

## THE THEME OF JUSTICE IN FRAY LUIS DE LEÓN'S GLOSSES OF THE PSALMS

Critical scrutiny of Fray Luis de León's Psalm translations<sup>1</sup> reveals a poet fond of technical experimentation, habituated to a number of patterns of amplification,<sup>2</sup> and apparently preoccupied with certain themes, such as the character of human and divine justice, that are evidenced by the selection of Biblical verses whose subject matter he elected to alter or gloss. The insights derived from such a scrutiny should provide the reader of Fray Luis's original poems with a lens through which to appraise their uniqueness. The Psalm translations are particularly useful because since sixteenth-century Spanish-Catholic politics vigorously upheld the sanctity and immutability of the Vulgate text,<sup>3</sup> Fray Luis could not lightly depart in structure or meaning from his Latin model; we may safely hypothesize that he did so only when compelled by metrical or other poetic imperatives or by important thematic concerns. And these imperatives and concerns are, of course, the raw material of his original poems as well.

Before examining Fray Luis's Psalms in detail, we should note that it is the literally mortal risk inherent in daring to translate scripture in the second half of the sixteenth century that makes the hypothesis stated above a safe one. Whether or not to translate the Bible, and if so, how, were questions of transcendental importance to Fray Luis's generation. The controversies that swirled around these issues perturbed scholars in their libraries, infected university lecture and committee rooms with venomous

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<sup>1</sup> For this paper I will consider the twenty Psalms (one in two versions) attributed to Fray Luis de León by Félix García in his edition of Fray Luis de León's *Obras completas castellanas* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1957); hereafter cited as *Obras*. For a discussion of bibliographical problems concerning the Psalm translations see Angel C. Vega, ed., *Poesías de Fray Luis de León* (Madrid: Saeta, 1955), pp. 73-82. Some additional Psalm texts are given in Fray Luis de León, *Poesías completas*, ed. Félix García (Madrid: Aguilar, 1968), pp. 256-310.

<sup>2</sup> For a schematization of these techniques in other Luisian translations see Concepción Casanova, *Luis de León como traductor de los clásicos* (Barcelona: n.p., 1936). Casanova details Fray Luis's addition, repetition, amplification and suppression of vocabulary by grammatical category; her conclusions are valid for the Psalm translations as well. She does not consider rhetorical figures or other broader aspects of style.

<sup>3</sup> I have shown in a paper forthcoming in *Romance Notes* that Fray Luis based his translations of the Psalms on the Vulgate rather than on Hebrew versions.

rhetoric, dragged otherwise civil gentlemen into public brawls,<sup>4</sup> and posed a threat to men's reputations, estates, and even their lives and souls.<sup>5</sup> The boldest of the Spanish humanists took their lead from Erasmus, by far the most authoritative Biblical scholar of the century, who lobbied for the popularization of the Bible through its translation into vulgar tongues. Scripture, Erasmus argues eloquently in the preface to his commentary on Matthew, should be available to "the farmer, the tailor, the mason, prostitutes, pimps and Turks." In the prologue to his version of the New Testament he repeated these sentiments with lyrical forcefulness:

I would that even the lowliest woman read the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles. And I would that they were translated into all languages so that they could be read and understood not only by Scots and Irish, but also by Turks and Saracens. ... Would that, as a result, the farmer sing some portions of them at the plow, the weaver hum some parts of them to the movement of his shuttle, the traveler lighten the weariness of the journey.<sup>6</sup>

That Fray Luis considered himself in the Erasmian mold can be seen in the introduction to his translation of the Psalms, where he repeats his mentor's yearning to put the Bible into the hands and hearts of the common people:

Y pluguiese a Dios que reinase esta sola poesía en nuestros oídos, y que solo este cantar nos fuese dulce, y que en las calles y en las plazas, de noche, no sonasen otros cantares, y que en estos soltase la lengua el niño, y la doncella recogida se solazase con esto, y el oficial que trabaja aliviase su trabajo aquí. (*Obras*, II, 970)<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately this noble goal had already been thwarted by the anti-Erasmistic repressions<sup>8</sup> which culminated in the Council of Trent's ban-

<sup>4</sup> See the examples cited by Manuel Durán in *Luis de León* (New York: Twayne, 1971), p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> For details of the Inquisitional trials of Fray Luis and his Salamancan colleagues see Miguel de la Pinta Llorente, *Estudios y polémicas sobre Fray Luis de León* (Madrid: C.S.I.C., 1956); additional bibliography is provided in Oreste Macrí, *La poesía de Fray Luis de León* (Madrid: Anaya, 1970), pp. 190-195.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by J. Kelley Sowards in *Desiderius Erasmus* (Boston: Twayne, 1975), pp. 80-82.

<sup>7</sup> This theme was commonplace among the Erasmian humanists. Compare, for example, the dedication of Clement Marot's translations of the *Psaumes de David*:

O bien hereux qui voir pourra  
fleurir le temps, que l'on orra  
le laboureur a sa charrue,  
le charretier parmy la rue,  
et l'artisan en sa boutique,  
avecques un pseume ou cantique  
en son labeur se soulager!  
Hereux qui orra le berger  
et la bergere au boys estans  
faire que rochers & estangs  
apres eulx chantent la haulteur  
du saint nom de leur Createur!

Quoted by Lily Campbell, *Divine Poetry and Drama in Sixteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> For details see Marcel Bataillon's monumental *Erasmus y España*, 2d ed. (México: Fondo de

ning all Protestant versions of the Bible and the decision of the Spanish Church—habitually more papist than the Pope—to ban all versions of Scripture in the vulgar tongue.

