latter understood Spanish nor the former French; and less understood each other a chaplain of the squadron and a clergyman of the plaza, who, with a desire to be interpreters, began to speak Latin, comprehending nothing of the mutual questions and answers on account of the great variance in

pronunciation and of the long time which the first one spent laughing at the second one because he pronounced the j harshly, and the second one at the first one because he pronounced the diphthong au as if it were an o, whilst the soldiers and sailors were brawling with each other."

LETTER 61

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Judgment of the story of Don Quixote.)

In this nation, there is a book which is much applauded by all the others.[169] I have read it, and have without a doubt enjoyed it; but the suspicion that the literal meaning is one thing, and the truth quite different, does not cease to vex me. No work needs Nuño's dictionary more than this one. What one reads is a series of nonsensical remarks of a madman, who believes that there are giants, sorcerers, etc.; some maxims in the mouth of a fool; and many well-examined scenes of life well-examined. But beneath this appearance is, in my opinion, a concurrence of profound and important matters.

I believe that the character of some European writers (I am speaking of the classical ones of each nation) is as follows: the Spaniards write half of what they imagine; the French, more than what they think, due to the quality of their style; the

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[169] A book which is much applauded: Don Quixote, by Miguel de Cervantes (Part I, 1605; Part II, 1615).

Germans tell everything, but in such a way that no one understands half of it; the English write for themselves alone.

LETTER 62

From Ben-Beley to Nuño

(Reply to Letter 42.)

The style of your letter, which I have just received, proves to me the truth of what Gazel has so often written to me about you. I did not doubt that there could be hombres de bien among you. Never did I believe that honesty and rectitude were things peculiar to this or to another clime; but even so, I believe that it has been Gazel's singular fortune to meet you. I ask him to visit you frequently, and you to send me an account of your life, promising you that I shall send to you a most exact one of my own since, from what I see, we two are much alike, mutually deserving to be acquainted with each other. May Allah protect you.

LETTER 63

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Continuation of Letter 51.)

In accordance with the definition of the word politics and its derivative politician as my friend Nuño understands it, I see a number of men who wish to

merit this name. They are such that, they tell truth and lies in the same tone; they give no meaning to the words God, father, mother, son, brother, friend, truth, obligation, duty, justice, and many others that are regarded with great respect and pronounced with great care by those of us who do not consider ourselves worthy of aspiring to such a high timbre with such exalted competitors. They change faces a thousand times more often than their clothing. They have a ready-made provision of courtesies, of felicitations and of condolences. They possess an abundance of ambiguous words; they know a thousand phrases of great ostentation and no meaning. They have acquired at the cost of immense effort innumerable quantities of frowns, smiles, laughter, tears, sobs, sighs, and (in order that understanding be obvious) even swoons and fainting spells. Their souls inhabit flexible and manageable bodies which have a dozen postures for speaking, listening, admiring, depreciating, approving, and reproving--this profound theoretical-practical science extending from the most important action to the most frivolous gesture. They are, in short, weather vanes which indicate the wind, clocks which indicate the hour of the sun, stones which manifest the law of metals, and a species of general index of the great book of courtiers. Then, why do these men not make a fortune?--Because they spend their lives in the useless exercises and vague practices of their science. How does it result that do they not derive benefit from their efforts?

"They lack," says Nuño, "one thing."

"What is the thing that they lack?" I ask.

"A trifle!" says Nuño. "They lack nothing less than the power of reason."

LETTER 64

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Petitions to Gazel.)

Just a few days after my introduction in some homes of this Court, I received the three following petitions. Since it was then precisely the season that the Christians call Carnival or Shrovetide, I thought they were probably pranks by those who are so accustomed on such days in these countries, since I could never believe that there were petitions of this sort written seriously. But Nuño looked at them and told me that he did not doubt the sincerity of those who produced them; and since they were remitted to his inspection, not only did he call them favorable trade petitions, but also as a friend he insisted quite efficaciously that I accept the petitions and requests.

If they captivate you with the same good humor as they did Nuño, I believe that you shall approve of them. Do not imagine that they are incredible, as I am witnessing even more ridiculous incidents, most regularly, I assure you. I will set down for you the three petitions in the order that they came into my hands.

First petition.--"Señor Moor: Juana Cordoncillos,[170] Magdalena de la Seda[171] and Co., milliners established in Madrid since the year 1748, in the name of and with the authority of all the guild, say to you with the greatest respect that: having fulfilled the commissions and orders within and without the Court, with the general approbation of all the heads of our customers in the art of cutting out, basting, and assembling of hats according to the various styles which there have been in the aforesaid period of time, are in grave danger of losing our wealth, and what is more, our honor and fame, because of the scarceness of time in the matter of invention of new styles in our school, threatening irreparably in the near future the most noble art of sombreripidia.[172]

"When our army returned from Italy, the hat à la Chambéry was introduced, with the point of the front corner so sharp that, for want of a lancet, it could have served for bloodletting, even if it were for a very young girl. This style lasted for many years, with no more innovation than that of some indianos who lined their hats made this way with some species of cloth formed from beaver pelt.

"Wearing hats in the Prussian style opened a new era in our guild, because since then the shape of hats changed, with a great lessening in the sharpness, the width, and the length of the said corner. It continued thus until the war in Portugal,

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[170] Cordoncillos: Rib, wale, cord (on fabric such as corduroy).

[171] Seda: Silk.

[172] Sombreripidia: A word apparently invented by Cadalso which probably means "the education of hat-making."

the system being innovated as the returning soldiers wore and introduced other hats made à la Beauvau. This change gave new development to our commerce.

"We were all on the point of publicly praying against making known the fashion of carrying hats beneath the arm, as endeavored some of those in Madrid who are authorities upon the subject. This fright lasted a short time: they covered their heads again to the detriment of their exquisite hairstyles; we triumphed once more over the hairstylists; and our industry again flourished. We wanted to sing a Te Deum as an expression of thanks for this favorable revolution; we were not permitted to do so; but our Junior Minister pointed out the revolution in the annals of our hat-making realm and, pointed out as it was, he put it into the archives.

"This style fell out of fashion, and the making of hats in the Swiss style was introduced, with whose production, we thought, as much cash would soon circulate amongst us as there can be in the fourteen cantons; but the French hairstylists put an end to this fashion with the introduction of other, almost invisible, hats, for those who do not have good vision or good microscopes.

"The English, eternal emulators of the French, not only in arms and letters but also in industry, were going to introduce us to their caps for horse riding, with which we would have been hopelessly lost; but God's mercy spared us from this affliction. And we remained as before, since we see the perpetuation of hats fashioned à la invisible with a continuation and, let us put it this way, an unprecedented immutability, not even seen by our ancient members of the guild.

This constancy is probably very good morally; but politically, and in particular for our field, it is very bad. We no longer count upon this trade. Any valet, lackey, liveried servant, knows how to make them, and we become less useful each day; in this way, we shall become completely redundant on account of the number of artisans, and we shall have to beg for alms. On this assumption, and considering that our irremediable ruin was now already beyond help, if you had not come to Spain, we inform you of the sadness of our situation. Therefore:

"We beseech you to be kind enough to give us a notebook of illustrations, in each of which is painted, sketched, engraved, or printed, one of the turbans which are fashionable in your country, to see if we can take the shape of them for models, patterns, figures, and casts, in order to make hats for our young people. We are quite convinced that hats à la marrueca[173] will not displease them; rather, I believe that your countrymen will not regret seeing some analogy betwixt their heads and those of our petimetres. Hoping to receive the favor of the eminent gifts of your excellency, whose life may God protect for many years."

Second.--"Señor Moor: The representatives of the tailors' guild inform you with the greatest respect that there having been until now the novelty in fashion which has most given us a living, and the fertility of human reason undoubtedly having become extinct, since there is no longer useful invention in the cutting of

[173] À la marrueca: A nonexistent style of hat.

long coats, frocks and knee-breeches, overcoats, redingotes,[174] cabriolés[175] and capes, we are desirous of finding someone to enlighten us. The knee-breeches of the latest fashion, those of the one before, and those of the one before that, are now standard; wide, narrow, with lots of buttons, with few, with small buttons, with large buttons, have drained the discourse, and reason appears to have found its non plus ultra on the subject of knee-breeches; and therefore:

"We beseech you to be kind enough to give us several designs for knee-breeches, small[176] and large,[177] which are fashionable in Africa, so that, placed upon the table of our dean and examined by our oldest and gravest brethren, something may be learned about what is worthwhile to introduce in the style of knee-breeches; we believe that our profits and standing will return to their highest level if we bring to light something new which can be accommodated to the knee-breeches of our Europeans, even though it be derived from African knee-breeches. Desiring compassion from the benevolence of your Excellency, whose life may God protect for many years."

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[174] Redingotes: Great-coats (from English "riding coat").

[175] Cabriolés: Short capes without sleeves.

[176] Small (knee-breeches): Calzoncillos (a type of underdrawers).

[177] Large (knee-breeches): Calzonazos (wide, perhaps baggy pants; one wearing them considered to be a weakling or a softy; also a term for henpecked husband).

Third.--"Señor Gazel: The seven oldest members of the Catalonian shoemakers' guild, at your service with the greatest respect, in the name of all our brethren, including elders, portaleros,[178] and cobblers, inform you that we are going to suffer the most scandalous shoemaking bankruptcy that there can be, because in addition to the lesser consumption of shoes, arising from so many people traveling by coach who always had to go on foot and used to walk a short time ago, the little variety in shoes, both in the cutting as well as the stitching and color, is impoverishing us.

"The time that the red heel lasted is past; the season for wearing the low buckle is also past, to our great benefit, since a sixth less material went into a pair of shoes, and they were sold at the same price. Everything has ceased now, and the high shoe appears to be fixed, at least for what remains of the present century, because what there are seem to be no more than buskins or footwear of St. Michael. Besides the damage resulting to us from styles not changing, the reduction of a seventh more material that goes into them still remains, without an increase in the established price. Therefore:

"We beseech you to be kind enough to direct to us a complete set of boots, half boots, shoes, mules, slippers, hemp sandals, and any other species of African footwear, in order to derive from them the innovations which to us seem adaptable to the pavement of the streets of Madrid. Hoping to be in your debt for the

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[178] Portaleros: Tax collectors (also called "octroi guard") who collect duties on certain goods or products at the gates or entrances to a city.

kindness of your excellency, whose life may God and St. Crispin[179] protect for many years."

These are the petitions so far. Nuño, as I have mentioned, read them and supported them efficaciously, and is even in the habit of reading them to me with commentaries from his own imagination, since he realizes that my own is somewhat melancholic. Last night, he said to me after he finished reading them:

"Look, Gazel, these petitioners are right. The women who baste hats, for example--do they not form for the State a most meritorious guild? Does not the knowledge that our soldiers' hats are cut out, basted, put together, trimmed with gold braid, and fixed with cockades by the hands of Fulana, Zutana, or Mengana[180] contribute to the fame of our military? Those who write the histories of our century--will they not receive a thousand thanks from posterity for having taught it that, in a certain year, a person was living in a certain house on a certain street, who basted the hats of two hundred cadets of the guards, four hundred infantrymen, twenty-eight cavalrymen, eight hundred subaltern officers, three hundred captains, and fifty superior officers? Well, how much greater the honor for our century if someone were to write down the name, age, profession, life, and habits of the one who introduced such-and-such an innovation in the principal part of our modern

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[179] St. Crispin: The patron saint of shoemakers.

[180] Fulana, Zutana, or Mengana: Names meaning "so-and-so" when each is used alone; used together, and in the masculine, the equivalent of "Tom, Dick, and Harry."

heads! What repugnance there was for the hats later designed! What strategems were created for overcoming this obstacle--such as the abandonment of hats which lacked such-and-such an adornment, etc.!

"As far as the tailors are concerned, their request seems quite proper to me, and no less just the aspiration of the shoemakers. Believe it or not, I have spent a few seasons as a petimetre, having been at the height of my fashion fever when the low buckle on shoes used to be in style (something which is now only left for liveried servants, coachmen, and majos[181]). I assure you that, whether it is my way of walking, or whether it used to rain a lot in those days, or whether I used to be somewhat rigorous and excessive in observing the laws of fashion, I recall that I was wearing the buckle so extremely low that I usually left it out in the street. And one day or another, when I climbed upon the foot-board of a coach to speak with a lady who was coming from the Pardo,[182] I stepped down hurriedly from the foot-board and my shoe got caught in it; the team of mules tore off galloping at more

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[181] Majos: The phenomenon of the majo flourished in late eighteenth-century Spain. According to Joseph Baretti, an eighteenth-century traveler: "The Madrid majo is a low fellow who dresses sprucely, affects the walk of a gentleman, looks blunt and menacing, and endeavours after dry wit upon every occasion" (qtd. In Janis Tomlinson, Francisco Goya y Lucientes [1746-1828] 27). Tomlinson adds: "Their costumes were emulated by aristocrats at masked balls, and they appeared in the theatre as characters in one-act comedies and in widely disseminated popular prints." Generally speaking, a majo was the native Spanish rival of the foreign-influenced petimetre.

[182] Pardo: A royal hunting lodge and palace set in parkland just outside Madrid's city limits. Surrounding the palace is an elegant eighteenth-century village of the same name.

than three leagues per hour.[183] I was left more than a long half league from the Puerta de San Vicente, with one shoe missing, and precisely upon a beautiful winter afternoon when people had deserted Madrid to bask in the sun; and there I was, feeling as foolish as a trained monkey, having to go down the entire avenue and a great part of Madrid with one shoe missing. I fell sick from embarrassment, and I stayed at home until the fashion of wearing the high buckle appeared. But since between the former extreme and the one of today, in which people are now, years have passed, and for a long time I have been observing the slow ascent of the aforesaid buckles up along the foot, with the impatience and concern of an astronomer who watches the rising of a star along the horizon, until having it at the point where he needs it for his observation.

"So give these people models to follow, since perhaps there will be something in them suitable for me. The task ought to be yours alone: because if the other artisans know that your guidance is profitable to the three guilds which have solicited it, the others will come with equal vexatiousness to beg you for the same favor."

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[183] Three leagues per hour: About 10 mph (a league being about three statute miles).

LETTER 65

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Abuse of the virtue of the good.)

"I once found myself," Nuño was telling me not long ago, "in the situation of people disdaining me for being a fool, or abhorring me for being capable of taking revenge. I wasted no time in choosing, in spite of my self-esteem, the concept which most lowered my spirits. They humiliated me to such a degree that nothing could console me but this reflection that I make quite frequently. By opening my mouth, they would tremble at me instead of mock me, but I would esteem myself less. Their authority can vanish, but my inner testimony will accompany me beyond the grave. Let them, then, do as they wish; I shall do what I ought."

This doctrine is undoubtedly excellent, and my friend Nuño does quite well in observing it, but the harsh reality is that wicked persons abuse the patience and virtue of the good ones. To me this does not seem a lesser villainy than that of the thief who robs and kills the traveler he finds asleep and defenseless in the forest. It even seems greater to me, because the unhappy victim is not aware of the evil being done to him; but the virtuous man in this case is continually seeing the hand which is mortally wounding him. This, nevertheless, they say, is common in the world.

"Not so much," responded Nuño. "People are vexed by this superabundance of honesty and usually take revenge whenever they can. What

pleased me most in that situation was the awareness of being original in my conduct. I even thanked them for having obliged me by making such a rigorous test of my honesty.[184] From their supreme cruelty I obtained the greatest consolation, and what for others might have been a rigorous torment was for me a new species of delight. I considered myself a second-class Belisarius,[185] and would have traded places only with that general, in order to be in the first class, contemplating that my satisfaction would have been greater, the higher my elevation and the lower my fall."

LETTER 66

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Various classes of writers.)

In Europe, there are several classes of writers. Some write whatever comes to their pens; others, what they are ordered to write; others, totally the opposite of what they feel; others, what pleases the public with flattery; others, what shocks it with reprimand. Those of the first class are exposed to more glory and more disasters, because they can produce greater successes and blunders. Those of the second are pleased with finding guaranteed recompense for their work; but if, after

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[184] Honesty: hombría de bien. The most notable moral quality of being an hombre de bien is honesty.

