

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE UNDERWORLD IN SPAIN AND ENGLAND:
RINCONETE Y CORTADILLO AND *OLIVER TWIST*

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En *Oliver Twist*, Ch. Dickens se explaya en una crítica de las condiciones sociales de la Inglaterra del siglo XIX, cuya dureza había experimentado de niño. El futuro de Oliver, un joven huérfano, se debate entre las garras del hampa y la diáfana vida de la clases acomodadas. En *Rinconete y Cortadillo*, publicado por Miguel de Cervantes en 1613, creemos ver el punto de partida de la extensa novela de Dickens. Este artículo estudia los puntos de contacto entre ambas obras, lo que obliga a una reflexión sobre las características del género y también una indagación en la influencia de Cervantes en la literatura inglesa.

Charles Dickens took it upon himself to criticize the social conditions in 19th century England, of which he himself as a child had been a potential victim, in the story of *Oliver Twist*, a young orphan whose future as a delinquent or an upright member of society is the subject of debate and intrigue. *Rinconete and Cortadillo*, written two centuries earlier by Miguel de Cervantes, would seem to be a starting point for Dicken's *Oliver Twist* as numerous points of contact can be identified. This leads to the question of the characteristics of genre as well as the influence of Cervantes on English literature.

A close reading of Miguel de Cervantes' *Rinconete y Cortadillo* (1613) and Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1837-1839) brings to light a series of elements which would not seem to obey to mere coincidence. Even given the differences between Golden Age Sevillian society and early 19th century London, a common thread attributable to

shared biographical experiences and a common outlook on life underlies both works. To this must be added both the evolution of the picaresque novel and the literary tradition of Cervantes and his works in England, not only with reference to Dickens himself but also to the British writers who influenced him.

Seville in the 16th and 17th centuries was a melting pot that attracted people from many countries and all walks of life. Anyone desiring to embark to Spain's New World territories was obliged to spend enough time there to ready all their documents. In the employ of the government, charged with requisitioning wheat for the Armada, Cervantes frequented city and country, including the inns and a prison (Alborg, 1979: 25-34).

The laws promulgated in England around the beginning of the 19th century favored the landowners to such extent that the countryfolk had no assurance of being able to eke out a living, especially in years of adverse weather. This resulted in their flocking *en masse* to cities which lacked the infrastructure needed to provide the basic necessities, leading the government to enact a series of "Poor Laws" designed to provide a meager room and board to those who could not be duly employed, while at the same time taking great care to ensure that the conditions were never so tempting as to attract able-bodied men who could work for the private sector (Johnson, 1952: 273-83).

At the age of twelve Dickens was forced to leave school and work long hours in a blacking warehouse while his father spent three months in debtor's prison (Fairclough, 1985: 7). This, and the fact that the whole family resided in prison with the head of the household, was to mark Dickens for life and color his writings. Later, as a young journalist, he covered both trials and the workings of Parliament and made public his opinions regarding the treatment afforded to the destitute (Johnson, 1952: 88). Thus, Dickens too had a first-hand knowledge of the people and places he portrayed.

Both *Rinconete y Cortadillo* and *Oliver Twist* take the reader on a journey through the lower levels of society in the company of rogues, rascals and delinquents.¹ This leads us to consider their relationship to the picaresque novel, which Tierno Galván (1974: 16-55) considers to be the "novela del proletariado barroco". Though neither of the works

¹ A.A. Parker (1971: 37) raises objections to the accustomed translation of *pícaro* for "rogue", preferring instead to speak of "delinquents".

can be classified as true picaresque novels, both undoubtedly share some common characteristics with this much-discussed subgenre.²

Though directed at the Spanish *pícaro*, Cela's definition can easily be adapted to other rogues or delinquents:

un tipo humano descarado, apaleado y resignado que vivió en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII rodeado de un ambiente convenientemente hostil y zarandeado por gobernantes tenidos por ecuanímenes en su obediente ceguera, clérigos vapuleadores en su falta de caridad y caballeros soberbios en su fanfarria que pronto habría de tronarse en derrota; a su hambre, los historiadores le suelen llamar inadaptación, cuando no le aplican peores y más crueles epítetos (Cela: 1974: 16).