Thus it was that among the charges that in 1569 sent Fray Luis to prison for five years was that he had translated sections of the Bible into Spanish. The many statements Fray Luis made in his defense indicate just how aware he was of the obligation of the translator to remain as literally faithful as possible to the original text: not only to the Vulgate but, where the Latin texts admit variants, to the Hebrew originals (a position which, under Inquisitional pressure, he later recanted).<sup>9</sup> Years before, in the famous introduction to his *Cantar de los Cantares*, translated from the Hebrew, Fray Luis had specified his method:

Pretendí que respondiese esta interpretación con el original, no sólo en las sentencias y palabras, sino aun en el concierto y aire de ellas, imitando sus figuras y maneras de hablar cuanto es posible a nuestra lengua. ...Entiendo ser diferente el oficio del que traslada, mayormente Escrituras de tanto peso, del que las explica y declara. El que traslada ha de ser fiel y cabal y, si fuere posible, contar las palabras para dar otras tantas, y no más ni menos, de la misma cualidad y condición y variedad de significaciones que las originales tienen, sin limitarlas a su propio sentido y parecer, para que los que leyeren la traducción puedan entender toda la variedad de sentidos a que da el original. ...El extenderse diciendo, y el declarar copiosamente la razón que se entiende, y el guardar la sentencia que más agrada, jugar con las palabras añadiendo y quitando a nuestra voluntad, eso quédese para el que declara, cuyo propio oficio es. (*Obras*, I, 74)

Thus both the religious climate and Fray Luis's own philological training obligated him to a conscientiously literal translation of Scripture. Yet remarkably there is not one of his Psalm translations which does not add to, and subtract from, the literal content of the Vulgate text in numerous ways. In these departures from the well known established text of the Latin models we will find keys to Fray Luis's thematic concerns.<sup>10</sup>

But before we jump to thematic conclusions we must first ascertain what else may have influenced Fray Luis's decision to alter the Psalms. To a considerable extent Fray Luis's choice of stanzaic form predetermined the amount of material he had to add or delete, for rather than attempt to duplicate the irregular rhythms and verse lengths of the Vulgate, Fray Luis rendered all twenty-one of his Psalm translations into Italian stanzas; ten into *liras*, six into *silvas* dominated by a quaternary structure, three into tercets, one into hendecasyllabic quatrains, and one into lengthy *estancias*. In the vast majority of these poems Fray Luis chose to devote precisely one

Cultura Económica, 1966).

<sup>9</sup> *Obras* I, 988, 992.

<sup>10</sup> In an analogous fashion Stephen Gilman directed our attention to the interpolations in the *Celestina* as a key to understanding Rojas' intentions. *The Art of the Celestina* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1956).

stanza to each Biblical verse, with the Procrustian result that often he either had to stretch the Biblical material with various amplificatory devices, or else lop off a pronomial or verbal appendage or two in order to fit content to form.<sup>11</sup> Once the pattern of one verse per stanza was set, Fray Luis seemed reluctant to break it.<sup>12</sup>

The choice of stanza and its degree of fit to the Vulgate largely determines the extent to which Fray Luis had to bend his material, but it does not govern the nature of the amplifications, nor does it account for the several passages where Fray Luis chose to gloss a single Biblical verse in multiple stanzaic units.<sup>13</sup> The most significant of Fray Luis's departures from the Vulgate are found in a group of eight Psalms, all of which, in one way or another, deal with the theme of justice. Fray Luis's adaptations constitute an essay of his thoughts about the system of justice operant in late sixteenth-century Spain, and perhaps even about his own incarceration.<sup>14</sup>

In what follows I shall briefly discuss these eight translations. To aid the reader, italics in the quotations will indicate Fray Luis's innovations.

Psalm 1, "Beatus vir": The essence of evil is slander.

The Vulgate proposes a dichotomy between the righteous who heed God's commandments and the wicked who do not, likening the first to a tree in harmony with nature and the second to chaff before the wind. In rigorous parallel the Latin enumerates three varieties of sinners, puts them in three loci, and proffers three verbs of avoidance:

Beatus vir que no abiit in consilio impiorum,  
et in via peccatorum non stetit,  
et in cathedra pestilentiae non sedit. (1:1)<sup>15</sup>

Fray Luis, expanding the Vulgate's five concise verses to six stanzas, turns the poem into a slashing indictment of slanderers. Fray Luis's enumeration gives prominence to a third variety of sinner:

Es bienaventurado  
varón el que en concilio malicioso  
no anduvo *descuidado*,  
ni el paso *perezoso*

<sup>11</sup> A fine example of amplification is found in 24:9; of reduction, in 17:3.

<sup>12</sup> Where the stricture of one verse per stanza is less rigorously imposed, there is correspondingly less pressure to stretch or prune, and the Psalms deviate less from their Latin models. See for example Psalms 44, 71, 103, 106, and 109.

<sup>13</sup> Psalms 1, 11, 18, 44, 71, 87, 109, 129.

<sup>14</sup> The dates of Fray Luis's Psalm translations are problematical in the extreme. According to Angel C. Vega (p. 78) some could date from as early as 1545. For Félix García, Psalm 26 may have been written in prison (p. 982) and Psalm 87 undoubtedly was (p. 993).

<sup>15</sup> *Biblia sacra*, 4th ed. (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1965). Citations of the Vulgate are all from this edition.