[185] Belisarius: The famous Byzantine general(505?-565) of the Eastern Roman Empire who served under Emperor Justinian.

publishing it, the one who ordered it dies or retires, and one from an opposing system comes in to succeed him, they usually encounter punishment instead of recompense. Those of the third are liars in block capital letters, as Nuño calls them, and deserve for their writings the odium of the entire public. Those of the fourth have some excuse, as long as the flattery is not very servile. Those of the fifth class deserve appreciation for their courage, since they need no small amount of it for reprimanding someone who is comfortable in his vices, or strongly believes that the free exercise of them is a most estimable privilege.

Each nation has had some more or less rigid critics; but I think that in order to exercise this position with some respect on the part of the common people, a critic is needed who undertakes to be untainted by the defects that he is going to censure. Who in ancient Rome would have the patience to see Seneca writing against luxury and magnificence with the same hand that he was using with notable avarice in the amassing of millions? What effect could all the praise for the golden mean produce on someone who aspires to nothing but surpassing the wealthy in splendor? Doing one thing and writing the contrary is the most tyrannical means for ridiculing the simplicity of the common people, and also the most powerful means for exasperating them, if they manage to comprehend this artifice.

LETTER 67

Nuño to Gazel

(Pedantry.)

Since your arrival in Bilbao, I have not received any correspondence from you, which I await impatiently, in order to see the opinion you form of those people, who are nothing like any other. Although in the Court the people look like those of other courts, the inhabitants of the countryside and provinces are truly original. Language, customs, clothing, are totally peculiar to them, without the least connection to others.

News of literature, which you so much request, we do not have these days; but in recompense I will tell you what happened to me a few days ago in the gardens of the Retiro[186] with a friend of mine. (And in truth they say that he is really a savant because, although he spends twelve hours in bed, four at the dressing table, five in visits, and three on the promenade, it is rumored that he has read all the books that have been written and, in prophetic vision, all that will be written, in Hebrew, Syrian, Chaldean, Egyptian, Chinese, Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian, French, English, German, Dutch, Portuguese, "Swiss," "Prussian," Danish,

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[186] The Retiro: The Parque del Retiro in Madrid, named for Felipe II's royal palace, which once stood here. The park was the scene of pageants, bullfights, and mock sea battles. In the eighteenth century, formally-dressed visitors were allowed to stroll and ride in the park. In 1869, it was fully opened to the public, and has ever since been a favorite spot for relaxation in Madrid.

Russian, Polish, Hungarian, and even the Basque grammar of Padre Larramendi.[187]) This chap, striking up a conversation with me about the books and papers given to the public these days, said to me:

"I have seen several little such modern works." And then he took a pinch of snuff, smiled, and continued: "They lack one thing, yes, one thing."

"They probably lack many and probably have more than enough," said I.

"No, no, it is not that," my friend replied, and took another pinch of snuff, smiled again, and took two or three steps, and continued: "Only one, which would characterize the good taste of our writers. Do you know what it is, Señor Don Nuño?" he said, turning the snuffbox around betwixt his thumb and index finger.

"No," I responded laconically.

"No?" pressed the other. "Well, I shall tell you." And again he took a pinch of snuff, smiled, and took three more steps. "They lack," he said with affected solemnity, "they lack at the head of each paragraph a Latin text taken from some classical author, with its reference and even information on the edition, with that

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[187] Padre Larramendi: Padre Manuel Larramendi (Manuel de Garagorri Itaztxe), a Basque priest, lexicographer and historian. His El imposible vencido. Arte de la lengua vascongada (The Unvanquished. Arte of the Basque Language, 1729) was the first comprehensive grammar of Basque (considered the oldest language in Spain). Larramendi also compiled a trilingual dictionary in Latin, Castilian and Basque which was published in 1745.

thing of the mihi[188] in parenthesis; with this, the writer gives the public to understand that he is master of the entire century of Augustus, materialiter et formaliter.[189] What do you think?" And he took a double portion of tobacco, smiled and strolled on, glanced at me, and abandoned me, in order to give his opinion on a new ruffled ladies' dress which had caught his eye on the avenue.

I was left alone, reasoning thus: this man, such as God created him, is considered to be a fountain of knowledge, a gulf of erudition, and an ocean of literature; then, I will do well if I follow his instructions. Farewell, I said to myself, farewell, wise Spaniards of 1500, wise Frenchmen of 1600, wise Englishmen of 1700; it is a matter of looking for sententious fragments from the time of Augustus and, thanks to the fact that they are not sending us back a few centuries earlier in search of lines to put at the head of what will be written in the year which, if the calendar does not lie, is the year 1774 of the Christian era,[190] 1187 of the Hegira of the Arabs, 6973 of the Creation of the world, 4731 of the universal flood, 4018 of the founding of Spain, 3943 of that of Madrid, 2549 of the era of the Olympic games, 192 of the Gregorian Reform, 16 of the reign of our religious and pious

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[188] Mihi: Latin dative, first person singular for "to / for myself." This type of pedantic citation would be printed thus: "(mihi 232)," meaning: "in my edition, page 232.")

[189] Materialiter et formaliter: (L. "in matter and in form"). The endings of the two words were added by scholastic philosophers when separating the two elements in metaphysical speculations. Cadalso is ridiculing the pedantry of Nuño's friend by putting this phrase in his mouth.

[190] The year 1774: Generally accepted as the year in which Cadalso completed the Moroccan Letters.

monarch Carlos III, may God protect him.

I went home and, without opening more than one work, found a complete collection of these epigraphs. I summarized them and wrote them down with all formality; I called my copyist (whom you already know, an abundantly extraordinary man), and told him:

"See here, Don Joaquín, you are an archivist, and a worthy trustee of all my papers, slips of paper, and sundry documents, in prose and in verse. Therefore, take this list, which appears to be nothing but amorous glosses for gallants and ladies. And be aware that, if in the future I fall into the temptation of writing something for the public, you must put a few lines of these on each of my works, depending on which is most pertinent, even though it may be stretching the meaning."

"Very well," said Don Joaquín (who by this time had already taken out his eyeglasses, cut a new quill, and tried out a 'Dear Sir,' most beautiful and with many flourishes, in the salutation of a letter).

"You will employ them in this way," I continued. "If I am presented the opportunity, as I believe I shall be, of some dissertation upon the great superficiality of things, put that of Persius:

Oh curas hominum! Oh quantum est in rebus inane![191]

"When I publish very sad dirges over the death of some celebrated

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[191] Oh curas hominum! Oh quantum est in rebus inane!: Persius, Satire I, 1. "O human woes! O so much vanity!"

personage, whose loss be lamentable, notice how pertinent will be the well-known severity of some of the soldiers who took Troy, saying with Virgil:

...Quis talia fando

Myrmidonum, Dolopumve, aut duri miles Ulixi

Temperet a lacrimis![192]

"God save me from writing about love, but if I stumble into this human weakness and I amble through those mountains and vales, forests and crags, vexing the nymph Echo with the names of Amarilis, Aminta, Nise, Corina, Delia, Galatea, and others, however much I rush you, do not forget that of Ovid:

Scribere jussit Amor.[193]

"If I sometime start to console a friend quite gently, or myself, upon some of the infinite misfortunes which all we heirs of Adam can be prey to, have the kindness to put, in very pretty letters, that of Horace:

Aequam memento rebus in arduis

Servare mentem.[194]

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[192] ...Quis talia fando / Myrmidonum, Dolopumve, aut duri miles Ulixi / Temperet a lacrimis!: Virgil, Aeneid, Book II, 6-8. "What Myrmidon or Dolopian, what brutal soldier of Ulysses, could tell such a tale and refrain from tears?"

[193] Scribere jussit Amor: Ovid, Heroides, Epistle IV, 10. "Love makes one write."

[194] Aequam memento rebus in arduis / Servare mentem: Horace, Odes, Book II, Ode III, 1-2. "Remember to preserve a composed mind in adversity."

"When I declaim in writing against riches, because I do not have them, as others do (and those who declaim against them do a lesser evil than those who declaim against them and think only of acquiring them)--what harm you shall do, if you do not put, stealing from Virgil, what he said on a most serious, grave, and stupendous occasion!:

Quid non mortalia pectora cogis,

Auri sacra fames![195]

"I shall very much regret that the depravity of customs should cause me to fall into the stupidity of celebrating confusion; but as this machine[196] of ours is so fragile--how should I know if I will someday begin to applaud what I have always reprimanded, and chant that it is a useless task to protect women, daughters, and sisters? To this pious production, do me the small kindness of putting, from the mouth of Horace:

Inclusum Danaen turris ahenea,

Robur atque fores, ac vigilum

Canum tristes excubiae, munierant

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[195] Quid non mortalia pectora cogis, / Auri sacra fames!: Virgil, Aeneid Book III, 56-57. "O cursed lust for gold, to what do you not drive the human heart!"

[196] This machine: I.e., the human body.

Satis nocturnis ab adulteris.[197]

"If I someday manage to profane my pen because I write against what I think, and I say among other things that this century is worse than any other, intending to ingratiate myself with the elders from the past century, I can do it at very little cost, provided only that you have the kindness to put, at the head, what the very same Horace said of his own century:

...Clament periisse pudorem

Cuncti paene patres.[198]

"If the skies of Madrid were not so clear and beautiful, and became sad, opaque, and gloomy, as in London (whose sadness, opacity, and gloom, according to physical geographers, depend upon the vapors of the Thames, from coal smoke, and other causes), I would dare to publish the Noches lúgubres,[199] which I have composed upon the death of a friend of mine, in the style of the work written by Dr.

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[197] Inclusum Danaen turris ahenea, / Robur atque fores, ac vigilum canum / Tristes excubiae, munierant satis/Nocturnis ab adulteris: Horace, Odes, Book III, Ode XVI, 1-4. "Tower of bronze and doors of oak and the hostile vigilance of sullen dogs would have quite securely kept imprisoned Danaë from nocturnal lovers."

[198] ...Clament periisse pudorem / Cuncti paene patres: Horace, Epistles, Book II, Epistle I, 80-81. "May most fathers cry out that modesty has perished."

[199] Noches lúgubres: the other main work by Cadalso, Lugubrious Nights (written between 1771 and 1774). It is almost certainly the first fully Romantic European prose work, predating even The Sorrows of Young Werther, by Goethe. For an English translation of this work, see Matt C. Waldroop's edition , José Cadalso's "Lugubrious Nights" and the Agony of Romantic Grief (University Press of the South, 2008).

Young.[200] It would be printed on black paper with yellow letters, and the epigraph (in my opinion, quite opportune, although it must be brought forward from the catastrophe of Troy to a particular case) would be that of:

...Crudelis ubique

Luctus, ubique pavor, et plurima noctis imago.[201]

"When we publish, my Don Joaquín, the collection of letters which some friends have written to me upon various occasions (because money is made from everything today), Horace would come in handy, and we shall say with him:

Nil ego praetulerim jucundo sanus amico.[202]

"Because many poets are called rogues, laughingstocks, blockheads, buffoons, tricksters, and other such things, poetry has fallen much from the ancient

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[200] In the style of the work written by Dr. Young: The frontispiece of Noches lúgubres does indeed contain this statement. Between 1742 and 1745, Doctor Edward Young, a poet belonging to the "English school of melancholy," published his highly influential book Night Thoughts. This work is considered to be one of the keys to the transformation of European thought which made Romanticism possible. In Night Thoughts a tormented conscience, in the night and in solitude, gives voice within itself to the dormant pains of all humanity--an attitude summed up by Young's famous line "I mourn for millions."

[201] ...Crudelis ubique / Luctus, ubique pavor, et plurima noctis imago: Virgil, Aeneid, Book II, 368-69. This phrase also appears on the frontispiece of Noches lúgubres: "everywhere, cruel weeping; everywhere, terror, and a thousand night images." In Virgil, mortis imago ("death images") appears, instead of noctis imago ("night images"), which is Cadalso's change in the text, for reasons of his own.

[202] Nil ego praetulerim jucundo sanus amico: Horace, Sermons, Book I, Sermon V, 44. "While I have sense, I shall prefer nothing to a cheerful friend." In Horace, contulerim ("shall equate /compare") appears, instead of praetulerim ("shall prefer"), which is Cadalso's change in the text.

esteem with which it was treated by the great poets of yore. Of course you see, my Don Joaquín, how pertinent will be a dissertation to restore the honor of true poetry, telling its origin, growth, decadence, ruin, and resurrection; and you also see, my Don Joaquín, how pertinent it would be to please ask Horace for a propitious bit of Latin, and to say:

Sic honor, et nomen divinis vatibus, atque

Carminibus venit.[203]

"When we see how much paper makes the presses groan in our time, who can possibly hold back his pen, however non-satirical it may be, and fail to repeat with the not-at-all flattering Juvenal?:

. . .Tenet insanabile

multos scribendi cacoethes . . .[204]

"It seems to me that, as a general rule, I must, as must all writers, either of papers such as this one, small, or of great tomes, such as some that I know of, write before everything, after the cross[205] and margin, that of Martial:

Sunt bona, sunt quaedam mediocria, sunt mala plura,

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[203] Sic honor, et nomen divinis vatibus, atque / Carminibus venit: Horace, Ars poetica, 400. "Fame and honor descended on holy poets and poems."

[204] . . .Tenet insanabile / multos scribendi cacoethes . . .: Juvenal, Satire VII, 51. "Many suffer from the incurable disease of writing..."

[205] The cross: In printing, an obelisk, as a mark of reference(†), in the form of a dagger.

Quae legis hic: aliter non fit, Avite, liber.[206]

"Whenever I see a book written in our times appearing before the public in pure, fluid, natural, easy, and genuine Castilian, such as used to be written in the time of my noble grandmother, I promise to give thanks to the author in the name of the deceased gentlemen Garcilaso, Cervantes, Mariana, Mendoza, Solís, and others (whom God may have pardoned), and the epigraph of my letter will be:

...Aevo rarissima nostro

Simplicitas...[207]

"I have, as you know, Don Joaquín, almost finished a treatise in opposition to the master arch-critic Feijoo,[208] in which I prove, contrary to the system of the Most Illustrious Reverend, that quite common, and as a legitimate consequence, not so rare, are the cases of goblins, witches, vampires, brucolacos,[209] sprites, and

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[206] Sunt bona, sunt quaedam mediocria, sunt mala plura, / Quae legis hic: aliter non fit, Avite, liber: Martial, Epigrams, Book I, Epigram XVI. "Some of what you read here is good, some is mediocre, and more is bad; a book, Avitus, cannot be made any other way."

[207] ...Aevo rarissima nostro / Simplicitas . . .: Ovid, The Art of Love, Book I, "Simplicity is nowadays very rare."

[208] Feijoo: Benito Jerónimo Feijoo (1676-1764), a Benedictine monk, and one of the major exponents of the Enlightenment in Spain. He believed in reason plus experimentation.

[209] Brucolacos: John Polidori (Byron's traveling companion and physician during his trip to Switzerland in 1816) says in the introduction to his short novel The Vampyre (1819): "Though the term Vampyre is the one in most general acceptation, there are several others synonymous with it, made use of in various parts of the world: as Vroucolocha, Vardoulacha, Goul, Broucoloka, etc."

phantoms, all of them authenticated by the depositions of reliable persons, such as nursemaids, grandmothers, old men of the village, and others of equal authority. I have made up my mind to publish it soon, with fine illustrations and accurate maps; individually, the engraving of the frontispiece, which represents the Campo de Barahona[210] with a general assembly of all the nobility and plebeians of witchcraft. At the end of it, we shall call again at the door of Horace, even though it be midnight; and, asking him for another needed text, we shall take from his hand that of:

Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas,

Nocturnos lemures, portentaque tesala rides?[211]

"The first sovereign in the world who dies, although he be an Indian cacique[212] among the Apaches, as soon as his death comes to my ears, will give me cause for an impassioned oration upon the equality of human conditions with respect to death, and back to Horace's house in search of:

Pallida mors aequo pulsat pede pauperim tabernas,

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[210] Campo de Barahona: This field, near Soria, was reputed to be a meeting-place for witches and sorcerers.

[211] Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas, / Nocturnos lemures, portentaque tesala rides?: Horace, Epistles, Book II, Epistle II, 208-9. "Do you laugh at dreams, magic terrors, wonders, witches / Night-walking spectres, Thessalian omens?