More closely related to our novels is Gomez Yebra's (1988: 13-36, 182) study of the *niño-pícaro*, in which he outlines the education of a future delinquent, a journey from birth to the age of eighteen (when the young adult chooses the life he or she will lead). The *niño-pícaro*'s first steps are taken in the company of parents or tutors, but he will come to feel unwanted and decide to abandon his home, perhaps even with the blessing of his care-givers. During this journey, whether it be made alone or in the company of others, the youngsters will be educated in the trials and throes of life during the course of which they will suffer a trauma, leading them either to abandon the delinquent's life and become an upright member of society or fall into the depths of the underworld.

Rinconete y Cortadillo, "dos muchachos de hasta edad de catorce a quince años; el uno ni el otro, no pasaban de diez y siete" (Rodríguez Marín, 1969: 133), meet at the *venta del Molinillo*. While taking great care not to reveal his identity, Cortadillo confesses to leaving home "porque mi tierra no es mía, pues no tengo en ella más de un padre que no me tiene por hijo y una madrastra que me trata como alnado" and, in response to Rinconete's query as to his trade, he admits that "no sé otro sino que corro como una liebre, y salto como un gamo, y corto de tijera muy delicadamente". Prodded by his companion he confesses that his father is a tailor and hosier and that he himself has

² We will deal here neither with the evolution of the *novela picaresca* in Spain nor with its fate once it ventured outside the Spanish borders, whether in the form of translations or adaptations or its use as a model. Let it suffice to remember that the characteristics can be summed up as a "humorous travel book" (Parker, 1971: 33-56).

other abilities that “no son para en público”.³ Impressed by this succinct biography and despite being “uno de los más secretos mozos que en gran parte se puedan hallar”, Rinconete declares that while he began by learning his father’s trade as a papal bull seller

habiéndome un día aficionado más al dinero de las bulas que a las mismas bulas, me abracé con el talego [...]. Vino el que tenía a cargo el dinero tras mí; prendiéronme; tuve poco favor; aunque, viendo aquellos señores mi poca edad, se contentaron con que me arrimasen al aldailla y me mosqueasen las espaldas por un rato y con que saliese desterrado por cuatro años de la Corte (Rodríguez Marín, 1969: 138-40).

After using marked cards to cheat a mule driver and robbing the travellers who taken them on as errand boys, they arrive in Seville where an Asturian porter explains how they can make a more or less honest living. Hardly had they begun to work when *Ganchuelo* (“the Bait”) advises them to present themselves to *Monipodio* (“the Monopolizer”), head of a varied gang of organized rogues of all shapes, sizes, disguises and walks of life, whom Rinconete y Cortadillo have occasion to meet in the patio of his dwelling, where they hear tales told by members of the gang who have infiltrated different realms of society, attend a social event and witness several quarrels. Once initiated into the brotherhood and on their way to their posts, Rinconete takes it upon himself to warn his younger companion not to linger in that “vida tan perdida y tan mala”, although the narrator informs the reader that their lack of experience led the boys to spend several months in this seemingly safe haven (Rodríguez Marín, 1969: 218).