*detuvo del camino peligroso.  
 Y huye de la silla  
 de los que mofan la virtud y al bueno;  
 y juntos, en gavilla,  
 arrojan el veneno,  
 que anda recogido en lengua y seno. (1-10)*

Fray Luis posits the counsel of the wicked so as to emphasize the malicious intent of the ill speakers, and his suggested safeguard against them, which the Latin omits, is vigilance: not to venture out negligently. The way of sinners, the "via peccatorum," is similarly changed. For Fray Luis the dangerous path is the path of righteousness,<sup>16</sup> perilous because of the temptations which can draw the sinner from it. It can only be traversed successfully with a disciplined will: the lazy man will digress into sin. By eschewing the simple parallelisms of the Latin, which would surely be familiar to the majority of his readers, Fray Luis draw attention to the complex nature of virtue and sin. The unexpected adjective, "*perezoso*," personalizes the moral dilemma of choice, and creates a dynamic tension which is maintained by the substitution of the active verb "*huye*" for the Latin "*sedit*."

The rest of this stanza glosses "*pestilentiae*." Fray Luis's scoffers not only mock virtue, they actively seek to destroy virtuous men. These slanderers are in essence cowards, for they find safety only in numbers; they are like stalks of wheat bound together for strength or, in another contemporary meaning of the word *gavilla*, like a gang of thugs.<sup>17</sup> Their poisonous words are hurled from the mouth like weapons: most effective weapons, which are picked up by other tongues and lodge in peoples' breasts.

These two stanzas, the most striking of the translation, are typical of Fray Luis at his very best: intellectual, concise, passionate and engaged. Here, as in the best of his original odes, he is the master of shifting perspective, of emblematic image, and of hyperbaton.

The rest of the translation, which Angel C. Vega considers "*paraf-rástica*" and "*desgraciada en muchos pasos*,"<sup>18</sup> is not of this intensity, but even so it offers clues to Fray Luis's thematic concerns. Fray Luis's tree of the righteous not only is nourished by a flowing stream, and gives fruit in season, and does not lose its leaves (all from the Vulgate),<sup>19</sup> but it also rises to

<sup>16</sup> The interpretation is consistent with Fray Luis's discussion of Psalm 1:1 in his *Exposición del Libro de Job*, where he says that "camino... significa el estilo de la vida; ...es el intento y propósito que uno sigue en sus obras y costumbres, como se ve en el salmo 1." *Obras II*, 396.

<sup>17</sup> For Sebastián de Covarrubias (1611) *gavilla* is "el hazecillo de sarmientos o de otra leña menuda," or "la junta de vellacos adunados para hazer mal." *Tesoro de la lengua castellana* (rpt. Madrid: Turner, 1977), p. 634.

<sup>18</sup> Vega, *Poesías*, p. 74.

<sup>19</sup> In his commentary on Job, Fray Luis notes the frequency with which the Bible compares a just man to a tree planted by water (*Obras II*, 176, 457).

heaven in an act suggestive of worship and of reward, for it is “de *hermosas* hojas siempre *coronada*” (v. 20). This tree is not only “dichoso,” it is “seguro de la suerte que se muda” (v. 22). Fray Luis is suggesting that the righteous man by his vigilance, his strength of character, and by acts of worship is protected against fortune: not because he is exempted from the vicissitudes of human existence, but because by this righteousness he transcends them. The “*impii*” (1:4), on the other hand, are “el mal y *dañoso*” (v. 23), evil both by nature and by effect. Though once a scoffing sheaf of thugs, they are in the final analysis merely chaff (an improvement over the Latin “*pulvis*”), cut down, brought to the threshing floor<sup>20</sup> and blown away: “cual si el viento sacuda/la paja de la era *muy menuda*” (24-5). This image neatly ties the fifth stanza to the second. And the hyperbaton, which places “*muy menuda*” at the end of the verse, only draws attention to the ultimate insignificance of these evil men. For when at last they come to Judgement, their purposes will be recognized as vain and they will fall, Fray Luis adds, “con grande *afrenta*,” in noisy spectacle. Thus they become a scarewarning, an *escarmiento*, to those who have not yet chosen their own path of righteousness.

Fray Luis closes the poem with one last striking modification of the Latin text:

Porque Dios el camino  
sabe *bien* de los justos, *que es su historia*;  
del otro *desatino*  
de la maldad memoria  
no habrá, *como de baja y vil escoria*. (31-5)

The righteous, of course, choose God’s path, and Fray Luis adds that this is to be found in Holy Scripture which is “su historia.” The Vulgate closes with “*iter impiorum peribit*,” the way of the wicked will perish. This “way” for Fray Luis is a “*desatino*,” a disharmony, a kind of craziness that the self-evident order of creation should dispel. And if not it will be forgotten like common slag. The image seems out of place,<sup>21</sup> for there are no previous images of smelting. Yet it suggests that the entire process of righteous living—vigilance, strength, worship, active avoidance of evil—is one of refining the raw ore of human nature: that at the end of the process the wicked, or wickedness, or perhaps even the human body itself, will be cast away like cold, useless, inert slag, while by implication the souls of the righteous will shine like tempered steel. The horde of malicious slanderers will blow away like chaff; their vicious words, once incandescent with venom shall cool to slag and vanish from the memory of God.

<sup>20</sup> The verse recalls copla 16 of Jorge Manrique: “¿Qué fueron sino verduras/de las eras?”

<sup>21</sup> Could this be another echo of Manrique (copla 20): “Metióle la Muerte luego/en su fragua./¡Oh juicio divinal!/Cuando más ardía el fuego/echaste agua”?

Psalm 11, "Salvum me fac, Domine": Indignation that evil prospers.

Fray Luis's additions to this Psalm magnify the ways in which the boastful arrogance of the wicked menaces the righteous, and intensifies the psalmist's feelings of angry impotence. Fray Luis captures the essence of the Latin slanderers ("vana locuti sunt... labia dolosa... linguam magniloquam... linguam nostram magnificabimus" 11:3-5) with the single term "fanfarrones," and he underlines their arrogance when he renders the static question "quis noster dominus est" (11:5) with a strident, bully-like challenge to action: "¿qué viviente/me estorbará el ser vano?" (11-12).