[212] Cacique: A chieftain or tribal leader.

Regumque turres . . .[213]

"I should not wish, for anything in the world, to be a man of collusion, serious business, important secrets, and mysterious employments--but rather, in order to go mad someday, to make a note of how much I knew and send my manuscript to be printed in Holland, only to make use of what Virgil said to the Gods of Hades:

Sit mihi fas audita loqui . . .[214]

"Let us suppose that someday I am an academic, although contemptible, of whichever of the academies or academes (write it as you wish, my Don Joaquín, long or short, for we shall not quarrel over this)--if, as I say of my subject, someday I am a member of one of them, even though it be the famous one of Argamasilla, which there was in the time of the most valiant gentleman Don Quixote, of errant memory, the day that I take a seat amongst so many upright persons, I shall deliver a long and moving speech upon the utility of the sciences, especially in the detail of softening dispositions and tempering customs. And should my companions be exhausted by the vexatiousness of my oratory, I shall make amends to them for the injury to their patience, by finishing with a saying by Ovid like:

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[213] Pallida mors aequo pulsat pede pauperim tabernas, / Regumque turres . . .: Horace, Odes, Book I, Ode IV, 4-15. "Pale death beats with impartial foot at the cottages of the poor and the castles of princes."

[214] Sit mihi fas audita loqui . . .: Virgil, Aeneid, Book VI, 266. "Grant me leave to state what I have heard."

Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes,

Emollit mores, nec sinit esse ferox.[215]

"Watch out, Don Joaquín, around here is operating a gang of young fellows which no one can tolerate. If someone speaks with a bit of the scholastic method, they begin laughing, and with four slashes or slaps they make him keep silent. You see, obviously, how insufferable this must necessarily be for those of us who, for forty years, have studied Aristotle, Galen, Vinniuss, and others, in whose reading we have lost our teeth, grown gray hairs, burnt the midnight oil, worn out our breasts, and nearly lost our sight.--Is that not true, Don Joaquín? Well, then, observe--I have them in my hands, and I shall put them to shame. I will say the same thing that Juvenal said of other rogues of his day, proving to them the respect with which in other times gray hairs used to be regarded, since he says that:

Credebant hoc grande nefas, et morte piandum,

Si juvenis vetulo non adsurrexat . . .[216]

"I would be glad to have a lot of money for many things, among them for doing a new edition of our dramatists of the past century, with notes, now critical, now apologetic, and beneath the portrait of Frey Lope de Vega Carpio (whom the

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[215] Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes,/ Emollit mores, nec sinit esse ferox: Ovid, Ex ponto, Epistle IX, 47-48. "A faithful study of the liberal arts humanizes character and permits it not to be cruel."

[216] Credebant hoc grande nefas, et morte piandum, / Si juvenis vetulo non adsurrexat . . .: Juvenal, Satire XIII, 54-55. "Men deemed it a heinous sin, worthy of death, if a youth did not rise before his elders . . ."

French have hit upon calling López, and saying that he was the son of a comedian), that saying of Ovid:

. . . Video meliora, proboque;

Deteriora sequor.[217]

"When we go to the usual village, and we write to our friends in Madrid, even though it be no more than asking them for the gazettes or entrusting them with some trifle, do not forget to put what Horace put, saying:

Scriptorum chorus omnis amat nemus, et fugit urbem.[218]

"Concerning the direction that criticism has taken in our times, it would not be bad, either, to publish a discourse which indicates the true method to be followed in order to be useful in the Republic of Letters; in this case, the phrase would be from Juvenal, vexed by the same thing:

Dat veniam corvis, vexat censura columbas.[219]

"Once, I set myself to considering how worthy a subject for an epic poem

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[217] ...Video meliora, proboque; / Deteriora sequor: Ovid, Metamorphoses, Book VII, 20-21. "I see the better way, and approve; I follow the worse."

[218] Scriptorum chorus omnis amat nemus, et fugit urbem: Horace, Epistles, Book II, Epistle II, 77. "Every chorus of writers loves the grove and flees the cities."

[219] Dat veniam corvis, vexat censura columbas: Juvenal, Satire II, 63. "Our censor absolves the crow and passes judgment on the pigeon."

was the coming of Felipe V[220] to Spain, how much adornment could be derived from the incidents which befell him during his reign, how much felicitous augury for Spain that he left behind good heirs. I had already formed the plan of my work, the division of the cantos, the characters of the principal heroes, the arrangement of some episodes, the imitations of Homer and Virgil, the introduction of the sublime and the marvelous, the description of some battles; and I had even begun the versification, taking great care to put r,r,r in the hard lines, l,l,l in the soft ones, avoiding the vulgar consonants ible, able, ente, eso, and other such ones. In short, the work was going along in earnest, when I perceived that the epic would for the moderns be the phoenix, a bird which everyone talks about but no one has seen. It was necessary to abandon it, and in truth I had sought out a most suitable epigraph for the subject, and it was from Virgil, when setting himself up as a prophet, he said in an inflated and emphatic voice:

Jam nova progenis caelo demittitur alto.[221]

"It would not be a bad thing to dedicate ourselves for a short time to looking for the mistakes, errors, blunders, faults, and obscure passages of the most classical authors, ours or foreign, and then to come out with a criticism of them apparently quite humble, but in reality quite arrogant (a species of humility very much in

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[220] Felipe V: The first Bourbon King of Spain (reigned 1700-46), grandson of Louis XIV and María Theresa (the sister of Carlos II, who had died without leaving a direct descendant).

[221] Jam nova progenis caelo demittitur alto: Virgil, Eclogue IV, 7. "Now a new progeny descends from Heaven."

fashion), and to put in the frontispiece, as a means of deference to the criticized author, that of Horace, to wit:

Quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus.[222]

"And in the same manner with the other subjects which can arise."

I see you laughing at this method, friend Gazel, because undoubtedly it must seem pure pedantry to you. But we see a thousand modern books which have nothing good but the epigraph.

LETTER 68

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Consequences of luxury.)

Examine the history of all nations, and you will deduce that each one has been established by the austerity of customs. In this state of strength, it has grown; from this growth, abundance has come; from this abundance, luxury has been produced; from this luxury, effeminacy has ensued; from this effeminacy, moral weakness has been born; from this moral weakness, its ruin has proceeded. Others have certainly said this before me, and better than I. But truth (and useful truth) does not cease to be so because of this; and the useful truths are so far from being repeated too frequently that they seldom manage to be repeated sufficiently.

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[222] Quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus: Horace, Ars poetica, 359. "At times, the good Homer sleeps."

LETTER 69

Gazel to Nuño

(The secluded life.)

Since the roads are so bad in the greater part of the provinces in your country, it is not surprising that carriages break down frequently, mules fall over cliffs, and travelers lose a day's journey. The coach I took from Madrid has gone through several hardships; but that of breaking one of its axles, while being quite lamentable for me, not only caused me some misfortune, but also gave me one of the greatest pleasures that there can be in life, to wit: the satisfaction of speaking, although not for as long as I should wish, with a man different from all the others I have seen until now, or expect to see. The occurrence was exactly as follows, because I made a particular note of it in the diary of my trip.

A few leagues from this city, going down a very steep hill, the team of mules dashed off blindly, the coach overturned, and the front axle broke, as well as one of the shafts. As soon as we recovered from the shock and we could all get out through the door, which was above us, one of the coachmen told me that they needed many hours to mend the damage, since it was necessary to go to a place which was a league from the spot in which we found ourselves, in order to bring someone to repair it. Seeing that it was growing dark, it seemed better to me to go on foot with a servant, and each one of us with a musket, to the place, and to spend the night there, during which the breakdown would be remedied and we the

maltreated would rest. This I did, and I began to follow a footpath which the same coachman had pointed out to me, through terrain deserted and apparently unsafe because of the ruggedness of the mountain. In something like a league, I found myself in a less disagreeable spot; and on a crag upon the bank of a brook, I saw a man of good bearing in the action of putting a book in his pocket, standing up, petting a dog, putting on a rustic hat, and taking hold of a walking stick more robust than elegant.

His age must have been forty, and his countenance was mild, his clothing simple but neat and tidy, and his gestures were full of that naturalness which characterizes the habitual manner of illustrious people, without that affectation which inspires arrogance and vanity. He turned his face suddenly when he heard my voice, and greeted me. I returned his greeting, advanced toward him, and said not to regard me as suspicious because of the spot, my companion and weapons, since the reason was what had just happened to me (which I related to him briefly), and I asked him if I was on the right path for the town. The stranger turned to greet me a second time, and told me that he regretted my misfortune, which was a frequent one in that place; that several times he had informed the authorities in that vicinity of this, and even their superiors; that I not take a step more toward my destination, because the house where he resided was within gunshot of here; that from it he would despatch one of his servants on horseback to the town in order that

the alcalde[223] send competent aid.

I then recalled your encounter with the caballero protegé of Tío Gregorio[224] --but how different this one was! He obliged me to follow him, and after having walked a few steps without saying anything important, he burst out saying:

"Encountering a man such as myself at this hour and in this spot must be surprising to the foreign gentleman; more surprising must be what he hears and sees henceforth, whilst he pleases to remain in my company and home, which is this one--" and he pointed to his house, at which we now stopped.

With this, he knocked at a large gate in the adobe wall of a garden adjoining it. An ugly dog barked, two young rustic servants responded, and then opened the gate. Entering through a beautiful patch of every species of fruit trees beside a very spacious pool covered with ducks and geese, we came to an enclosure full of every species of birds, and from there to a small patio. Two handsome boys came out of the house, knelt, and kissed his hand. One took his walking stick, the other his hat, and they went ahead running and crying out:

"Mother, here comes Papa!"

Out to the doorstep came a matron full of that majestic beauty which inspires more respect than passion and, when she was about to fling out her arms to

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[223] The alcalde: The mayor.

[224] Tío Gregorio: Gazel is referring to the local butcher who is the friend of the young señorito in Letter 7.

her husband, she noticed those of us who accompanied him. She held back her tender impulse, and limited it to asking him if he had received some news, since he was so late in returning, to which he replied in an amorous, but respectful, manner. He introduced me to his wife, telling her the reason for bringing me to their house, and gave orders that what he had offered be done, so that the coach could come. We went in together through several small but comfortable rooms, furnished gracefully and without luxury, and we seated ourselves in the one which was prepared for my lodging.

Upon our return, I shall relate to you with more leisure the supper, the conversation during it, the homely decrees my host made in front of me, the affectionate and orderly way that the sons, the mother, and servants went off to retire, and the most charming expressions with which he offered me his house, entreated me to use it, and retired to allow me to rest. An elderly servant who appeared to be completely in his trust had remained waiting for me to go to bed in order to remove the light. The curiousness of that entire scene had provoked me too much, and the persons seemed too mysterious to me not to investigate the character of each one. Hence, I detained the servant, and with strong insistence asked him a thousand and one times to explain to me such a great enigma. He resisted with equal efficacy until, at the end of some interval, he put the candlestick upon the table in order to leave, half-closed the door, sat down, and told me that he did not doubt the desire I had to find out about the temperament and condition of his master. And he proceeded in more or less these words:

"If the affection of an affable wife, the beauty of the fruit of matrimony, a plentiful and honorific estate, robust health and a select library with which to polish an obvious talent by nature, can make happy a man who knows no ambition--there is no one in the world who can boast of being so more than my master, or to put it better, my father, since that is what he is to all his servants. He spent his childhood in this village, his early youth at the university; then, he went into the army; after that, he lived at the Court, and now he has retired to this retreat. This variety of lifestyles has made him regard with indifference all types of them, and even the greater part of them with disgust. I have always followed him, and always will, even beyond the grave, since I can scarcely live after his death. Hidden merit is looked down on in this world, and if it reveals itself, it attracts envy and its followers. What must a man do, then, who has it?--Retire to where he can be useful without danger to himself. I call merit the joining together of good talent and a good heart--which my master uses for the benefit of his dependents.

"The farmers who rent his fields regard him as a tutelary god of their homes. He never enters them for anything but to fill them with benefits, and he visits them often. In average years, he exempts them from part of the tribute, and from all of it in the bad ones. Lawsuits are unknown amongst them. The father threatens the bad son by naming his master, and shows affection for the good son by using his master's name. Half of his wealth is employed in placing the orphaned daughters of these environs with honorable and poor young men from these same villages. He has founded a school nearby, and is accustomed to distributing from his own hand a

reward each Saturday to the boy who has made the best use of the week. From distant countries he has brought agricultural tools and books for their use which he translates from foreign languages, handing out all of them free to the farmers. All foreigners who pass by this place find in him the hospitality which was exercised in Rome in its happiest days. A part of his house is used for taking in the sick people of these environs, in which there is scant space to care for them. Nor are there usually idle people in this region: such is its attractiveness that it makes industrious and useful vassals of those who would have been useless (at least if they had followed their accustomed idleness). In short, during the few years that he has lived here, this region has taken on a different aspect. His example, generosity, and discretion have made of this rough and uncultivated land a delightful and happy province.

"The education of his sons occupies a great part of his time. One is ten and the other nine. I have seen them born and brought up. Each time I hear and see them, I am delighted by so much virtue and cleverness in so few years. They surely inherit from their father a wealth superior to all the possessions of fortune. They certainly prove healthy and virtuous offspring to be the greatest reward of a perfect marriage. What cannot be expected in time from these boys who, at such a tender age, evince an innocent joy, a voluntary diligence, an inclination toward everything good, a filial respect for their parents, and benevolent and decorous conduct towards their servants?

"My mistress, the worthy wife of my master, the honor of her sex, is a

woman endowed with singular moral qualities. Let us be clear, Señor Foreigner: woman, by herself alone, is a docile and flexible creature. However much the unrestraint of young men impels them to paint her as a model of weakness, I see the opposite: I see that she is a faithful copy of the man with whom she lives. If a young woman, wealthy and with merit, finds in her husband a passion for reasons of state, a disagreeable manner, and a bad opinion of her sex in the remainder of men--how unlikely is it that things will go badly? My mistress is very young, more than moderately beautiful, highly clever, and what they call sophisticated. When she married my master, she found in her spouse a man amiable, judicious, and full of virtues; she found a companion, a lover, a teacher--all in a single man, equal to her even in the accidental circumstances of what they call birth. Perforce, she had to be, and continue being, good. Nature is not so bad that it can resist so many examples of kindness.

"I have not forgotten, nor do I believe that I can ever forget, an incident which ended in confirming my opinion of her as a singular or unique woman. Part of the army which was going to Portugal passed through this area. My master gave lodging in his home to several gentlemen whom he had met at Court. One of them lingered for a while longer to convalesce from an illness which befell him. Gallant bearing, charming conversation, an illustrious name, magnificent équipage,[225] a courtly lack of restraint, and being at the age suitable for amorous enterprises, gave

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[225] Équipage: A French term referring to a carriage, specifically, one with horses and liveried servants.

him some encouragement one day to apparently make reference to subjects in front of my mistress which were inappropriate for the decorum that has always reigned in this house. How discreet was my lady! The young man was ashamed of his presumptuousness. My master did not understand what was the matter; and with all that, I heard her crying in her room and complaining about the young man's license."

Telling me other things of this tenor about the life of his master and mistress, the good servant kept me up all night long; and so as not to disturb my hosts, I set about my journey at dawn, leaving word that upon my return toward Madrid, I would tarry for a week at their house.

What do you think about the life of this man? It is one of the few that can be desirable. It is the only one that to me seems enviable.

LETTER 70

Nuño to Gazel

(Reply to the previous letter.)

I am looking at the account you provide me of the hospitality that you received due to the fortuity, so common in Spain, of a coach breaking down on the road. That disposition and retirement has agreed with you, I know. The enumeration which you give me of the virtues and moral qualities of that family will undoubtedly kindle warmth in your good heart. The liking of one's fellow men

is a quality which has recently been discovered to be inherent in our nature, but with more strength among the good than among the wicked; or, to say it better, only among the good is found this sympathy, since the wicked always regard each other with notable mistrust, and if they treat each other with apparent intimacy, their hearts are always farthest apart when their arms are embracing and their hands clasping--an opinion which is confirmed for me by your friend Ben-Beley.