Mystery surrounds the identity of *Oliver Twist* from the very moment of his birth and the death of his mother in a public almshouse. Dickens portrays Oliver as a ward of the government who could much more easily fall into a life of crime than surmount the difficulties of his birth and become a productive citizen. The length of Dickens’ novel permits him to expound on young Oliver’s journey and practical education in the school of life. At the tender age of nine, having survived the rigors of the orphanage, the workhouse and

³ Cortadillo will soon prove his skills by cutting open the bag of one of the Frenchman in whose company they travel to Seville and by stealing first a sacristan’s purse and then his handkerchief while conversing with him (Rodríguez Marín, 1969: 136-8, 146, 150-51, 154-55).

several attempts at apprenticeship, Oliver makes his way to London where he is immediately befriended by Jack Dawkins, the "Artful Dodger" ("el Artero Perillán"), who presents him to the Fagin, ringleader of a London brotherhood of rogues and criminals. Oliver is portrayed as a pawn, too young to govern his own life, who finds himself disputed by Fagin's world of evil and the kindness of two benefactors, Mr. Brownlow and Mrs. Maylie, who believe in him even when all the evidence points to his guilt. When Oliver watches how Charley Bates and the Artful Dodger steal a handkerchief from a gentlemen browsing through books at a bookseller's, his innate goodness causes him to flee, for which reason he is immediately taken to be the author of the crime, although the bookseller himself will later testify to his innocence. When Fagin's cronies need a small child to burglarize a home, Oliver is forced to take part in the crime, in the course of which he is wounded by the butler. Befriended by the owner of the house thanks to the intercession of her adopted niece, little Oliver, who on this occasion is indeed guilty of housebreaking albeit against his will, is now exonerated through the intervention of a rather unconvinced family doctor, who is able to convince both the servants and the police inspectors summoned to investigate the attempted burglary that this little boy could not possibly have been the one who tried to forcibly enter the house.

Near the end of the story the reader learns that Oliver, whose father was Mr. Brownlow's best friend and whose aunt had been adopted by Mrs. Maylie, is half-brother to Monks, one of Fagin's cronies. The plot revolves around a clause in the father's will, according to which Oliver may only inherit his part of the estate if he grows up to be an honest, law-abiding adult. Oliver's life as a *niño-pícaro* ends happily at the age of twelve.

Yet it is not only Oliver to whom we would compare Rinconete y Cortadillo, but also to Fagin's young apprentices, the Artful Dodger and his sidekick Charley Bates. Although the Dodger is "about [Oliver's] own age" (Dickens, 1994: 66), he is much more streetwise than nine-year-old Oliver. These two young pickpockets move easily about London and provide Fagin with a wealth of handkerchiefs and personal items which will later be sold to unscrupulous fences.

Monipodio's patio congregates a varied display of underworld characters in worldly disguise. The length of a *novela ejemplar* does not permit Cervantes to develop the characters, who enter Monipodio's patio to the surprise of Rinconete and Cortadillo and then represent several *costumbrista* scenes laid out in the form of a tableau.

The reader learns of the religiosity of Pipota and the other young girls and the fine fare of the picnic lunch. He follows Monipodio's mediations: first in the "marital" problems between Juliana la Cariharta and Repolido (which end in a bout of singing and dancing), then between Cortadillo and a corrupt representative of the Law who comes to recover the purse that had been unwittingly stolen from a "protected" member of the clergy⁴ and finally between Chiquiznaque, one of Monipodio's boys, and a disgruntled "client", who had paid good money to have a rival's face slashed to the point of requiring fourteen stitches. Once the problem has been solved to the content of all, Monipodio takes out a series of account books where he has noted down the week's work and explains his part of the business.

Although Cervantes has much less space to devote to the development of his characters, it is possible to identify the same types in both works.⁵

	<i>Rinconete y Cortadillo</i>	<i>Oliver Twist</i>
THE RINGLEADER:	Monipodio	Fagin
CHILDREN:	Rinconete, Cortadillo Ganchuelo (Ganchoso)	Oliver Artful Dodger, Charles Bates
YOUNG ADULTS:	Repolido, Juliana, Renegado, la Escalanta, Centopíes, La Gananciosa	Bill Sykes, Nancy, Tom Chitling, Betsy, Noah Claypoole, Charlotte
ADULTS:	la vieja Pipota	Old Sally

In both works the reader sees the fate of young rogues, both male and female, who have opted for a life of crime. Only Dickens, however, makes explicit use of them to warn of Oliver's own pending fate and plays on the theme in the character development of Nancy.⁶

⁴ Once "justice" has been served, Cortadillo's feat will be the object of praise, earning him the epic title of "Cortadillo el Bueno" as well as certain prerogatives in Fagin's underworld, much to the approval of those present.