For the Latin psalmist, God's promises are merely pure, septessentially crisolized silver ("argentum igne examinatum, probatum terrae, purgatum septuplum," 11:7). For Fray Luis these promises are unchanging and unchangeable, "son... *sin mudanza/y son firmeza estable*" (19-20). As in the first Psalm, we are witness to Fray Luis's yearning for permanence in a world of contentious instability, permanence that will only come once the world has been transcended in the eternal afterlife. And yet the comfort of the last eight lines of the poem rings strangely hollow.

y así nos librarás eternamente,  
Señor, desta malvada,  
desta malvada gente, que continuo  
nos cerca a la redonda,  
y crece, porque tu saber divino  
y tu grandeza honda  
les da pasar en gozo, y en convites,  
y así se lo permites. (23-30)

The reason is that the "*malvada gente*" prevail, not circumstantially among the sons of man, as the Latin suggests ("In circuitu impii ambulans: secundum altitudinem tuam multiplicasti filios hominum," 11:9), but with God's explicit permission, perhaps even at His behest. The encroachment of this arrogant mob, reiterated for emphasis, swells overpoweringly as Fray Luis glosses the Latin "in circuitu" with four phrases whose power is cumulative: the mob is unceasingly ("*continuo*") in siege ("*nos cerca*") all around us ("*la redonda*"), and still it grows ("*y crece*"). The Vulgate merely juxtaposes, albeit with some irony, God's promises of salvation and the exaltation of the wicked. Fray Luis chains them together with devastatingly unreasonable logic: Your promises are immutable and *therefore* ("*así*") You will save us from the evildoers who are besieging us *because* ("*porque*") You prosper them and *because You permit it* ("*así se lo permites*"). To heighten the irony Fray Luis concretizes the temporal rewards of the wicked: they will enjoy carnal delights and banquets. The Latin psalmist recognizes the existence of evil, prays confidently for its eventual destruction, and admits that this has not yet come to pass. Fray Luis engages in an active existential struggle against malevolent forces. His yearning for the promised fulfilling stability of the afterlife is much less

confident, for in his gloss evil grows, and God is inexplicably distant. The poet's resentment dominates the poem's climax, undercutting God's stereotypical attributes of "*saber divino*" and "*grandeza honda*," for in this dark vision these attributes have become the very arbiters of evil.

Psalm 12, "Usquequo Domine":<sup>22</sup> The enemy rejoices.

In translating this very brief Psalm, Fray Luis heightens the extent to which the psalmist's adversaries gloat over his downfall. In the Vulgate the adversary is called simply "*inimicus meus*" (12:5); for Fray Luis he is "*el enemigo crudo, airado*," "*mi adversario*," and "*el duro contrario*." In the Latin the enemy will be exalted over the psalmist ("*exaltabitur... super me*," 12:3); they will rejoice ("*exultabunt*," 12:5) when the psalmist is shaken. Fray Luis enhances these abstractions with a telling detail: "*extremos de placer y gozo haría*" (v. 20). Fray Luis's adversary is more haughty than the Latin psalmist's. He is puffed up with scornful anger, he revels at Fray Luis's downfall.

Psalm 17, "Diligam te, Domine": The greater my enemy, the greater God's love.

This is the longest of Fray Luis's Psalm translations,<sup>23</sup> and the one with the most added material. Although Fray Luis follows the Latin closely, his one verse per tercet pattern requires him to expand the often laconic verses of the Vulgate. Throughout the translation there is a tendency to heighten the personal relationship between the poet and the Deity, exemplified best in the opening verse, "*Diligam te, Domine, fortitudo mea*," which Fray Luis expands to a tercet, rending the Latin psalmist's straightforward love as a complex embrace of the poet's entire inner self:

*Con todas las entrañas de mi pecho  
te abrazaré, mi Dios, mi esfuerzo y vida,  
mi cierta libertad y mi pertrecho. (1-3)*

Here Fray Luis multiplies God's attributes and repeats the possessive pronoun to intensify the personal nature of his relationship to God.

Fray Luis augments both his adversaries' strength and the saving grace of God. The two are explicitly dichotomized in 17:4 ("*ab inimicis meis salvus ero*"), which Fray Luis renders with perfect balance: "*opuesto al enemigo, a mi amoroso*" (v. 9). This double enhancement is clearly seen in the psalm's two moments of direct conflict. In the first moment the psalmist is saved from enemies who are like a raging sea. The Latin "*de inimicis meis*

<sup>22</sup> On page 973 of Félix García's edition (see note 1 of this paper) this Psalm is mistakenly headed "Diligam te, Domine," which is the beginning of Psalm 17.

<sup>23</sup> This poem appears twice in the Bible: as Psalm 17 and, with a number of minor variants, as a hymn of victory in Second Samuel 22. Fray Luis seems to have used the psalmic version.



fortissimis" (17:18) becomes "del mayor poder del mundo... de otros mil perseguidores" (45-6). In the Latin they hit the psalmist when he is down: "praevenierunt me in die afflictionis meae" (17:19). In Spanish they are more explicitly malicious, they attack more suddenly, and they push their advantage:

*Dispuestos en mi daño y veladores  
vinieron de improviso, y ya vencían;*

...

*ya dentro en cerco estrecho me tenían.... (48-51)*

God's thunderbolts destroy an unspecified enemy in the Vulgate's 17:14: "disipavit eos... et conturbavit eos." In Spanish the rout is more explicitly military ("Huyó el contrario roto...;/allí queda uno muerto, allí otro herido," 36-8), and the violence of the battle is projected by the cacophonous elisions in the Spanish verse. This battle imagery is carried through to the second encounter where the pursued enemy ("persequere inimicos meos," 17:38; "et inimicos meos dediste mihi dorsum," 17:41) are clearly a military squadron:

*Seguía, y alcanzaba la bandera  
contraria que huía:*

...