But, Gazel, returning to your host and others of his character, who are not lacking in the provinces and of whom we know many--does it not seem sad to you for the State to lose some men of talent and merit who withdraw from careers useful to the realm? Do you not believe that all individuals are obligated to contribute to their country with painstaking care? Let the useless and the decrepit withdraw from the hubbub: they are of more hindrance than service; but your host and others like him are at the age to serve it, and must seek out occasions to do so even at the cost of all species of vexations. It is not enough to be good for oneself and for a few others; it is necessary to be so, and to attempt to be so, for the entirety of the nation. It is true that there is no career in the State which is not fraught with griefs; but they should not frighten the man who walks firmly and courageously.

Military service is based entirely upon harsh subordination, but less rigid than the slavery which there was amongst the Romans; it offers nothing but physical labor for greenhorns and esprit de corps for veterans; it never promises a reward that can be called such, considering the sufferings which are continually threatening. Wounds and poverty form the old age of the soldier who does not die

in the dust of some battlefield, or amongst the planks of a warship. They are, furthermore, in their own countries considered disagreeable citizens of society; there is no lack of philosophers who call them executioners. So what, Gazel?--for this reason, there should not be soldiers? The most illustrious citizens of each country should not enter into military service? This career should not be regarded as the birthplace of nobility?

The judicial robe is a profession no less severe. Long studies, arid and insipid, consume the youth of a judge. After this follows constant exhausting work and retirement from diversions, and then, until death, a daily obligation to judge lives and property belonging to others, guided by obscure documents of doubtful meaning and of scrupulous interpretation, continually acquiring for himself the malevolence of the many who fall beneath the staff of justice. And for this reason, there should not be judges? Nor anyone who follows the career which seems so much like the divine essence in rewarding the good and punishing the wicked?

Palace life can frighten us just as much, and even more, showing us the necessity of living with a perpetual artifice which is often not even enough for the courtier to maintain his position. A thousand unforeseen accidents undo the greatest efforts of human prudence. Edifices of many years are ruined in an instant. But not for this reason should there be a lack of men who dedicate themselves to this way of living.

The sciences, which seem to influence gentleness and kindness, and to fill

with satisfaction he who cultivates them, offer nothing but griefs. To how much one exposes himself who derives from them reasons for disillusioning men somewhat, or teaching them some new truth! How many griefs he incurs! How many and what sinister interpretations envy or ignorance provoke, or both of them together, or tyranny, when it makes use of them! How much undergoes the savant who did not know how to flatter the common people! And for this reason, the sciences should be abandoned? And for fear of such dangers, men should abandon that which so much refines their reason and distinguishes it from the instinct of beasts?

The man who recognizes the strength of the links which bind him to the nation scorns all the phantoms produced by a misplaced philosophy that leads him into fear, and says: Fatherland, for you I shall sacrifice my quietude, my possessions, and my life. This sacrifice would be short if it were reduced to dying. I shall expose myself to the caprices of fortune and to those of men, even more capricious than she. I shall suffer the scorn, tyranny, odium, envy, betrayal, inconstancy, and the infinite and cruel combinations born from the conjunction of many or all of them.

I shall tarry no longer, although it would be quite easy, about this subject. I think that the aforesaid suffices for you to form a less favorable opinion of your host. Surely you realize that, even though he may be a good man, he is certainly a bad citizen, and that being a good citizen is a true obligation of the ones which a man incurs on being included in the realm, if he wishes for it to esteem him, and

even more if he wishes that it not regard him as a foreigner. Patriotism is one of the most noble enthusiasms which have been known for guiding men to scorn travails and to undertake great matters, and subsequently to conserve the commonwealth.

LETTER 71

Nuño to Gazel

(Continuation of the preceding letter.)

You have now probably read my last letter against personal quietude and in favor of enthusiasm. Even though it be vexing your philosophical and retiring spirit, I shall continue in this one where I left off in the last one.

Self-preservation of the individual, unrelated to others, is so opposed to the common good of society, that a nation composed entirely of philosophers would not take long to be enslaved by another. The noble enthusiasm of patriotism is what has protected states, halted invasions, assured life, and produced those men who are the true honor of the human race. From it have sprung heroic actions impossible to understand by one not possessed by the same ardor, and easy to imitate by one who is dominated by it. [Here the manuscript was torn, with which the public is deprived of the continuation of so commendable a subject.]

LETTER 72

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Bullfights.)

In the morning and afternoon today, I have attended a fittingly national diversion of the Spaniards, what they call fiesta, or bullfights. It has been a matter of so much thought for me this day, and so great the mad rush of ideas which assaulted me at once, that I do not know how to begin providing you an account of them. Nuño added to my confusion concerning this particular, assuring me that there is no foreign author who speaks of this spectacle who does not call barbarous the nation which takes pleasure in attending it.

When my mind is more in equilibrium, without the agitation that I now experience, I shall write to you at length upon this subject. I will only tell you that the slaughter of our ancestors in the battles of Clavijo, Salado, Navas,[226] and others, which their histories tell of, no longer seems strange to me, if it was executed by men disdainful of all luxury, austere in their habits, and accustomed from childhood to pay money to see the spilling of blood, considering this an amusement, and even a worthy occupation of the foremost nobles. This species of barbarity undoubtedly made them ferocious, since from childhood they amused themselves with that which usually causes men of great valor to swoon the first time that they attend this

[226] The battles of Clavijo, Salado, Navas: Famous battles in the Reconquest of Spain from the Moors (Clavijo, 844; Salado, 1340; Navas [de Tolosa], 1212).

spectacle.

LETTER 73

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Illustrious men of the ruling house of Spain.)

Each day, I admire more and more the number of great men that one reads about in the genealogy of the kings of the house which currently occupies the Spanish throne.[227] The present one[228] began his reign by pardoning the debts which the provinces had incurred through many unfortunate years and paying those owed by his predecessors to his vassals. By having left the debts in the state he found them in, neither collecting nor paying, anyone would have considered him equitable, and everyone would have praised his benignity, since, having in his power the discretion of being judge and party, not collecting what he could would have seemed sufficient moderation. But he condemned himself and absolved others. And by this means he gave an example of justification more estimable than an entire code of laws that he might have published upon justice and the mode of administering it. He forgot that he was king, and remembered only that he was like a father.

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[227] The house which currently occupies the Spanish throne: The Bourbons.

[228] The present one: Carlos III (reigned 1759-78).

His brother and predecessor, Fernando,[229] in his pacific reign confirmed the notion that the name of Fernando always had to be a good augury for Spain.[230] His other brother, Luis,[231] lasted a short time, but enough so that his death was greatly mourned.

His father, Felipe,[232] was a hero and a king, with posterity not knowing which class to place him in without affronting his dignity. The living image of his ancestor Enrique IV,[233] he had, at the beginning of his reign, one hand raised for conquest and the other for alleviating the defeated. His people were divided in two, and he divided his heart in two also, rewarding some and pardoning others. The people who followed him faithfully found a father who treated them affectionately, and those who distanced themselves found a master who corrected them. Those who did not love him had to admire him; and if the faithful found him good, the others found him magnanimous. Since human nature is such that it does not take long to love the same that one admires, he died ruling over every heart, the same as

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[229] Fernando: Fernando VI (reigned 1746-59).

[230] The name of Fernando always had to be a good augury for Spain: Fernando I (1029-65), Fernando II (1157-88), Fernando III ("el Santo," 1230-52), Fernando IV (1295-1312), and Fernando V ("el rey Católico," 1479-1516).

[231] Luis: Luis I reigned less than eight months, in 1724. (Luis I was born in 1707, and died in 1724.)

[232] Felipe: Felipe V (reigned twice: 1700-24, 1724-46). He was a grandson of Louis XIV of France.

[233] His ancestor Enrique IV: The first Bourbon king of France (1553-1610). Known as "Henry the Great" or "The Good King," he reigned from 1589-1610, and is often considered by the French to have been the best king the country ever had.

over all the provinces, but without having achieved a stable peace which might have made him enjoy the fruits of his vexations.

His ancestors reigned in France. Their histories being read with reflection, it shall be seen what France was like before Enrique IV, and what a different role that monarchy has played ever since the descendants of that great ruler have governed it.

LETTER 74

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Means for renovation of Spain.)

Yesterday I was at a gathering in which they were speaking of Spain, its condition, religion, government, what it is, what it has been, what it could be, etc. I marveled at the eloquence, the efficacy, and the love with which they were speaking, and noted all the more that, excepting Nuño, who was the one who was least expressing himself, none of the persons in attendance was Spanish. Some gave the audience the beautiful effects of their speculations that this monarchy would have a hundred ships of the line[234] in little more than six months; others, that

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[234] Ships of the line: Battleships, specifically during the age of sail. A ship of the line was a naval warship built from the sixteenth century until the mid-nineteenth century. A ship of the line was so-called because its role was to participate in a naval tactic known as the "line of battle," in which a fleet's warships formed a long single-file line and closed with a line of the enemy fleet on the same tack. Ships then maneuvered in order to deliver broadsides in the most destructive manner possible; greatest effect was achieved by firing into the stern of

the population of these provinces would double in less than fifteen months; others, that all the gold and silver of both Americas would remain in the Peninsula; others, that Spanish factories would replace all those of Europe in favor; and likewise with the rest.

Many supported their discourses with comparisons taken from what happens in other nations. Some pretended that the only object motivating them was doing good for the nation, dolorously contemplating it as backward by more than a century and a half with respect to the others, and there was no lack of some who were making a show of their profound erudition in these matters, in order to demonstrate with more evidence the uselessness of Spanish genius and ingenuity, and others, finally, for various other motives.

"It reached full measure in the time of Felipe V, notwithstanding his long and sanguinary wars," said one.

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an enemy ship, so that the shot traveled the entire length of the vessel, inflicting enormous devastation. Ships of the line were classed according to the number of guns they carried or the number of decks they had. England's Royal Navy used six classes, or "rates," to class a battleship. The highest class, a "first-rater," had at least one hundred guns (sometimes as many as one hundred and twenty), three gun decks, and a crew of up to eight hundred and fifty men. HMS Victory, the most famous and only surviving example of a first-rate ship of the line, is now in drydock at Portsmouth Harbour. The Victory was Admiral Horatio Nelson's flagship at the Battle of Trafalgar south of Cádiz off the southwestern coast of Spain on 21 October 1805. At Trafalgar, the Victory carried one hundred and four guns and a crew of eight hundred and twenty. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a "ship of the line" was also called a "line-of-battle ship" (a term which was eventually shortened to "battleship").

"It was that way upon the death of Carlos II,"[235] said another.

"Felipe IV[236] was quite negligent," added a third, "and quite unfortunate his minister, the Conde-Duque de Olivares."[237]

"Ah, gentlemen!" said Nuño. "Although all of you may have the best intentions when you speak of remedying the backwardness of Spain, although all of you may have the greatest interest in restoring her, no matter how much you look at her with love for--let us say--an adopted country, it is impossible for you to succeed. In order to cure a sick man, the rudimentary knowledge of the faculty is not sufficient, nor is the good desire of the professor--it is necessary that he have particular knowledge of the patient, the origin of the illness, its increments and complications, if there are any. You want to cure all species of illnesses and infirmities with the same medicine. It is not medicine, but what they call quackery, not only ridiculous in he who practices it but also harmful for he who uses it.

"Instead of all these speculations and projects, another system, born of knowledge that you do not have, seems much simpler to me, and it boils down to this little thing: The Spanish monarchy never was as felicitous from within, nor as

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[235] Carlos II: The last Hapsburg king of Spain (1665-1700).

[236] Felipe IV: King of Spain (reigned 1621-65).

[237] Conde-Duque de Olivares: The Count-Duke of Olivares, the favorite and controversial minister of Felipe IV.

respected from without, as in the epoch of the death of Fernando el Católico.[238] Notice how the maxims among those which together formed that excellent government have faded from their former vigor. Return them to their old vigor, and we shall have the monarchy on the same footing in which the House of Austria found it. Small variations with respect to the current system of Europe are enough, instead of all these things which you have heaped together."

"Who was that Fernando el Católico?" asked one of those who had perorated.

"Who was he?" asked another.

"Who, who?" asked all of the other "statesmen."

"Ah, what a blockhead I am!" (exclaimed Nuño, losing some of his natural quietude). "What a blockhead I am!--to have wasted time speaking about Spain with people who do not know who was Fernando el Católico. Let us leave, Gazel."

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[238] Fernando el Católico: Ferdinand and Isabella, known as the "Catholic Monarchs" (reigned 1479-1517).

LETTER 75

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Violent matrimonies.)

When I entered my lodgings last night, I found a letter whose copy I am remitting to you. It is from a Christian woman whom I scarcely know. Its content, which will surely seem strange to you, says this:

"I have just had my twenty-fourth birthday and buried my latest of six husbands, whom I have had in as many marriages, in the space of very few years. The first was a youth of little more age than my own, of fine presence, good inheritance, great birth, but not one bit of health. He had lived so much in his few years that, when he came into my arms, he was already a cadaver. I was about to display my bridal attire, when I had to go into mourning. The second was an old man who had always observed the most rigid celibacy; but, inheriting through deaths and lawsuits some abundant and honorific property, his attorney advised him to marry--his physician may have been of another opinion. He died shortly afterwards, calling me his daughter, and I swear that he treated me as such from the first day to the last. The third was a captain of grenadiers, more courageous, apparently, than all those in his company. The wedding was performed in Barcelona by proxies; but, taking offense with one of his companions in the orchestra seats of the opera, they went out to take the air together on the esplanade, and the companion returned alone, whilst my husband remained out there.

"The fourth was a rich and illustrious man, robust and young, but so hearty a gambler that, not even on the night of the wedding did he sleep with me, because he spent it in a game of baccarat. This first night gave me such a bad idea of the ones to come that I always looked upon him as a guest in my house more than as my other half in my new state of matrimony. He paid me in the same coin, and died shortly afterwards as the result of one of his friends throwing a candlestick at his head because of some blunder or other of laying down a card to the right which should have been laid down to the left. Notwithstanding all this, he was the husband who amused me the most, at least through his conversation, which was witty and always in the style of card-playing. I remember that, dining one day with numerous people in the home of a somewhat short-sighted lady, she asked him for a dish near him, and he said to her:

"'Señora, anyone possessing sufficient funds could have bet on the previous card, but that gentleman over there, who eats and says nothing, has just bet on this plate a double stake with so much success that he has broken the bank. This is one of the frightening wagers of this game.'

"The fifth one who called me his own was of such little discernment that he never spoke to me of anyone but a female cousin whom he loved very much. The cousin died of smallpox a few days after my wedding, and he went after her. My sixth and final husband was a savant. These men are usually not good material for husbands. As my bad luck had it, on the night of my wedding appeared a comet, or a species of comet. If one of these phenomena has ever been a thing of bad augury,

none was as much as this one. My husband calculated that sleeping with his wife should be a periodic thing every twenty-four hours, but if the comet returned, it would take so long to go around that he could not observe it; and thus, he left one for the other, and went out to the countryside to make his observations. The night was cold, and sufficient to give him a pain in his side, from which he died.

"All this might have been avoided if I had once married according to my wishes, instead of subjecting them six times to that of a father who believes that the will of a daughter is something which should not enter into account in a marriage. The person who used to be my suitor is a young man who seems quite equal to me in all qualities, and who has redoubled his petitions each of the first five times that I have been made a widow; but, in deference to his parents, he also had to marry against his wishes, on the same day that I contracted marriage with my astronomer.

"I shall thank Señor Gazel for telling me what practice or custom is followed over there in his country in this matter of marrying a family's daughters because, although I have heard of many frightening things among the few favorable ones which are to us Mohammedan laws, I find no distinction whatever between being the slave of a husband or of a father, especially when being the slave of a father results in not having a husband, as in the present case."

LETTER 76

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Coquetry.)