⁵ Let this short table suffice as an example as space does not permit greater detail. Several of these similarities have been pointed out by Long (1994: 118-119, 123).

⁶ Dickens furthermore reports on the future of the other main characters in the final chapter of *Oliver Twist*.

True to their role as purveyors of Evil, Monipodio and Fagin "The Jew" are quite sinister in appearance (Long, 1994: 121):

El señor Monipodio [...] de edad de cuarenta y cinco a cuarenta y seis años, alto de cuerpo, moreno de rostro, cejijunto, barbinegro y muy espeso; los ojos, hundidos [...] las manos eran cortas, pelosas, y los dedos gordos, y las uñas hembras y remachadas [...] los pies eran descomunales, de anchos y juanetudos. En efeto, él representaba el más rústico y disforme bárbaro del mundo (Rodríguez Marín, 1969: 164-65).

standing over [the sausages], with a toasting-fork in his hand, was a very old shrivelled Jew, whose villanous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair. He was dressed in a greasy flannel gown, with his throat bare (Dickens, 1994: 71).

Aside from being dirty and hairy, both attract attention because of their build, though Monipodio is oversized and Fagin thin and wrinkled.

While Monipodio directs his business from the depths of his Sevilian residence, never seeming to venture into the outside world but receiving his visitors as if he were a great personage, Fagin frequents other dark, derelict dwellings (Pérez de Ayala, 1958: 68) and taverns, often under the cover of night. Both direct their criminal activities under the guise of some good works. In *Rinconete y Cortadillo* Good and Evil are typified by the *exterior*, bustling Seville where people of all types intermingle, and the shady *interior* of Monipodio's dwelling, whereas in *Oliver Twist* this contrast is better attributed to the *light* and clarity of the Brownslow and Maylie residences as opposed to the dingy *darkness* of Fagin's haunts.

Once immersed in this atmosphere Cervantes considers good judgement to be sufficient to save his young characters from falling into the clutches of Evil, whereas Dickens presents a helpless young lad who relies on helpful, well-meaning adults to save him from being swallowed up by the underworld.

The continued existence and well-being of the underworld enterprises depends on an unwritten law of silence. Thus Monipodio remonstrates the newcomers, "querría yo que también tuviédeses [ánimo] para sufrir [...] media docena de ansias sin desplegar los labios y sin decir «esta boca es mía», to which Cortadillo responds "¡como si tuviese más letras un 'no' que un 'sí'!" (Rodríguez Marín, 1969: 173). Dickens incorporates this pact into the plot: when Oliver is befriended by Mr. Brownslow, Fagin immediately plans to abduct him in order that he may not give them away; in the final chapters it is a pusilanimous

newcomer rogue, Noah Claypoole, who proves to be the true nemesis to the brotherhood when he sends Fagin to the gallows by turning state's evidence against Fagin in return for his own freedom (Dickens, 1994: 105-15, 509).

The two works follow the same basic structure, the outline given by Cervantes being developed – with modifications – two centuries later by Dickens. Both deal with *niños-pícaros* who, under differing circumstances, abandon their homes and begin a journey during which they come into contact with the outside adult world and are initiated into the doings of the underworld. While Oliver's future is happily resolved by Dickens, Cervantes points his young characters to the road of good intentions.