*huyó de mi cuchillo el enemigo;  
desorden fue a su escuadra y desatino. (105-6, 115-6)*

And just as the enemy are concretized and temporarily magnified, so too is God's vengeance on them, seen explicitly as a reward for the righteous:

*Tú de venganzas justas has hartado  
mi pecho, y no contento con vengarme,  
mil gentes a mi cetro has sujetado.*

*No te satisfaciste con librarme  
del opresor injusto; hasta el cielo  
te plugo sobre todos levantarme. (135-140)*

In Fray Luis's vision, the magnitude of God's salvation appears to be proportional to the weight of the forces of evil.

Psalm 24, "Ad te, Domine, levavi": The paradox of divine love and human suffering.

This prayer for deliverance from personal adversaries contains the traditional elements of such pleas: cry for help, description of the psalmist's afflictions, protest of innocence, affirmation of trust and plea for vindication. Fray Luis, in the pattern that has now become familiar, draws particular attention to the poet's personal suffering. The most striking example

occurs in the opening verse, simple and direct in Latin: "Ad te, Domine, levavi animam meam" (24:1). Fray Luis dramatizes the psalmist's act of faith by prefacing his simple affirmation with a masterfully heavy-handed description of his downbeaten condition:

*Aunque con mas pesada  
mano, mostrando en mí su desvarío  
la suerte dura, airada,  
me oprima a su albedrío,  
levantaré mi alma a Ti, Dios mío. (1-5)*

For Fray Luis, fate, "la suerte dura," is a malevolent, anthropomorphic, capricious enemy who strives to dominate the poet by sheer force of will.<sup>24</sup> Immediately, however, this force, given a satanic will, is individuated in specific human enemies who gloat over the poet's abasement. The Vulgate's "irredeant me inimici mei" (24:3) becomes "la gente *perdida*/se alegrará *soberbia en mi caída*" (9-10). A similar idea is grafted to the concept of bewilderment. The faithful, declares the Latin psalmist, shall not be bewildered ("confundentur," 24:3). For Fray Luis this bewilderment, or confusion, is composed of two elements: the God-fearing shall not be either deceived ("*burlados*," [v. 11] with its sixteenth-century connotations of loss of social or moral status) or put to shame ("*avergonzados*," v. 13). Just the opposite: confusion strikes those who dedicate their lives to acts of unmotivated injustice, the "inicua agentes supervacue" (24:4), whom Fray Luis terms "los que sin causa *al bueno persiguieron*" (v. 15).

These evildoers function on two levels in Fray Luis's poem. On the one hand they are the abstract godless whom God must instruct in the way ("legem dabit delinquentibus in via," 24:8). Fray Luis's gloss insinuates that their evil is caused by an insane willfulness ("al que *sin tino/va ciega y locamente*," 37-8) in refusing either to see or to reflect upon God's grace. The Latin psalmist's God is a lawgiver; Fray Luis's is an enforcer whose gentle heart empowers an iron hand against the evildoer ("*redúcele benino/mas con debido azote, al buen camino*," 39-40). While maintaining the path of righteousness as an abstraction, Fray Luis devotes more attention to it than does the Latin psalmist for whom it is simply "vias tuas" or "semitas tuas" (24:4), whose essential characteristics are God's truths ("veritate tua," 24:5) embodied in His law. Fray Luis sees the path as problematical, with slippery spots ("*deslizaderos*," v. 17) and snares ("*lazos*," v. 18), presumably set by Fray Luis's enemies or by the Devil's minions. The true path is one of reason, law, and divine light, without which the evildoers go "*ciega y locamente*" (v. 38). Fray Luis features this idea of God's light, the illuminat-

<sup>24</sup> This stanza buzzes with tension caused, in part, by enjambment, hyperbaton, and the clash of hammerlike stressed *a* sounds (*más pesada/mano mostrando*) and strident *i* sounds (*desvarío... oprima... albedrío*).

ing power of grace. The wise man directs his eyes to it night and day (v. 72), and the land through which he walks will be "*esclarecida*" (v. 65).

In this whole section Fray Luis is building on the verse: "Oculi mei semper ad Dominum, / quoniam ipse evellet de laqueo pedes meos" (24:15). The key word "laqueos" (snares or nets) he introduces early in his version of the Psalm (v. 18) to suggest how his enemies are anxious to trap him. Fray Luis repeats the concept in v. 75 and then reintroduces it in v. 81 as a bridge to the poem's penultimate section, in which he describes his personal misfortunes. Here the abstract enemies of the righteous have become the specific persecutors of the poet, who finds himself cut off from human succor ("desamparado," "*de todos desechado*," 79, 80). The poet is confined, restrained by his afflictions. The Latin "tribulationes cordis mei multiplicatae sunt" (24:17) has become "*los lazos<sup>25</sup> de tormento, / que estrechamente ciñen mi afligida / alma, ya son sin cuento*" (81-3). The effect is to diminish the force of the pious abstractions of the central portion of the Psalm by equating the poetic voice not only with the just but also somehow with the evildoers. The faithful ("los que esperando en Ti permanecieron," v. 12) avoid the "lazos"; but although the poet has specifically included himself among this group ("*solo a Ti me inclino, / y a Ti solo yo quiero, / y siempre en Ti esperando persevero...*," 23-5), nevertheless the "lazos de tormento" have ensnared him.