Infinite are the caprices of fashion. A current one is letters written to me by some women who know me only from my name, or by hearing me, or by speaking to me, or by both. Many have been written on this basis since the first note written to me, which I remit to you, was divulged. I shall do the same with those that to me seem worthy of crossing the sea to divert with European extravagances a wise African; and, without missing the post, I now send this copy your way. Put aside for a moment, oh my venerable Ben-Beley, the serious aspect of your age and character. I have heard you say a thousand times that a moment employed in amusement usually leaves the spirit more relaxed for dedicating itself to sublime speculations. I recall seeing you care for a bird in a cage and a flower in a garden. Never did you seem to me more wise. A great man is never greater than when he descends to the level of other men, without this depriving him of returning to where he is exalted by the supreme essence which inspires us. The letter, thus, says this:

"Señor Moor: The French women have a certain pastime which they call coquetry, and it is a deception women play on every man they meet. The coquette has a splendid time, for she has at her disposal all the young men of some merit, and the idol of pride is greatly flattered by so much adulation. But, since the Frenchmen take or leave some things with sufficient fickleness, and among them

those of love, the consequences of a thousand little coquetries detrimental to a young man boil down to his reflecting upon it for a minute, and leaving with his adulation for another altar. The Spanish men are more formal in the matter of falling in love; and since now has disappeared all that ancient apparatus of wooing, obstacles to overcome, difficulties to forestall, servants to bribe, they begin to suffer from the moment that they become enamored of a Spanish coquette, and the matter usually ends as soon as the lover, who perceives that they have made fun of him, dies, goes mad, or at best absents himself in despair.

"I am one of the most famous of this sect, and I can do no less than recall with genuine satisfaction the victims who have been sacrificed in the temple of my cult. If in Morocco they someday give us a similar despotism (which will be in the same moment that the austere laws of the seraglio are annulled), and if the Moroccan ladies wanted to admit a few Spanish women as professors of this new science heretofore unknown in Africa, I promise to soon bring forth, amidst my teachings and those of another half dozen of my women friends, a sufficient number of disciples to pay back Mohammedan men in a few weeks for all the tyrannies they have exercised over women since Mohammed himself until the present day; for by increasing the dominion of my sex over the masculine one in proportion to the heat of the climate (as has been experienced in the short distance of the crossing of the Pyrenees), the Moroccan coquettes should expect to exercise a despotism scarcely possible in the human imagination, over everything in the southern provinces of yon empire."

LETTER 77

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Effects of bad taste of the past upon the sciences.)

The procedures of birth, growth, decadence, loss and resurrection of good taste in the transmigration of the arts and sciences leave such a series of effects that in each of these periods are seen the influences of the previous ones. But they are more notable when, after an era of bad taste, upon now coming into contact with that of the good one, the effects of the preceding one are perceived; and if this is observed with pity in the serious arts and positive sciences, it is observed with laughter in the faculties of pure adornment, such as eloquence and poetry.

They both declined in Spain by the middle of the last century, as in all the remainder of the monarchy. Both have risen again in the current one; but notwithstanding the fostering of the sciences, in spite of the resurrection of good Spanish authors of the sixteenth century, notwithstanding the translation of the modern foreigners, even after the establishment of the academies, and in the midst of the mockery with which some Spaniards have ridiculed the turgidity and all the vices of bad language--from time to time we see some effects from the false rhetoric and poetry of the last half of the past century. Some geniuses still die, let us say, due to the same pestilence from which few escaped in those days. Nowadays, various orators and poets appear to be nothing but shades or souls of those who died a hundred years ago, and who return to the world, now to continue

the discourses which they left pending when they expired, now to frighten the living.

Nuño told me this very thing last night, and added:

"This is the patent truth, but with the titles of books, papers and plays in particular. I have here a list of entertaining titles of works which have appeared before the public with all the solemnity of twenty years ago, doing little honor to our literature, although the content does not cease having many good things, which I omit."

He took out his letter case, that letter case of which I have spoken to you so many times, and after rummaging through it, said to me:

"Take this, and read it."

I took it, and read, and it said: "List of some titles of books, papers and plays, which have struck me, published since the year 1757, when it was credible that all turgidity and pedantry had ended:"

1. Jealousy Makes Stars, and Love Makes Prodigies.[239] It said in Nuño's handwriting in the margin: "I do not understand the first part of this title."

2. Temperate Essence, Which Teaches One to Play Checkers With Sword

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[239] Jealousy Makes Stars, and Love Makes Prodigies: Los celos hacen estrellas, y el amor hace prodigios, by Luis Vélez de Guevara (1579-1644), a Spanish dramatist and novelist who wrote more than four hundred works. Los celos hacen estrellas was a zarzuela (Spanish musical comedy or operetta) which premiered in Madrid in the Palacio de Zarzuela (one of the residences of the Spanish Royal Family), in 1672.

and Buckler, Supplemented and Enlarged.[240] And the marginal note said: "We all used to understand that the game of checkers (as well as that of chess) was quite a slow one, excellent for a tranquil village, proper for a cavalry captain who is giving fodder to his company, a pharmacist or inspector of documents of his village, whilst the clock strikes twelve and one goes to eat some stew; but the "temperate essence" author gives us so horrifying an idea of this pastime that I am quite glad not to be an enthusiast of such a game, because this matter of going about armed with a sword and buckler, when one believed that it was a matter of a bit of mild, calm and phlegmatic diversion, is a frightening deception."

3. Art of Good Speaking, Restraint in Speech, Model for Perfecting Persons, Useful Entertainment and Path for Living in Peace.[241] At the margin, one reads: "This is much title, and that of perfecting persons is much work."

4. New Experimental and Permitted Magic. Miscellany of Sundry Things, Arithmetical as Well as Astronomical, Astrological. Amusing Sets Distributed in an Almanack for the Present Year of 1761.[242] This title undoubtedly much vexed

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[240] Temperate Essence, Which Teaches One to Play Checkers With Sword and Buckler, Supplemented and Enlarged: Médula eutropélica que enseña a jugar a las damas con espada y broquel, añadida y aumentada, 1718, by Pablo Cecina Rica y Fergel.

[241] Art of Good Speaking, Restraint in Speech, Model for Perfecting Persons, Useful Entertainment and Path for Living in Peace: Arte de bien hablar, freno de lengua, modelo de hacer personas, entretenimiento útil y camino para vivir en paz, by José Díaz de Benjumea.

[242] New Experimental and Permitted Magic. Miscellany of Sundry Things, Arithmetical as Well as Astronomical, Astrological. Amusing Sets Distributed in an Almanack for the Present Year of 1761: Nueva mágica experimental y

my friend, since in the margin he had written in a very bad hand, as though his pulse trembled from pure choler: "If this title is read twice in succession to any bronze statue, and it does not break into laughter or rage, I would say that there are statues harder than bronze itself."

5. Buzz of Prognostications, and Prognostication of Buzzes.[243] "My ears are buzzing[244] with the antithesis," said the marginal note.

6. Small Bunch of Diverse Flowers, Whose Fragrance Deciphers the Mysteries of the Mass and the Divine Office, Giving Courage to the Moribund and Chasing Away Tempests.[245]

7. Eternity of Diverse Eternities.[246]

8. Rainbow of Peace, Whose Bowstring Is Reflection and Meditation for Praying the Most Sacred Rosary of Our Lady. Its Quiver Holds Five Hundred and

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permitida. Ramilletes de selectas flores, así aritméticas como físicas, astronómicas, astrológicas, graciosos juegos repartidos en un manual calendario para el presente año de 1761, 1760, by astrologer Juan González.

[243] Buzz of Prognostications, and Prognostication of Buzzes: Zumba de prognósticos y prognóstico de zumba, by Antonio Ángel de Fábrega.

[244] My ears are buzzing: A play on words based upon the word zumba ("buzz") in the title.

[245] Small Bunch of Diverse Flowers, Whose Fragrance Deciphers the Mysteries of the Mass and the Divine Office, Giving Courage to the Moribund and Chasing Away Tempests: Manojito de diversas flores, cuya fragrancia descifra los misterios de la Misa y Oficio Divino, da esfuerzo a los moribundos y ahuyenta las tempestades, 1723, a rare compendium of exorcisms by Padre Juan Nieto.

[246] Eternity of Diverse Eternities: Eternidad de diversas eternidades, by Padre Félix de Alamín, a Capuchin monk.

Seventy Reflections, Which Divine Love Shoots at All Souls.[247]

9. Most Sacred Antidote, the Ineffable Name of God, Against the Abuse of Auguries.[248] In the margin of this title and the three preceding ones there was: "I regret very much that, for speaking of the sacred matters of a religion truly divine and, therefore, worthy of being treated with the most profound circumspection, such extravagant expressions and metaphors are used. If similar locutions concerned less reputable subjects, good mockery could be made of them."

10. History of the Future. Prolegomenon to All History of the Future, in Which Is Declared Its End, and Proved Its Foundations, Translated from the Portuguese.[249] And the note said: "I praise the diligence of the translator. As if we

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[247] Rainbow of Peace, Whose Bowstring Is Reflection and Meditation for Praying the Most Sacred Rosary of Our Lady. Its Quiver Holds Five Hundred and Seventy Reflections, Which Divine Love Shoots at All Souls: Arco iris de paz, cuya cuerda es la consideración y meditación para rezar el Santísimo Rosario de Nuestra Señora. Su aljaba ocupa quinientos y sesenta consideraciones, que tira el Amor Divino a todas las almas, 1765, by Pedro de Santa María de Ulloa (1642-90), a Dominican missionary in Spain and America. "Bowstring" is a play on words, related to "rainbow."

[248] Most Sacred Antidote, the Ineffable Name of God, Against the Abuse of Auguries: Sacratísimo antídoto, el Nombre inefable de Dios, contra el abuso de Agar, by Miguel Ferrer.

[249] History of the Future. Prolegomenon to All History of the Future, in Which Is Declared Its End, and Proved Its Foundations, Translated from the Portuguese: Historia de lo futuro. Prolegmeno a toda la historia de lo futuro, en que se declara el fin y se prueban los fundamentos de ella, traducida del portugués, 1718, by Padre Antonio de Vieyra (1608-97). Vieyra (sometimes spelled "Vieira") was a Portuguese Jesuit famous for his sermons, known as the "prince" of pulpit-orators of his time. Vieyra died in Bahía, Brazil. In 2008, Portugal issued a stamp commemorating the four-hundredth anniversary of his birth.

did not have enough profusion of turgidity, pedantry and nonsense--sown, cultivated, gathered and stored from our own harvest--the good translator wants to introduce us to the products of the same species of the foreigners, in case some bad year of that product comes to us."

11. "Torches" of Enlightenment for Bachelors, "Sparks" of Inspiration for Married Men.[250] And in the margin, my friend had written: "This title is more obscure than all the previous ones together. There is no man in Spain who might understand it, unless one reads the entire work, and it is not a work that greatly allures readers by its title."

12. Ingenious and Literal Contest Between MUSA, King of Nouns, and AMO, King of Verbs, Which a Sanguinary and Pitched Battle Between the Vassals of One and the Other Monarch Destroyed; Composed in the Form of a Colloquy.[251] The marginal note said: "For the sake of the literary honor of my country, I shall

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[250] "Torches" of Enlightenment for Bachelors, "Sparks" of Inspiration for Married Men: Antorchas para solteros, de chispas para casados, by Josef Piñan y Zuñiga. "Torches" is a play on words, because in addition to meaning "torches," the word antorchas can mean "inspiration." "Sparks" is a continuation of the same play on words, because in addition to meaning "sparks," the Spanish word chispas can mean "wit."

[251] Ingenious and Literal Contest Between MUSA, King of Nouns, and AMO, King of Verbs, Which a Sanguinary and Pitched Battle Between the Vassals of One and the Other Monarch Destroyed; Composed in the Form of a Colloquy: Ingeniosa y literal competencia entre MUSA, rey de los nombres, y AMO, rey de los verbos, a la que dio fin una campal y sangrienta batalla que se dieron los vasallos de uno y otro monarca; compuesta en forma de coloquio. The publication of this work was announced in the 19 May 1772 issue of the Gaceta de Madrid. "MUSA, King of Names, and AMO, King of Verbs" refers to Musa, a first declension noun in Latin, and Amo, a first conjugation verb in Latin.

much regret that such a title crosses the Pyrenees, although for my personal use I can do no less than applaud it, since each time that I read it, I am rid of two or three grades of my natural hypochondria. If all these titles pertained to jocose or satirical works, they might be tolerated, although not much; but this style is insufferable when the subjects of the works are serious, and much more so when they are sacred. It is regrettable that such abuse still persists in the Spain of our century, when it has now been banished in all the rest of the world, and more so when in Spain itself such repeated and witty criticism of it has been made by various authors, and more severe than in some parts of Europe, regarding the fact that Spanish genius, in the subjects of human reason, is like heavy artillery pieces, which are difficult to transport, to operate or to change direction, but once moved, work to great effect wherever they are aimed."

LETTER 78

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Character of a scholastic savant.)

Do you know what a true scholastic savant is? I am not speaking of those who, following the common method because of career or reason of state, fully instruct themselves privately in the true positive sciences, study Newton in their rooms, and explain Aristotle in their professorial chairs (of which there are many in Spain), but rather of those who believe in their conscience that all which they

themselves do not teach to their disciples and do not learn from their teachers is physical folly and pure atheism. Well, then, pretend that you are going to hear one of them speak. Imagine first that you see a man quite dried out, quite full of tobacco, quite tall, quite overloaded with eyeglasses, quite incapable of lowering his head in greeting a living soul, and quite well adorned with other similar requisites. This is the picture which Nuño drew of them for me, and which I verified to be quite in accordance with the originals when I walked through their universities. They shall say to you, then, in this manner, if you go around suggesting any enthusiasm of yours for sciences other than the ones that they know:

"You do not need two years of rhetoric, not even one. Knowing a few dozen long words of fourteen or fifteen syllables each, and by repeating them frequently and ostentatiously, you can compose an oration either suitably funereal or suitably congratulatory."

If you tell one the advantages of good oratory, its use, its rules, the examples of Solís, Mendoza, Mariana, or others, he will burst out laughing and turn his back to you:

"Poetry is a frivolous pastime. Who does not know how to compose a décima[252] or dash off a glossed quatrain to a lady, to an old man, against a doctor or an old woman, in memory of a certain saint or in reference to a certain mystery?"

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[252] Décima: A Spanish stanza of ten octosyllabic lines rhyming abbaaccddc, used for plaintive speeches.

If you tell him that this is not poetry, that poetry is an inexplicable thing and that it can only be learned and known by reading the Greek and Latin poets and an occasional modern one, that religion itself uses poetry in praise of the Creator; that good poetry is the touchstone of the good taste of a nation or century; that, despising the ridiculous productions of equivocators, rogues and buffoons, heroic and satirical poetry are perhaps the most useful works of the Republic of Letters, since they serve to perpetuate the memory of heroes and to correct the customs of our contemporaries--you will be ignored:

"Modern physics is a puppet show. I have seen those things they call machines of experimental physics: I repeat, a puppet show, water that rises, fire that lowers, filaments, wires, pasteboard boxes--nothing but a children's game."

If you reply that, to what one of them calls a puppet show, all nations are indebted for advancements in civil life, and even physical life, since some provinces would be under water without the use of dikes and machines constructed along the good principles of this science; if you say that there is no mechanical art which does not need the said science in order to subsist and advance; if you say, in short, that in all the learned universe much notice is taken of this science and of its professors--he will call you a heretic.

Woe to you if you speak to him about mathematics. "Tricks and amusement," he will say most gravely. "Here we had Don Diego de Torres,"[253] he

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[253] Don Diego de Torres: Diego de Torres Villarroel (1694-1770), author of the popular semi-autobiographical, semi-picaresque novel Vida (1743-1758) gained

will repeat with great solemnity and pride, "and we never respected his field of learning, although much so his person for the wit and concepts of his works."

Or if you tell him: "I know nothing of Don Diego de Torres, about whether or not he was a great mathematician, but mathematics is and always has been considered to be a collection of knowledge which forms the only science which can be called such among men. To say if it will rain in March, it will be cold in December, if some persons will die in this year and others will be born in the coming one, to say that a certain planet has a certain influence, that to eat melons will give one the tertian fever, that to be born on a certain day, at a certain hour, means a certain thing or a certain series of events, is, without a doubt, worthless nonsense; and if you men have called this mathematics, and if you believe that mathematics is not something else distinct"--do not say so where people might hear it. "Physics, navigation, shipbuilding, fortification of towns, civil architecture, army encampments, the casting, wielding and development of artillery, the formation of roads, advancement in all the mechanical arts and others more sublime, are branches of this field of knowledge--look and see if these branches are useful in human life."