Fray Luis's gloss falls within the tradition of one of the central Judaeo-Christian mysteries: if God is good, rewarding righteousness and faith and punishing evildoers, and if a man has faith and lives righteously, then why is he afflicted? This is the central complaint of Job, it obsesses the psalmists, and it rises painfully from the cross: "Eloi, Eloi, lamma sabachthani?" (Mark 15:34). If sin is punished, and I am punished, the logic goes, then clearly I must have sinned; yet those who persecute me, and are so clearly more wicked than I am, are exalted.

This mystery provides the tension that infuses the best of Fray Luis's Psalms with their power. He habitually augments his Latin models by interweaving energy in such a way as to link himself both with the sinners and the sinned against. Normally, this linkage is implicit, and therefore muted. It functions as a kind of underlying paradox, at the edge of consciousness, subtly undercutting the poet's indignation. While at the same time, in a countercurrent, Fray Luis intensifies the sense of his indignation by concretizing and magnifying both the malevolence of his enemies and his own suffering. The last six *liras* of this Psalm are a sterling example:

*Tus brazos amorosos  
abre, Señor, a mí con rostro amado,  
con ojos piadosos,  
porque desamparado,*

<sup>25</sup> "Lazos" may have been suggested by the false cognate "cordis."

soy pobre yo y *de todos desechado*.

*Los lazos de tormento,*  
que *estrechamente* ciñen mi *afligida*  
alma, ya son sin cuento.  
*¡Ay Dios!*, libra mi *vida*  
*de suerte tan amarga y abatida*.

*Atiende a mi bajeza;*  
mira mi abatimiento; de mi pena  
contempla *la graveza;*  
*con mano de amor llena*  
rompe de mis pecados *la cadena*.

Y mira como *crecen*  
mis enemigos *más cada momento*,  
y como me aborrecen  
con aborrecimiento  
*malo, duro, crüel, fiero, sangriento*.

Por Ti sea guardada  
mi alma y *mi salud; de tan tirano*  
*poder* sea librada;  
mi fe no salga en vano,  
pues me puse, Señor, todo en *tu mano*.

Al fin, pues que te espero,  
valdráme la verdad y la llaneza;  
*mas sobre todo quiero*  
que libre tu *grandeza*  
a tu pueblo de angustia y *de tristeza*. (76-105)

The crescendo of emotion is overpowering. The simple presentation of the poet's debased condition ("soy pobre," "desamparado," "desechado"; "los lazos.../...son sin cuento") breaks on a strangled cry for help, "¡Ay Dios!", followed by a series of imperatives which alternate between pleas for attention and for action: "libra," "atiende," "contempla," "rompe," "mira." The poet has been beaten down, humbled, tormented and chained.<sup>26</sup> Each departure from the Latin serves the process of intensification. In Latin the enemies have been increased: "inimicos... multiplicati sunt," (24:19). For Fray Luis they are still increasing: "*crecen... más cada momento*." In Latin his enemies merely hate him ("odio iniquo oderunt me," 24:19). In Spanish the hate is modified with five adjectives whose cumulative effect is devastating. Even the anti-climax of the last two stanzas is made more specific. "Erue me," says the Latin (24:20); "*de tan tirano/ poder*," add Fray Luis. Redeem Israel "ex omnibus tribulationibus suis," (24:22) says the psalmist; and from "*tristeza*," appends Fray Luis. The word lingers as a true anticlimax, for it is the natural result of man's acceptance of the Christian paradox of divine love coexisting with mortal frailty. The emotional chain reaction of this Psalm is man's natural condition, and it is from this that Fray Luis begs to be freed: from suffering, from indignation, from anguish, and from sadness.

<sup>26</sup> In one sense his chains are those of his own sin, as the hyperbaton of v. 90 makes emphatically clear: "rompe de mis pecados la cadena."

Psalm 26, "Dominus illuminatio": The mystic refuge from wordly enemies.

Here the psalmist in the midst of his enemies affirms his confidence that God will rescue him. The glosses move in two directions. First, as we have come to expect, Fray Luis intensifies the threat of his enemies. The Latin psalmist asks "a quo trepidabo?" (26:1). Fray Luis gives these "quo" some specific attributes: "¿qué fuerza o qué grandeza/pondrá...miedo?" In 26:11 the psalmist seeks a smooth path "propter inimicos meos." For Fray Luis the enemies are "los puestos contra mí siempre en celada": powerful, exalted, wily, the Spanish poet's enemies surround him in perpetually threatening ambush.

Fray Luis's translation also takes a mystic turn, for he adds to the Latin version a powerful yearning for direct communication with the Deity. Fray Luis glosses the nature of both the mystic search and its reward. The Latin poet seeks "voluptatem Domini" (26:4). Fray Luis would witness "su dulzura,/y remirar su cara y hermosura." The psalmist would dwell in God's house ("domo Domini"); Fray Luis would repose in God's nest. We are not told where the Latin poet seeks God's face; Fray Luis's eyes search "en la mesa, en el lecho" (v. 38). The locus of the reward is also changed, from "in terra viventium" (26:13) to "tierra de alegría,/de paz, de vida y dulce compañía" (64-5). The search is never-ending and the searcher must be strong, as the psalmist indicates in his closing:

Expecta Dominum, viriliter age,  
et confortetur cor tuum, et sustine Dominum. (26:14)

Fray Luis promotes this necessary strength of will with a series of verbs:

No concibas despecho;  
si se detiene Dios, ¡oh Alma!, espera;  
dura con fuerte pecho;  
con fe acerada, entera,  
aguarda, atiende, sufre, persevera. (66-70)

What in Latin is a straightforward expression of faith in mystic vision (if I am strong I will see God in the land of the living), in Spanish has become a tense and poignant drama. Strong-willed faith has become an imprecation against despair. God may or may not allow Himself to be glimpsed, but if He does, then the soul, exploding in a shout of transcendent joy, should wait (or expect, or believe, or hope) for Him.