"The medicine which suffices," this same one will say, "is that extracted from Galen and Hippocrates. Rational aphorisms, the aid of good syllogisms, suffice to constitute a good doctor."

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fame as a diviner and astrologer through the publication of almanacs and prognostications under the name Piscator de Salamanca.

If you tell him that, without depreciating the merit of those two savants, the modern ones have advanced in this field of learning through the greater knowledge of anatomy and botany, which the ancients did not have to such a degree, in addition to the many medicines, such as quinine and mercury, which were not used until recently--he will also laugh at you. And so on with the other fields of learning.

"Well, then, how shall we live with these people?" someone or other will ask.

"Quite easily," responds Nuño. "Let us allow them to shout continually upon the famous point proposed by a modern satirist: Utrum chimera, bombilians in vacuo, possit comedere secundas intentiones.[254] Let us work in the positive sciences, so that foreigners do not call us barbarians; let our youth make what advances they can; let them strive to give works to the public upon useful matters; let the old ones die as they have lived, and when the men who are now young reach a mature age, they will be able to teach publicly what they now learn secretly. Within twenty years, the entire scientific system of Spain will have changed imperceptibly, unostentatiously, and then the foreign academies shall see if they have reason to treat us with scorn. If our savants take some time in equaling theirs,

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[254] Utrum chimera, bombilians in vacuo, possit comedere secundas intentiones: "Whether a chimera buzzing in a vacuum can consume second intentions." (In logic, a first intention is a first or general concept, as of an object as a whole, and a second intention is a conception gained by generalizing from the first conception.)

they shall have the excuse of saying to them:

"Señores, when we were young, we had some teachers who used to tell us: 'Young men, we are going to teach you everything one has to know in the world; be careful that you do not take other lessons, because you shall learn from them nothing but frivolous, useless, despicable, and perhaps harmful things.' We had no desire to spend time in anything but that which could give useful and certain knowledge, so we dedicated ourselves to what we heard. Little by little, we went on hearing other words and reading other books, which frightened us at first, pleased us afterwards. We began to read them with application, and since we saw that in them were contained a thousand truths in no way opposed to religion nor to the nation, but certainly to indolence and prejudice, we went on dismissing all and sundry notebooks and scholastic texts, until not one remained. From then, some time has now passed, and in it we have equaled you, even though you had nearly a century-and-a-half lead on us. Count the aforesaid as nothing, and let us start reckoning from today, supposing that the Peninsula sank in the middle of the seventeenth century and has risen again from the sea at the end of the eighteenth."

LETTER 79

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Mutual complaints of the old and the young.)

The young ones say: "This tediousness of the old ones is insufferable." The

old ones say: "This unrestraint of the young ones is unbearable." Both are right, says Nuño: the excessive prudence of the old makes impossible the easiest things, and the excessive ardor of the young fancies the impossible things easy. In this matter the prudent should not interest himself, says Nuño, neither for one side nor for the other; but rather, should shy away from the choleric and the phlegmatic, take the middle course and eschew both extremes.

LETTER 80

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Abuse of the "Don.")

A few days ago, I witnessed an exquisite prank played on Nuño by several of his foreign friends; but they are none of those who go wandering about the world tarnishing the reputations of their respective countries and, full of the vices of every country they have swept through in Europe, bring the aggregate of all its wickedness here--but rather of those who attempt to imitate and esteem the good from all places and who, therefore, should be welcomed anywhere. Nuño clubs with some of these who reside in Madrid, and he loves them as his own countrymen, because all the hombres de bien in the world seem as such to him, and he being for them a true cosmopolite, or universal citizen. They were teasing him, then, about the facility with which Spaniards of any condition and class adopt the title of don. Since the matter is worthy of criticism, and those in attendance were

men of talent and good humor, there occurred to them an infinity of ideas and expressions, each one more humorous than the last, without the emphatic tenacity of scholastic disputes, but rather with the charm of conversations at Court.

A Flemish gentleman, who is in Madrid following some lawsuit or other, proceeding from a certain family connection with another in this country and its family tree, was telling him how absurd this abuse seemed, and he amplified upon it, adding and repeating:

"Don is the master of a house; don, each one of his sons; don, the Latin tutor who teaches the older son grammar; don, he who reads to the boy; don, the majordomo; don, the valet; doña, the housekeeper; doña, the laundress. My friend, let us be clear. There are more dons in almost any household than the Holy Spirit has gifts."

A non-active officer from France, the aide-de-camp of the Marqués de Lede, an exceedingly amiable man who has managed to achieve an excellent balance between Spanish solemnity and French levity, interrupted and said a thousand humorous things about the same abuse. This one was followed by an Italian from a most illustrious family, who had come traveling for pleasure and had stopped in Spain, an aficionado of the Castilian language, and who is making a collection of Spanish authors, criticizing the bad ones with as much rigor as praising the good ones with impartiality.

To everything, Nuño said nothing; and his silence made me even more

curious than the criticism of the others; but he did not interrupt them whilst they had to say and even repeat the aforesaid. Not even his expression changed. On the contrary, it seemed that he was approving the opinion of his friends with his own. By moving his head up and down, by arching his eyebrows, by shrugging his shoulders a few times and, by alternately putting, from time to time, now his right thigh over his left knee, now his left thigh over his right knee, he was signifying, in my opinion, that he had nothing to say in opposition--until, all those in attendance now tired of speaking, he said to them, more or less:

"There is no doubt that the number of those who usurp the title of <u>don</u> is extravagant--a general abuse nowadays, introduced in the past century, and expressly prohibited in the previous ones. <u>Don</u> means <u>señor</u>, as it is derived from the Latin word <u>dominus</u>. Without going back to the Goths, and without fixing our eyes upon more objects in the later times to the invasion of the Moors, we see that only the sovereigns, and not even all of them, would put <u>don</u> before their names. The dukes and great lords adopted it afterwards with the indulgence of the kings; later, it was left to all those on whom it seems good--to wit, on every lord of vassals. This practice was followed with so much rigor that, the second son of a great lord, not being the lord himself, did not put on himself such a distinction. Nor were the honorific appointments of the Church, magistracy or army given similar adornments, even when they fell to persons of the most illustrious birth.

"They would sign with all their titles, however great they might be; they would address each other with all their surnames, even though they were the first of

the monarchy, such as the Cerdas, Guzmáns, Pimentels, without putting don; but they would address the poorest individual caballero with don, as long as he had in effect some entailed land, however small it might be. On how many monuments, and not very old ones, do we read inscriptions of this and a similar tenor: 'Here lies Juan Fernández de Córdoba, Pimentel, Hurtado de Mendoza y Pacheco, Commander of Mayorga in the Order of Alcántara, Colonel of the Veterans' Infantry Regiment of Salamanca; he was born, etc., etc.' 'Here lies the licentiate Diego de Girón y Velasco, of His Majesty's Council in the High Court of Castile, Ambassador in the Court of the Holy Father,' etc., etc. But none of these used the don, even though a surfeit of titles fell to them. Later, it seemed convenient to tolerate that persons invested with important jobs in the State were called so. And this, which seemed just, demonstrated how much more rigorous was the old way, since in a few years donmania--pardon the new word--proliferated, so that in our century everyone not wearing livery calls himself Don Fulano--something which neither Hernán Cortés obtained in illo tempore,[255] nor Sancho Dávila, nor Antonio de Leva, nor Simón Abril, nor Luis Vives, nor Francisco Sánchez, nor other men renowned in arms and letters.

"What is more: the multiplication of don has made it worthy of scorn among people of fine education. To simply call someone Don Juan, Don Pedro, Don Diego, is to treat him as a lackey. It is necessary to call him Señor Don, which

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[255] In illo tempore: Latin: "in former times."

means don twice. If in the next century Señor Don also manages to increase in number as don in our own, Señor Don will no longer be sufficient for calling a man in such a way that he is not offended, and it will be necessary to say Don Señor Don; and fearing that it will be equally inconvenient in the future, the number of dons and señors will go on increasing throughout the centuries, so that within a few of them people will be on the footing of not addressing each other, because of the time miserably lost in repeating Señor Don so many useless times. The people of the Court, who undoubtedly have the least time to waste, have already recognized the harm of this, and in order to competently remedy it, if treating one with some familiarity, simply call him by his last name; and if they still do not find themselves on this footing, they add señor to his last name, without his Christian name. But even here arises another obstacle. If a lot of brothers, or cousins or relatives with the same family name find ourselves in the same room--how do they distinguish us, except by letters of the alphabet, as mathematicians distinguish the parts of their diagrams, or by numbers, as the English do with their infantry regiments?"

To this, Nuño added a thousand other humorous reflections, and finished by rising with the others to go take a stroll, saying:

"Señores, what can we do about it? This proves what has been demonstrated for a long time, to wit: that men corrupt everything good. I confess it in this particular, and I say frankly that there are as many superfluous dons in Spain as marquises in France, barons in Germany and princes in Italy. Which is to say that, there are men everywhere who take possession of what is not theirs and

display it with more pomp than those to whom it belongs legitimately; and if in French there is an adage which says, alluding to this very thing: Baron allemand, marquis français et prince d'Italie, mauvaise compagnie,[256] thus has also passed into a Castilian proverb the saying of Quevedo:

> They call me Don Turuleque,
>
> But I think it's deliberate,
>
> Because "don" with Turuleque
>
> Does not very well seem to fit.[257]

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[256] Baron allemand, marquis français et prince d'Italie, mauvaise compagnie: "German baron, French Marquis and Italian prince--bad company."

[257] They call me Don Turuleque,
But I think it's deliberate,
Because "don" with Turuleque
Does not very well seem to fit:

Don Turuleque me llaman,
pero pienso que es adrede,
porque no sienta muy bien el don con el Turuleque.

LETTER 81

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Uncertainty concerning how a man should conduct himself.)

It is not easy to know how a man must conduct himself to make his way in the world. If one appears to be talented and educated, he acquires for himself the odium of people, because they consider him arrogant, impudent and capable of great things. If, on the contrary, one is humble and discreet, they scorn him as good-for-nothing and foolish. If they see that one is circumspect and thorough, they consider him vengeful and traitorous. If one is sincere, humane, and easily reconciled with another who has offended him, they call him cowardly and pusillanimous. If he attempts to elevate himself, ambitious; if he contents himself with mediocrity, idle; if he follows the way of the world, he acquires renown as a flatterer. If he opposes the nonsense of men, he joins the ranks of the eccentric. These considerations, vexatious with maturity and confirmed by so many examples which abound, give a man the desire to withdraw to the most uninhabited place in our Africa, to flee from his fellow men, and to choose the abode of the deserts or the hills, among the wild animals and brutes.

LETTER 82

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Quintessence of modernism.)

May Allah deliver me from believing that there has been a century in which men have been sane. Human follies are as ancient as they are ridiculous, and each era has had its favorite madness. But, just as one who enters a madhouse marvels at what he sees in each cell until he passes on to another in which he finds a more frenetic madman, thus the century we now see merits primacy until another one comes which surpasses it. The next one will be, undoubtedly, the superior, but let us take advantage of the few years which remain to this one for amusing ourselves, in case we do not manage to take part in the following one. And let us be clear: its nonsense is excessive, particularly that of having managed to declare as false a few axioms or propositions which used to be considered established and indubitable principles.

"I have," Nuño said to me, "two friends who, by dint of studying the current customs and blaspheming the old ones, and by dint of trying to extract the quintessence of modernism, have succeeded in losing their heads, as can happen to those who persist much in finding the Philosopher's Stone. But the most singular thing about their misfortune is the mania they have caught: to wit, that the one is moribund and the other is helping him to die well. To do this, they make certain declarations of faith, all of which are based upon the common maxims of our

conceited men of fashion. Visiting them often, in case I can contribute to a cure, I have managed to learn from memory several of their articles, in addition to having asked the servant who assists them to write down every humorous thing he hears upon this particular, and every morning to present me with the list. He hears it through questions and answers, according to the way they usually repeat them.

"'Question. Do you believe that one can be an excellent soldier without having seen more fire than that from a chimney; and that it is enough only to wear a very narrow trimming on the sleeve, to speak badly of all the generals who do not provide a good table, to say that since Felipe II our armies have done nothing, to state with assurance that from twenty years of age one can command a hundred thousand men better than with forty years of experience, fifteen armed skirmishes, four wounds and knowledge of the art of war?'

"'Answer. Yes, I believe.'

"'Question. Do you believe that one can be an amazing savant without having read for more than two minutes a day, without having a book, without having had teachers, without being humble enough to ask questions, and without having any more talent than dancing a minuet?'

"'Answer. Yes, I believe.'

"'Question. Do you believe that in order to be a good patriot it suffices to speak ill of the country, to make fun of our ancestors, and to listen acquiescently to hairdressers, dancing masters, opera singers, cooks, and disagreeable satires against

the nation; to act as if you have forgotten the native tongue, to speak ridiculously and badly various excerpts from foreigners, and to turn up one's nose at everything that happens and has happened on this side of the Pyrenees?'

"'Answer. Yes, I believe.'

"'Question. Do you believe that in order to judge a book one does not need to see it, and it suffices to judge it by its cover or something from the index or prologue?'

"'Answer. Yes, I believe.'

"'Question. Do you believe that, in order to maintain one's physical human body, four hours at table with a variety of exquisite and unhealthy dishes, coffee which debilitates the nerves, liquors which daze the head, and afterwards a game of cards which ruins the pocketbook, contracting shameful debts to pay, are indispensable?'

"'Answer. Yes, I believe.'

"'Question. Do you believe that in order to be a useful citizen it suffices to sleep twelve hours, to spend three at the theater, six at table and three at gambling?'

"'Answer. Yes, I believe.'

"'Do you believe that to be the father of a family it suffices to not see your wife for entire months, but instead those belonging to others, to ruin your inheritance, to hand over your sons to a hired tutor, or to your lackeys, coachmen or stable boys?'

"'Answer. Yes, I believe.'

"'Question. Do you believe that in order to be a great man it suffices to abstain from civil behavior, to arch one's eyebrows, to have great equipages, great houses and great vices?'

"'Answer. Yes, I believe.'

"'Question. Do you believe that in order to contribute your part to the advancement of the sciences it suffices to persecute or to scorn those who are dedicated to educating themselves; and to regard a philosopher, a poet, an orator or a mathematician as a parrot, a long-tailed monkey, a dwarf and a buffoon?'

"'Answer. Yes, I believe.'

"'Question. Do you believe that every taciturn, speculative and modest man, in proffering his opinion, deserves scorn and mockery, and even blows and whacks if he tolerates them, and that, on the contrary, in order to be worthy of attention it is necessary to speak like a magpie, to go around in circles like a butterfly, and to make more gestures than a monkey?'

"'Answer. Yes, I believe.'

"'Question. Do you believe that the sum total and final felicity of man consists in having a team of very fat Frisian draft horses, or of very fine Cordovan colts, or of very tall Manchegan mules?'

"'Answer. Yes, I believe.'

"'Question. Do you believe that if the next century opens its eyes to the ridiculousness of the present one, your name and those of your fellow men shall be the objects of laughter and mockery, and perhaps odium and execration? And notwithstanding this, will you end up by promising to live in folly?'

"'Answer. Yes, I believe and promise.'

"And then the questioner usually grows quiet, and the other one asks him the same questions," added Nuño. "The regrettable thing is that they do not make a complete catechism analogous to this species of the symbol of their follies. I am most curious to know what commandments they would set down, what works of compassion, what sins, what virtues opposed to them, what speeches. Those who have professed this religion, venerated its mysteries, attended its rites, and attempted to propagate its doctrine, are accustomed to usually spend the most felicitous years of their lives. The high concept they have of themselves; the consummate scorn with which they treat others; the admiration which the feminine world has for them; their bizarre behavior; and, finally, the total lack of serious reflection which might for a moment halt their continual movement--undoubtably give them a most pleasurable youth. But when they arrive at a mature age and see that they are going to incur the greatest rebuff of fortune, I believe that they shall be in a most sad situation. All that whirlwind of superficialities shall vanish, and they will find themselves in another sphere. Serious, formal and important men will not receive them, for they have never paid attention to them; women will now forget them, because they see them stripped of all the talents which make them worthy of

esteem in the drawing-room, and I fancy each one of them as a bat, which is neither a mouse nor a bird.