It is not only the vision of the enemies that provokes fear in Fray Luis, it is also, in quite another way, this vision of God. If and when He appears, then the breast must stand fast; then faith must put on the armor of total concentration (remaining chaste, or whole: "entera"); then the soul must undergo again and forever the cycle of faithful abnegation which closes the

poem: "*aguarda, atiende, sufre, persevera.*" Pursuit of this mystical glimpse of the Deity, which is a foretaste of eventual union beyond the grave, is the true refuge of the soul against the enemies of this world.

Psalm 38, "Dixi, custodiam": Juridical torment.

The psalmist has suffered in silence lest his shaken faith encourage the skeptical enemies of God. Eventually he can no longer contain his emotion and he cries out to God to help him and to tell him the time of his death. Fray Luis improves measurably on the beginning of this Psalm, intensifying the pent-up emotion and introducing two elements foreign to the Latin version:

- 2 Dixi, Custodiam vias meas,  
locutus sum in lingua mea;  
Posui ori meo custodiam  
Cum consisteret peccator adversum me.
- 3 Obmutui, et humiliatus sum, et silui a bonis;  
Et dolor meus renovatus est.
- 4 Concaluit cor meum intra me;  
Et in meditatione mea exardescet ignis.
- 5 Locutus sum in lingua mea;  
Notum fac mihi, Domine, finem meum.  
Et numerum dierum meorum quis est,  
Ut sciam quid desit mihi.
- 6 Ecce mensurabiles posuisti dies meos,  
Et substantia mea tanquam nihilum ante te.  
Verumtamen universa vanitas, omnis homo vivens.

Here, for a change, the Spanish stanzas do not slavishly follow the Biblical verse divisions:

Dije: *sobre mi boca*  
*el dedo asentará; tendré cerrada*  
*dentro la lengua loca,*  
*porque, desenfrenada*  
*con el agudo mal, no ofenda en nada.*

Pondréla un lazo estrecho;  
*mis ansias pasará graves conmigo;*  
*ahogará en mi pecho*  
*la voz, mientras testigo*  
*y de mi mal jüez es mi enemigo.*

Callando como mudo  
*estuve, y de eso mismo el detenido*  
*dolor creció más crudo;*  
*y en fuego convertido,*  
*desenlazó la lengua y el sentido.*

Y dije: "*Manifiesto*  
*el término de tanta desventura*  
*me muestra, Señor, presto;*  
*será no tanto dura,*  
*si sé cuándo se acaba y cuánto dura."*  
*¡Ay! Corta ya estos lazos,*

*pues acortaste tanto la medida,*  
*pues das tan cortos plazos*  
*a mi cansada vida;*  
 ¡ay!, ¡cómo el hombre *es burla conocida!* (1-25)

He first creates an atmosphere of oppressive self-imposed restriction with a series of physical images; his hand forcibly clamps his mouth shut; his tongue is held fast in prison lest it escape its muzzle and give vent to its madness and its acute suffering. It must be bound tight with a cord. Whatever tortures it endures must be kept strangled inside. Fray Luis's version closely parallels the Latin, but his vocabulary is much more vivid. Moreover, in the third stanza, where the emotion ignites and explodes, he uses poetic technique as adroitly as in the best of his original poems.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, Fray Luis differs significantly from his predecessor in the nature of his request. The Latin psalmist asks for knowledge: in the face of sure death he hopes for a little more life. Fray Luis seeks knowledge of the end so as to be able to endure the sufferings of the present; more than that, he yearns for the sweet release of death.

The second innovation is in the nature of the enemy. The Latin psalmist is reticent of speaking in the presence of "peccator," the wicked or the sinful (38:2). Once again, in the Spanish version both torments and tormentors are more concrete. The poet suffers *ansias*, a term associated in the sixteenth century with a specific inquisitorial method of interrogation.<sup>28</sup> Fray Luis is both witness to and judge of his "mal." The hyperbaton of verse 10 conflates the terms: "*mal*" seems to be both an adjective modifying "*jüez*" and a noun; likewise "*mi*" appears both as pronoun and as possessive adjective; the dieresis in "*jüez*" gives the term special prominence. In all we are left with a vision of literal, juridical torment, as well as one of metaphysical anguish.

Psalm 87, "Domine, Deus, salutis meae": The literal prison.

This Psalm, which Félix García considers among those composed in prison, is a plea for help in extreme distress, Fray Luis's tercets closely follow the Latin, filling out the Spanish lines by doubling nouns and

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, the "Vaticinio del Tajo." Here the rhythm of the prosodic line clashes with the verse: first, hiatus separates "mudo" from "éstuve," slowing down the first phrase; then synalepha leaps across the half stop ("estuve, y de eso mismo el detenido/dolor creció más crudo..."); the enjambment sweeps the emotion along; the alliterative pairs beat the rhythm. The "freno" is torn off, the "lazo" is loosed on both tongue and sense, and the poet's frenzied madness is vented in babble ("corta... acortaste... cortos"). In another innovation Fray Luis closes this poem with a return to its opening image, asking that in the little time left to him he be permitted to "con risa abrir la boca" (v. 63).