"In what class of condition, then, will one of these be positioned when he reaches a less superficial and delightful age? What bitter moments he shall have when he sees himself in the impossibility of being either a man or a boy! Men who are entering the age he has passed through shall produce in him envy, and men who find themselves with the gray hairs which now threaten him shall cause him consternation. If Nature had assumed the obligation, at the time it produced him, of always maintaining him in the prime of life, he would die without having ceased to enjoy continuous pleasures and felicities. If, recognizing the shortness of youth, he had paid heed to what is well-founded, he would at a certain time find himself in some privileged position in the realm, more or less happy, to tell the truth, but always with some foundation; while in the case of the petimetre, this one has nothing more to hope for than mortifications and rebuffs of fortune from the day that his face wrinkles, his body grows fat, and his voice becomes deep and solemn--that is, since the day in which he could have begun to be something in the world."

LETTER 83

Gazel to Ben-Beley

(Signs of wise men.)

If I believed in the nonsense of judicial astrology, I would not employ my

life in anything with as much gusto and curiosity as in investigating the sign which presides over the birth of cultured men in Spain. It is, undoubtedly, everywhere a misfortune, and a very great one, that of being born with a degree more of talent than that of common mortals; but in this Peninsula, says Nuño, it is one of the greatest miseries a man can incur upon birth.

"To tell the truth," my friend continues, "if I were married and my wife were close to producing an heir to my house, I would say to her frequently: 'Go to church, and ask God to give you a stupid son; you will see what a restful and honorific old age he gives us. He will inherit from all his uncles and grandfathers, and will have robust health. He will have an advantageous marriage and a brilliant fortune. He will be revered by the people and favored by the wealthy; and we will die replete with assets. But if the son you now carry in your womb were born with talent--what grief he would make for us! I tremble with dread when I think about it, and I shall certainly avoid telling you about it for fear of causing you to miscarry out of fright. (Whatever the fruit of our marriage may be, I assure you, on my word of honor as the good father of a family, that I will not teach him to read or write, nor to deal with any more people than the house lackeys.')"

Let us leave behind Nuño's jest and return, Ben-Beley, to the aforesaid. Scarcely has this Peninsula produced a man superior to others, when miseries have rained down upon him to the point of drowning him. I omit those who through their pride attract to themselves the just indignation of the government, since those are everywhere exposed to the same thing. I speak only of the misfortunes innocent

savants in Spain have experienced from things which make them worthy of such punishment, and which they have acquired due to the constellation I have just mentioned to you, and which forms the object of my present speculation.

When I see that Miguel de Cervantes has been as unknown after death as he was unfortunate when living, since until now little has been known about where he was born, and that this genius, the author of one of the few original works that there are in the world, spent part of his life in the hospital, part in prison, and part in the active service of a company as a common soldier, I say that Nuño is correct in not wanting his sons to learn to read.

When I see that Don Francisco de Quevedo, one of the greatest talents God has created, having been born with a good patrimony and comforts, was subjected to a prison in which his sores became gangrenous on account of his shackles, I have the desire to burn every book I see.

When I see that Luis de León, notwithstanding his status in religion and at the university, was for many years in the greatest misery in a prison somewhat more frightening for Christians than the gallows itself, I shudder.

This injury is so certain, its consequences so sure, and its aspect so horrifying, that the Spaniard who today publishes his works writes them with incredible caution, and trembles when the time for printing them arrives. And even though the kindness of his intention, the sincerity of his expressions, the justification of the magistrate, and the benevolence of the public, are obvious to

him, he always suspects the influences of the star--the same as he who sails when it thunders, even though the ship be of good quality, the sea not very dangerous, its crew robust, and its pilot well-skilled--always fearing that a flash of lightning will come down and burn the masts or the rigging, or perhaps pass on to the powder magazine.[258]

From this it arises that many men, whose compositions would be useful to themselves and honorific to the nation, hide them; and foreigners, upon seeing the works which are published in Spain, hold a concept of Spaniards that they do not merit. But although the judgment is false, it is not reckless, since works which deserved applause remain hidden. I associate with few people, but even among the ones I know, I dare to say with assurance that quite worthy manuscripts upon every species of erudition, which could be published, naturally lie buried as if they were in the dust of the sepulcher, when they have scarcely left the cradle. And of others I can also affirm that, for each sheet of paper that they have published, they have kept hidden ninety-nine.

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[258] Powder magazine: In the original Spanish, the powder magazine is referred to as the "Santa Bárbara." The term results from St. Barbara, a third century Christian martyr who lived in Heliopolis, Egypt, being the patron saint of artillerymen, military engineers, miners and others who work with explosives. In her legend, the provincial prefect ordered her father Dioscorus to execute her by beheading. For doing this, Dioscorus, a wealthy heathen, was struck by lightning as divine punishment.

LETTER 84

Ben-Beley to Gazel

(Consolation of posthumous fame.)

Do not show to your friends the letter that I wrote you against that thing they call posthumous fame.[259] Although this is one of the greatest lunacies of mankind, it is necessary to allow it to reign as many others do. To endeavor to reduce the human race to only what is naturally good is to endeavor that all men be philosophers, and this is impossible. After writing to you upon this subject a few months ago, I have considered that the said desire is one of the few things that can console a man of unfortunate merit. It can be quite a strong relief for him to think that future generations will do him the justice his contemporaries deny him, and I am of the opinion that all the pleasure and consolation he might long for, although they be as puerile as they be innocent, should be granted to the unhappy and distressed animal called man.

LETTER 85

Gazel to Ben-Beley. Reply to the previous letter.

(Indifference concerning the same fame.)

I shall readily refrain from showing your letter to some people. It provides

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[259] The letter that I wrote you against that thing they call posthumous fame: Ben-Beley is referring to Letter 28.

me much strength to reflect that the hope of posthumous fame is the only one which can sustain many who suffer the persecution of their century and appeal to the coming ones; and that, consequently, one must give this consolation and any other decent one, even though it be puerile to the man who lives in the midst of so much misfortune. But my friend Nuño says that too many people in Spain already follow the system of indifference upon this kind of fame. That is to say, the character of the century, or the true spirit of philosophy; or, in other words, the consequence of religion, which sees as vain, transitory and frivolous the glories of the world, the certain thing being that in reality the number is excessive of those who regard the last day of their lives as the last one of their existence in this world.

To confirm it, he told me about the lives led by many incapable of acquiring such posthumous fame. Not only did he speak of the delightful life of the Court and great cities, which are a common place for gossip, but also of the towns and villages. The first example he cited was that of the host I had and esteemed so much on my first journey through the Peninsula. After this one followed several others quite similar, and he concluded by saying:

"Many thousands of men rise very late, drink very hot chocolate, very cold water, get dressed, go out to the plaza, bargain for a pair of chickens, hear Mass, return to the plaza, take a long walk, inquire about the jokes and pieces of gossip, return home, eat very slowly, take a nap, get up, take a walk in the country, return

home, take some refreshment, go to the tertulia, play manille,[260] return home, pray the rosary, eat supper, and throw themselves into bed."

LETTER 86

Ben-Beley to Gazel

(Apparitions of Santiago in battles.)

Ask your friend Nuño his opinion upon a hero of his country famous for the aid, in a long series of battles their ancestors had against ours for possession of the Peninsula, for which Spaniards have believed that they are indebted to him. In his histories I see that while King Don Ramiro, with a handful of his vassals, was surrounded by an innumerable army of Moors, his defeat inevitable, the said hero, called Santiago,[261] appeared to him and told him that, at dawn the following day, regardless of the number of his soldiers or that of his enemies, he should fall upon them, confident of the protection he brought him from Heaven. The histories add that Don Ramiro did so, and won a battle as glorious as it might have been foolhardy, if his hope had been measured by his military forces.[262] Those who

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[260] Manille: A card game played between two teams of partners, each player receiving twelve cards, the trump for each hand being the final card dealt to the dealer.

[261] Santiago: Saint James, patron saint of Spain.

[262] A battle as glorious as it might have been foolhardy: The battle of Clavijo, in 844.

have written the annals of Spain refer to this very thing. Tell me what this means.

LETTER 87

Gazel to Ben-Beley.

(Reply to the previous letter.)

I have fulfilled your request. I have communicated to Nuño your misgiving about a point of their history which we can like less, if it is true, and which can make us laugh more, if it is false; and I have even added some reflections from my own imagination. If Heaven, I have told him, if Heaven wished to free his nation from the African yoke--were the human forces, the actual presence of Santiago, and even less, that of his white horse, necessary for defeating the Moorish army? He who has made everything from nothing, with only words and with only His love--did He perhaps need a thing as material as a sword? Do you believe that those who are enjoying Eternal Bliss descend to give knife stabs and sword thrusts to the men of this world? Does not the thought God said: "Let the Moors flee," and the Moors fled seem to you an idea more in accordance with what we believe of the Divine Essence?

This conversation between an African Moor and a Christian Spaniard is undoubtedly odious, but among rational men of any country or religion it can be discussed quite well without vitiating friendship. To this, Nuño responded with the natural forbearance which accompanies him and the impartiality which makes his

arguments so appreciable:

"From fathers to sons has come to us the notion that Santiago appeared to Don Ramiro at the memorable battle of Clavijo, and that his presence gave the Christians victory over the Moors. Although this epoch of our history is not an article of faith, nor a demonstration of geometry, and therefore, anyone can deny it without meriting being called impious or irrational, it nevertheless seems that a tradition so ancient has been consecrated in Spain through the piety of our Spanish character, which leads us to attribute to Heaven the advantages that our defenders have won, whenever these seem extraordinary to us--which contradicts the vanity and pride attributed to us by foreigners. This very humility has caused the greatest triumphs had by any nation on the globe. The two greatest men that this Peninsula has produced experienced in difficult situations of the greatest consequence the importance of this piety of the common Spaniard.

"Cortés in America and Cisneros in Africa saw their soldiers work wonders of more than true human valor, because their armies saw, or believed they saw, the same apparition. There are no weapons, nor strategems, nor methods, nor military discipline, which inspire in the soldiers strength so invincible and with such known effect as the idea that a supernatural force accompanies them and that a leader descended from Heaven guides them--of whose truth following generations were so persuaded that for many years the custom lasted in the Spanish armies of invoking Santiago at the time of attack. The discipline most capable of making one army superior to another can be easily copied by anyone; the greatest skill in handling

weapons and the most scientific construction of them can be imitated: the greatest number of allied auxiliaries and mercenaries can be achieved with money; with the same method spies are obtained and informers are corrupted. In short, no warlike nation can have the least advantage in a campaign which the enemies do not equal him in, in the following one. But the belief that a celestial champion descends to aid a troop of soldiers fills it with an inimitable vigor.

"Observe, Gazel: those who endeavor to dissuade the people of many things they believe in good faith, and from whose belief result useful effects to the State, do not realize what would occur if the common people set themselves up as philosophers and tried to examine the reason for each law. I tremble to think of it, and it is one of the things that vexes me about the sect reigning today, which wants to revoke in doubt everything that until now has been considered more evident than a geometrical demonstration. Abuse passes on to use, and the accidental to the essential. Not only do they deny and scorn those articles which can be absolutely denied without being disrespectful toward religion, but also they endeavor to ridicule even the fundamentals of that same religion. Tradition and revelation are, in the opinion of these, mere machinations which the government puts into use according to what seems convenient.

"They concede that an inexplicable Sovereign Being has produced us, but they deny that its concern goes beyond the mere creating of us. They say that, dead, we shall be where and how we were before being born, and a thousand other things proceeding from these. But I tell them: even though we suppose for a minute that

all you say were true--does it seem advisable to you to bandy it about, and that everyone know it? The liberty that you not only claim to enjoy, but also to spread throughout the entire globe--would that not be the shortest way to overwhelm the world in frightening moral chaos, in which all government, economy and society were annihilated? Imagine that all men, persuaded by your discourses, do not hope or fear some future state after this life. In what do you believe they would employ it? In every species of crime, however atrocious and harmful they may be.

"Even if our arbitrary system empty of all basis of reason or authority were evident with total geometric rigor, it should be kept hidden among a few individuals of each realm. This should be a secret of state, mysteriously guarded among a very few, with the condition of severe punishment to he who violates it."

To tell the truth, friend Ben-Beley, this last reason of Nuño's seems incontestable to me. Either what the libertines have taken great pains to preach and propagate is true, or it is false. If it is false, as I believe it to be, they are reprehensible for trying to contradict the belief of so many centuries and nations. If it is true, this discovery is at the same time more important than the Philosopher's Stone, and more dangerous than black magic; and therefore, should not reach the ears of the common people.

LETTER 88

Ben-Beley to Gazel

(Wasted time declaiming against luxury.)

I observe and agree with what you tell me about the various steps nations pass through from their formation until their total ruin. If some remedy is possible for avoiding the chain of events which will happen to men and their communities, I do not believe that there is one for preventing the damages of the epoch of luxury. This has too much attraction to give way to another persuasion; and thus, those who are born in similar eras exhaust themselves in vain if they endeavor to counteract the force of such a furious torrent. A nation accustomed to exquisite food, soft beds, fine clothing, effeminate manners, amorous conversations, frivolous pastimes, studies directed toward refining the delights or other aspects of luxury, is not capable of hearing the voice of those who try to show it the proximity of its ruin. It will rush headlong into it as the river does into the sea. Neither laws on moderation, nor military ideas, nor public works, nor wars, nor conquests, nor the example of a frugal, austere and moderate sovereign will suffice to compensate for the harm which is introduced imperceptibly.

Such a nation would laugh at the magistrate who, wishing to revive the old laws and the austerity of its customs, punishes those who broke them; at the philosopher who declaims against laxity; at the general who speaks perchance of wars; at the poet who sings about the heroes of the nation. None of this is

understood nor heard; what is listened to with respect and executed with general painstaking care is everything that can complete the work of universal ruin. The invention of a sherbet, of a coiffure, of a dress and of a dance, is regarded as mathematical proof of the progress of human reason. A new composition of delightful music, of an effeminate poem, of an amorous drama, count among the most useful inventions of the century. To this, a nation reduces the effort of human reason: to a new coach spring, all mathematics; to a foreign fountain and an agreeable theater, all physics; to more sweet-smelling fragrances, all chemistry; to the means of making us more capable of enjoying pleasures, all medicine; and to breaking the bonds of kinship, matrimony, loyalty, friendship and love of the nation, all morality and philosophy.

A good reception would be had by one who went up to a young man of eighteen years, telling him:

"Friend, you are now at the age for beginning to be useful to your nation. Take off these garments; put on the woollen ones of the country. Leave those delightful foods and content yourself with a little bread, wine, herbs, beef and mutton. Do not even go to theaters and tertulias; go to the countryside; leap; run; pitch iron bars; ride horseback; swim across rivers; kill a wild boar or a bear; marry an honorable, robust and hardworking woman."

It would go little better for one who went up to a woman and said to her:

"You are now fifteen years old? Well, you must no longer think about

being a girl. Dressing rooms, coaches, viands, wooing, masque balls, bows, needlepoint lace, ribbons, ornamental patches, silk lace, perfumes, ruffled dresses, deshabillé--forget them from now on. Who will marry you, if you engage in these pastimes? What husband will have a woman who does not nurse her children at her breasts, a woman who does not know how to make his shirts, take care of him in illness, govern the household and follow him, if necessary, off to war?"

The poor man who went up to them with these sermons would receive in return much mockery and ridicule. These species of discourse, although quite true and venerated in one century, are scarcely understood in another. It happens exactly to those who express them as would happen to one who revived the speaking of the Gallic language in Paris today, or in Madrid the speaking of the language of old Numantia; and if to the style of talk he added the appropriate dress and gestures; all the unemployed (who are the greater part of the inhabitants of the courts) would go to see him out of curiosity, as one who goes to listen to a bird or a monster from distant lands.

If, as I am in Africa far from the court of the emperor, separated from its hubbub, and now at a decrepit age, I found myself in one of the principal courts of Europe, with few years, some introductions and an average fortune, although I had this philosophical knowledge, do not think that I would set about declaiming against this disorder, nor pondering its consequences. To me, it would seem as fruitless an enterprise as that of trying to stop the rising and ebbing of the sea or the rising and falling of the stars.