<sup>28</sup> "Cantar en el ansia se debe aplicar especialmente a la confesión hecha en el tormento de toca, en el cual, atado el reo al potro se le introducían en la boca unas tiras de tocas o gasas, y por medio de esta tan ingeniosa como cruel invención, se le forzaba a tragar cierta cantidad de jarros de agua." Diego Clemencín, *Comentarios al Quijote*, in Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (Madrid: Castalia, 1966), p. 1214. Here the poet's self-imposed *ansias* will tie back his tongue and cause his voice to drown in his chest.

adjectives in the accustomed fashion. The key departure from the Latin occurs in the translation of verse 87:9:

Longe fecisti notos meos a me,  
posuerunt me abominationem sibi.  
Traditus sum, et non egrediebar.

Fray Luis expands this into three tercets:

*Su rostro mis amigos encubriendo,  
porque, Señor, lo quieres, me declinan,  
o por mejor decir, se van huyendo.  
Antes me huyen, antes me abominan;  
contalles mis razones yo quisiera,  
a quien, ¡ay!, tus entrañas no se inclinan.  
En cárcel me detienes así fiera,  
que ni la pluma ni la voz se extiende  
a publicar mi pena lastimera. (22-30)*

The abstract restrictive scenario of the Latin has become a literal and cruel prison. The friends who are made to shun the afflicted because of his horrible aspect here rush to avoid him with a series of cruelly vivid acts: they cover their faces, twice they flee, they actively abominate him. The desire to communicate with these former friends, implicit in the Latin, takes prominence in the Spanish. The poet longs to recount his situation, to advance his own cause, but he can neither receive visitors nor pass written messages to the outside. Once again the abstract, metaphysical prison looms as an oppressive reality.

The Luisian Psalm corpus contains many other examples of departure, major and minor, from the Vulgate,<sup>29</sup> but these should suffice.

Fray Luis was a close reader of Scripture, perhaps the closest that the Spanish Renaissance was to produce. In his view the Bible was both an inspired source of eternal truths and a mirror to be held up to everyday reality. His glosses of the Psalms, much as his commentaries on Job and his *excursi* on the names of God,<sup>30</sup> point up his social and religious concerns. The careful reader of the late sixteenth century, to whom the Vulgate text of the Psalms would have been entirely familiar, would have seen in Fray Luis's translations a number of timely themes. That slander, malice and oppression were abroad in the land. That the enemies of man were aligned to persecute him at every chance, and that mortal man was condemned to

<sup>29</sup> Some of these departures also have to do with the theme of justice; see his gloss of Psalms 102:6, 124:4-5, and 145:7. Another group have to do with physical suffering, such as Psalms 87:4, 87:18, and 116:17-19. Some of the most exciting poetry is found in the physical descriptions of natural phenomena, particularly storms, such as in Psalms 17:8-17, 116:23-32, and 147:15-18.

<sup>30</sup> See Américo Castro's analysis in *La realidad histórica de España*, 3rd ed. (México: Porrúa, 1966) and *Hacia Cervantes*, 3rd ed. (Madrid: Taurus, 1967), pp. 151, 254.



fear and to suffering. That only by steadfast will, by faith, and by God's grace could man hope to remain on the narrow path of righteousness. That the rewards of salvation were more likely to come in the next world than in this one. But that to the persevering few, God's love might grant an occasional glimpse of paradise.

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I want to suggest a reading of *Fortunata y Jacinta* at odds with current accepted Galdós criticism. My point of departure is the notion recently propounded by Geoffrey Ribbans that *Fortunata* undergoes a change in the novel and may become a member of the middle classes.<sup>1</sup> Ribbans' original and sensitive perceptions have opened the door for us to a new apprehension of *Fortunata*. It is time for other readers to step through after him. Moreover, his judgment may be needlessly tentative. I submit that without question *Fortunata* ends her days as a member of the social group at once loved and despised by Galdós. Here is an astonishing example of social mobility; moreover, it is not irrelevant to our appreciation of the novel. *Fortunata's* upward journey socially and economically tells us a great deal about her growth as a character and as a figure of life.

Let us begin with some facts from the text itself.

*Fortunata*, who is illiterate, learns to read. *Fortunata*, who is ignorant, learns to tell time. *Fortunata*, who is poor, eventually becomes independently secure and lives from an investment income. *Fortunata*, who cannot do anything but clean house, learns to sew. *Fortunata*, who finds history meaningless, discovers her own. *Fortunata* gets a Singer sewing machine. *Fortunata* climbs a stair and dies.

To the reader of Galdós, many of the facts just stated have no relation to each other. Indeed, many critics deny these facts. Engler, Rodríguez-Puértolas and Blanco Aguinaga, for example, all insist that *Fortunata* is a daughter of the *pueblo*, an orphaned member of the lower classes crushed under the heel of middle-class capitalism in the person of Juanito Santa Cruz.<sup>2</sup> To a certain extent Stephen Gilman concurs. *Fortunata* is without a past, without history, says Gilman.<sup>3</sup> To these idealizations, and they are

<sup>1</sup> *Pérez Galdós Fortunata y Jacinta* (London: Tamesis, 1977), p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Kay Engler, "Notes on the Narrative Structure of *Fortunata y Jacinta*," S. 24 (1970), 111-27, esp. 126; Julio Rodríguez-Puértolas, *Galdós. Burguesía y revolución* (Madrid: Turner, 1975), pp. 13-24; Carlos Blanco Aguinaga, "On 'The Birth of *Fortunata*,'" *JGald.* 7 (1958), 13-24. See also John H. Sorenson, "Individual, Class, and Society in *Fortunata y Jacinta*," pp. 45-68 of *Galdós Studies*, II, ed. Robert J. Weber (London: Tamesis, 1974).

<sup>3</sup> "The Birth of *Fortunata*," *JGald.* 7 (1958), 11-25, and his *Galdós and the Art of the European Novel 1867-1887* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1961), esp. ch. X. On pp. 307-8 he states that *Fortunata* "has