LETTER 89

Nuño to Gazel

(Uselessness of letters concerning domestic topics.)

Ordinary letters dealing with nothing but health and domestic affairs of friends and acquaintances are the coldest and most insipid compositions in the world. Printed letters having the necessary blanks for the signature and date should be sold, with the distinction of letters from fathers to sons, from sons to fathers, from masters to servants, from servants to masters, from those who live at the Court to those who live in the village, from those who live in the village to those who live at the Court. With this assortment, which could be sold at any bookstore, at a fixed price, one would be relieved of the vexation of writing a ream of paper full of vapidness every year and reading as many others of the same quality, dedicating time to more useful things.

If the contents of this package, which I remit to you and which they have sent to me from Cadiz for you, are of this species, I can do no less than commiserate with you. But I believe that among them will be many from old Ben-Beley, in which can be found no less than things worthy of your reading.

I shall remit to you shortly an extract from a certain work by a friend of mine who is making parallels between the systems of sciences in various centuries and countries. It is incredible that, having advanced so little in the essential, there has been so much variety of opinions in different epochs.

There is a nation in Europe (and it is not the Spanish one) that a few centuries ago prohibited printing; afterwards, all theaters; then, all philosophy opposed to Peripateticism;[1] and, successively, the use of quinine; and then, has taken steps in the opposite extreme. The same nation, in its cold and humid land, tried to make birds, brought inside their eggs from their native climes, which are hot and dry, come out of their shells. Other savants of theirs have persisted in maintaining that animals can procreate without being produced from semen. Others refined the system of Newtonian attraction, to the point of attributing to it the formation of the fetus in the mother. Others said that mountains had been formed from the sea. This liberty has gone beyond the physical to the moral. Some have upheld that yours and mine are formal transgressions; that in the natural equality of men the establishment of hierarchies among them is perverted; that the natural state of man is solitude, as of the beasts in the woods. Those of us who do not delve so deeply into speculations cannot make up our minds to abandon the cities of Europe to go live among the Hottentots, Patagonians, Araucanians,[263] Iroquois, Apaches and other such peoples, which seems more in accordance with nature, according to the system of these philosophers or whatever they may be.

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[263] Araucanians: A group of Indians indigenous to Chile.

LETTER 90

Gazel to Nuño

(Gazel's farewell to Nuño.)

In the last letter from Ben-Beley that you have remitted to me, following your scrupulous custom of not opening those which arrive sealed, I find news which summons me with all punctuality to the Court of my country. My family has just renewed with another one certain old disputes, in which I must take a part, quite against my disposition opposed to all that is faction, party and partiality.

An uncle who could manage those affairs is far from the Court, employed in a governorship near the borders of the barbarians, and it is not customary among us to abandon occupations of public character for those of private interest. Ben-Beley, in addition to being very old, has retired from worldly affairs completely, and so I find myself necessarily compelled to respond to them.

In this port is a Dutch ship, whose captain is engaged to take me as far as Ceuta, and from there the passage to the Court shall be easy and inexpensive. It is natural that we call at Malaga; direct the letters that you write to me to that city, and entrust some friend you may have there to remit them to Cadiz, in case that in the entire month which begins today you do not see me. I assure you that the mere thought that I am going to the Court to make claims against the powerful and to battle against equals disheartens me incredibly.

I will write to you from Malaga and Ceuta, and upon my arrival. I regret

leaving behind your land and your friendship so soon. Both had begun to inspire me with certain ideas new for me until now, of which I had been deprived of by my birth and education (and others influencing me which now seem absurd when I ponder the object of the conversations we have had so often). Great must be the strength of truth, when it suffices to stand up to two such great spirits. Blessed dawn the felicitous day whose divine light has just dissipated the few uncertainties which still obscure the recesses of my heart! The sun has never seemed to me as beautiful after a squall, nor the sea after a furious agitation, nor the gentle west breeze after the dreadful sound from the north, as the state of my heart seemed to me when I achieved enjoying the quietude that you promised me, and that I began to experience in your discourses. The mere privation of such great good makes intolerable for me the distance from the coasts of Africa to that of Europe. In my land, I shall deal tediously with the affairs which summon me, leaving behind in your country the only one that merits my concern, and I shall return immediately to conclude it, not only at the cost of such a short voyage, but even though it were necessary to do a thousand times that of the Spanish ship La Victoria, which was the first to circumnavigate the globe.[264]

I intend to touch upon these matters with Ben-Beley. What do you advise me? I have a certain fear of offending his rigor, and a certain inner impulse to

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[264] La Victoria: The ship in which the survivors of the expedition of Ferdinand Magellan returned to Spain, in 1522, having been the first to completely circle the globe. La Victoria returned without Magellan himself, who had been slain by natives on the island of Zebu, in the Philippines.

illuminate him, if he is still unenlightened--or, I wager, his heart, if it has already received this light, will communicate it to my own; and, together united, they will form a greater clarity. Upon this I await your reply, even more than upon the concerns of pretension, courts and fortune.

End of the Moroccan Letters

NOTE

The manuscript contained as much again as what is printed, but a considerable part will always remain unpublished, since the handwriting is so bad that it is impossible to read. This has been all the more regrettable to me, as I was moved to greater curiosity by the list of contents of the letters, the published as well as the unpublished ones, up to the number of one hundred and fifty. A few fragments of the last ones have somewhat intelligible handwriting, although at the cost of much effort, increasing my sadness at not being able to publish the complete work. I would willingly include them here with the rest of the topics, wishing to be considered a scrupulous and precise editor, just as much for doing the public this courtesy as for not failing to be faithful to my deceased friend. But some are so unconnected with the others, and so short the legible passages, that the desire of the reader would not in any way be satisfied. And thus, we shall both content ourselves with saying that, from both the fragments and the titles it is inferred that the greater part was condensed to the letters from Gazel to Nuño, giving him news of his arrival in the capital of Morocco, his journey to meet Ben-Beley, the conversations of the two upon European subjects, the tidings of Gazel and the reflections of Ben-Beley, the return of Gazel to the Court, his introduction there, incidents which occurred to him there, the letters of Nuño about them, advice from the same to Gazel, and the death of Ben-Beley.

All these matters promised Gazel the opportunity to display his candor and Nuño his impartiality, and there were many pieces of news from the venerable Ben-

Beley. But such is the world, and such are men, that seldom do we see their works completed.

LITERARY PROTEST FROM THE EDITOR OF

THE MOROCCAN LETTERS

"Oh tempora! Oh mores!"[265] some will exclaim with much sound judgment upon seeing so many pages of so many lines each one. "What a voluminous work! Moral thoughts! Critical observations! Deliberate reflections! And in our times! Right before our eyes! Right under our noses! Wicked editor or author, or whoever you may be: how do you dare to give us a book so vexing, so massive and, above all, so tedious? How long will you abuse our benignity? Cannot either your age, which is still not mature, or that of the world, which has never been more childlike, dissuade you from such vexing toil? Vexing for you, who will conclude it, for us who will read it, and for the press, which will now groan. Are you not frightened by the fate of so many folio-sized books, which lie amidst the dust of the booksellers, or terrified by the fortune of such a small book, which is reprinted thousands of times, without its number being sufficient for every dressing table and mantelpiece which is considered unattractive for being seen without them?

"Mordant and superficial little satire, although it be against us ourselves, supplement or second part of it, amorous poetry and other equally frivolous productions, it may pass in good time from hand to hand, its style from mouth to mouth, and its ideas from person to person; they may pass, I repeat, a thousand and one times, eventually. Our figure seen in this mirror pleases us, even though the

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[265] Oh tempora! Oh mores!: Cicero, In Verrem actio, 4, 25, 56. "Oh the times! Oh the customs!"

mirror is not flattering; we like to see our portraits pass on to posterity, even though the artist's brush does not adulate us. But serious things, such as patriotism, vassalage, criticism of vanity, progresses in philosophy, advantages or inconveniences of luxury, and other similar article--not in our times; neither should you write about them nor should we read them. However little we permitted such absurdities, however little stimulus we gave you, you would soon set about working on totally serious things. The jocose style in you is artificial: your nature is somber and austere. We know your true face and shall tear away the mask with which you have tried to hide yourself.

"There is no lack among us of ones who know you. From this knowledge we deduce that from the obscurity of your study you have not tried to ascend quickly to the brilliance of literature, but rather, you have first flown very low, then elevated your wings a little more, and now we do not know to where you are trying to soar. One of us knows that you are preparing the public, with these little papers, for greater things. We are afraid that, by favoring you, someday you will publish The Elements of Patriotism, a most vexing work. You want to reduce the system of obligations of each individual in the State to his class, and of each class to the whole. If you did such a thing, you would scatter a very dense cloud over all that is brilliant in our conversations and ideas; you would manage to separate us from frivolous society, from flippant amusement and the superficial life, showing to each one the part which would fall to him in the grand structure, and making odious those who did not take great pains in their work.

"No, Vásquez, you shall not achieve this end, if you hope to ingratiate yourself with us as the effective means for it. We are going to cut the root from the tree which is able to give such bad fruit. You will learn that all of us are going to meet in full assembly and forbid ourselves, our children, wives and servants, such odious reading; and even if you manage to be read by someone, we shall also manage to give you other sorrows. We shall divide ourselves into various troops; each one shall attack you in a different spot. Some shall say that you are a most bad Christian in supposing that a Moor such as Ben-Beley gives such good counsel to his disciple. Others shall cry out that you are more barbarous than the Africans in saying that our century is not as felicitous as we say, as if it were not enough that we said it; and so on with other matters of your African Letters, written in the heart of Old Castile, a dry and inclement province which produces nothing but good wheat and loyal vassals."

I dreamed a night ago that, upon seeing these letters, some friends were telling me this with austere frowns, harsh voices, declamatory gestures and exalted furor. I also dreamed that they turned away from me with a majestic air, and threw me a glance capable of knocking down Hercules himself. How I would fare in this situation is a matter worthy of the charitable consideration of my pious, benevolent and friendly reader, in addition to my being pusillanimous, timid and poor in spirit. I awoke from this dream with that fright and sweat experienced by one who has just dreamed that he has fallen from a tower, or that a bull has gored him, or that they are taking him to the scaffold. And half dreaming and half awake, stretching out

my arms to halt my furious censors and move them to pity, kneeling down and joining my hands (the posture for placating the deities, although they be Jove with his thunderbolt, Neptune with his trident, Mars with his sword, Vulcan with his hammer, Pluto with his furies, et sic de caeteris,[266]), I said to them, wondering whether it was a dream or reality:

"Shades, visions, phantasms, I declare that from now on, from this very moment, I shall not write anything worth a pin. What I have written until now is not worth much more, as well; so let us be calm, because you leave me, as says Quevedo, who was, upon a certain occasion even less dreadful than this one:

Haud aliter stupui, quam qui Jovis ignibus ictus

Vivit et est vitae nescius ipse suae.[267]

"You shall see how quick is my amendment, since I begin upon one of those infinite paths of frivolity, which is the pedantry of these farfetched quotations, brought from afar and affected inopportunely.

"I shall tear up the sheets of the manuscript which angers you so much; I shall burn the original of these Letters, and I promise, finally, to not dedicate myself in the future to anything but matters worthy of your esteem."

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[266] Et sic de caeteris: L. = "and in the same way with the others."

[267] Haud aliter stupui, quam qui Jovis ignibus ictus / Vivit et est vitae nescius ipse suae: Ovid, Tristia, Book I, 3, vv. 11-12. "I was as dazed as one who, smitten by the fire of Jove, / Still lives and knows not that he lives."

INDEX

Aranda, Count of, 1, 4, 5, 10, 12, 62, 77, 81

Benavente, Countess-Duchess of, 7, 8, 15, 54, 80

Buero-Vallejo, Antonio

(Works):

Un soñador para un pueblo, 48-49

Byron, George Gordon 6th Baron, 17, 912

Cadalso, José, born 1741 in Cádiz, 1; youth in France and England, 1-2; joins Bourbon Cavalry Regiment, 2; Esquilache mutiny and knighthood in order of Santiago, 3-4; begins friendship with the Conde de Aranda, 4; is exiled from Madrid to Aragón in1768, 5; member of tertulia of San Sebastián, 6-7, 76; falls in love with actress María Ignacia Ibáñez, 8; death of María Ignacia Ibáñez, 9-10; disenchantment with the Enlightenment, 12-13; composition of Cartas marruecas, 13; serves in siege of Gibraltar, in 1779-82, 15; death of, at Gibraltar, in 1782, 16; (Also see 31, 44, 56, 57, 58, 59, 62, 64, 66, 68, 78)

Cadalso (Works):

Anales de cinco días, 15

(El) buen militar á la violeta, 15

Diario crítico del sitio de Gibraltar, 16

Don Sancho García, 15

(Los) eruditos á la violeta, 15, 18

Escritos autobiográficos y epistolario (EA), 1

Kalendario manual y Guía de Forasteros para el carnaval de 1768, 4

Noches lúgubres, 1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 47, 52, 53, 92

(La) numantina, 15

Ocios de mi juventud, 5

Observaciones de un oficial holandés en el nuevamente descubierto reino de Feliztá, 13

Solaya, ó los circasianos, 15

Camarero, Manuel, 11, 22, 30, 86

Carlos III, 3, 4, 12, 18, 21, 49

Casanova de Seingalt, Giovanni Giacomo(Works):

Histoire de Ma Vie, 4

Cervantes, Miguel de, 13, 14, 17, 38, 58, 100

Correo de Madrid, 29, 58, 59, 60, 100

Cotton, Emily, 70

Dale, Scott, 14, 19, 22

(The) Enlightenment, 12, 20, 23, 25

Esquilache Mutiny, 3, 4, 48, 51

fictive autonomy, 43-48

Floridablanca, Count of, 16

Gibraltar, 12, 15, 16, 95, 816

Glendinning, Nigel, 11, 12, 16, 18, 19, 23, 24, 29, 35, 36, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 75

Goldsmith, Oliver (Works):

Citizen of the World (Chinese Letters), v, 13, 25, 26, 27, 84

Goya y Lucientes, Francisco de, 2, 7, 8, 78

Helman, Edith, 1, 2, 11, 36, 51, 71

Ibáñez, María Ignacia, 8-11, 16

Iriarte, Tomás de, 6, 7, 8, 9, 61

Kronik, John W., 44, 45, 47

"letter from an intimate friend," 9, 10, 11

Locke, John, 2

majo, 76-79, 744, 733

Marana, Giovanni Paolo

(Works):

L'Espion du Grand Seigneur, v, 13, 24, 26, 28, 40

metadiagesis, 41-42

Montesquieu, Charles-Louis de Secondat, v, 2, 13, 14, 23, 25, 26, 27, 29, 55, 61, 70

Montesquieu (Works):

Lettres persanes, v, 13, 23, 25

Moratín, Nicolás Fernández de, 6, 7, 9

Pérez Galdós, Benito, 44, 65

Pérez Galdós (Works):

El amigo Manso, 44-47

perspectivismo, v, 20, 28-37

petimetre, v, 42, 50, 55, 66, 72, 73, 75, 76, 79, 80, 81, 86, 87, 89, 90, 92, 97, 98

Pirandello, Luigi (Works):

Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, 43, 45, 48

"primitive version" of Letter no. 7, 59, 113

"primitive version" of Letter No. 45, 59, 60, 120

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 2, 52, 53, 55

Rousseau (Works):

Les confessiones, 53

La Nouvelle Héloïse, 2, 52

Du contrat social, 52, 53

San Sebastián, Fonda de, 6, 7, 8, 762

Santiago (St. James), 1, 3, 28, 35, 62, 63, 64, 65

Schurlknight, Donald E., 47

Sebold, Russell P., 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 12, 15, 16, 27, 46, 49, 50, 54, 56, 80, 91, 92

Segura, Juan de (Works):

Proceso de cartas de amores que entre dos amantes pasaron, 19

Squillaci, Marquis of, 3-4, 48-49

tertulia, 6, 7, 8, 54-57, 73, 83, 85, 87, 92

Unamuno, Miguel de (Works):

Niebla, 45

Voltaire, François-Marie Arouet), 1, 50, 55

Voltaire (Works):

Candide, 50-51