But the relationship between the two works delves even deeper. *Handkerchiefs* (Long, 1994: 120-21) are an important *leitmotif*. In *Rinconete y Cortadillo* the only crime perpetrated in front of the reader's eyes is the theft of the sacristan's handkerchief (Rodríguez Marín, 1969: 154-55). On entering Fagin's abode Oliver notices "a number of silk handkerchiefs hanging from a clothes-horse"; his first days in Fagin's abode are spent watching how Fagin trains the Dodger and Bates in the art of pick-pocketing, using handkerchiefs and other articles, and Oliver himself will soon be charged with removing the marks from the stolen goods (Dickens, 1994: 71,77-78,79,80). Later, when Nancy acts as a liaison in order to save Oliver from her own fate, she will refuse all Rose Maylie's attempts to redeem her, accepting only a handkerchief to remember her by:

I have not done this for money. Let me have that to think of. And yet – give me something that you have worn: I should like to have something, no, no, not a ring - your gloves or handkerchief, - anything that I can keep, as having belonged to you, sweet lady. There. Bless you! (Dickens, 1994: 436).

This same handkerchief is in Nancy's hands at the moment of her death:

She staggered and fell [...] but raising herself, with difficulty, on her knees, drew from her bosom a white handkerchief – Rose Maylie's own – and holding it up, in her folded hands, as high towards Heaven as her feeble strength would allow, breathed one prayer for mercy to her Maker. (Dickens, 1994: 445).

Card games also play an important role in both novels. *Rinconete* travels with a deck of marked cards and he soon demonstrates his

skill by cheating a poor mule driver out of his money. Once again, Cervantes furnishes the reader with a wealth of information by listing the names of different games. While Monipodio is little impressed by Rinconete's seemingly vast knowledge of card tricks, he respects the art of Lobillo, el de Málaga, "único en su arte, porque tiene las mejores y más acomodadas manos [...] que se pueden desear" (Rodríguez Marín, 1969: 170-72, 214), appealing perhaps to the voice of experience.

In *Oliver Twist* card games are a way for the rogues to spend their free time, although Dickens uses this motif to show a lack of camaraderie. Dick Chitling, a feeble-minded young adult rogue, loses fifteen straight games of cribbage to Toby Crackit, who cannot help feeling rather ashamed of taking advantage of his crony (Dickens, 1994: 359).

A second set of characteristics has to do with the use of *language*. As problems of space prevent us from showing the full extent of usage, we must be content to outline a few examples.

Both authors have chosen their names with great care. *Monipodio*, ringleader of the brotherhood, has a true "monopoly" on the Sevillian crime scene. His name is a variation of *monopolio* documented by Corominas-Pascual (1989:129a) in 1390 and found in Golden Age documents (Tierno, 1974: 63). The young rogue who leads Rinconete and Cortadillo to Monipodio is first introduced as *Ganchuelo* ('the little hook') and later referred to as *Ganchoso* ("the great hook"); *Centopíes* ('the centipede') is a thief, probably renowned for his rapid escapes, whose girl, la *Gananciosa* ('the profitable one'), makes her living as a prostitute.

In *Oliver Twist* Toby Crackit ('el manitas') is one of Fagin's star thieves. Dickens' personages include the *incompetent*, hen-pecked beadle, Mr. Bumble; Mr. Sowerberry ('fruto amargo'), the undertaker; or the two police inspectors Blathers ('el que dice bobadas') y Duff ('el comodón'). Even when all the evidence points to Oliver's having taken part in the attempted burglary, Blathers and Duff let themselves be convinced of Oliver's innocence and, to further substantiate their competence, Blathers boastfully tells a tale of one of the crimes he was able to solve.⁷

⁷ Some of the earliest influences of Cervantes and the *Quixote* on English literature are to be found in the adaptation of his "inserted tales" or "stories within a story" as short novels and plays (Knowles, 1969: 278-79). In *Oliver Twist* the tale is admirably woven into the plot.

A variety of linguistic features characterize the speakers. Ganchuelo first approaches Rinconete y Cortadillo with *slang expressions* (Long, 1994: 120) which they cannot understand (Rodríguez Marín, 1969: 155-56):

- Díganme, señores galanes: ¿voacedes son *de mala entrada*, o no?
- No entendemos esa razón, señor galán – respondió Rincón.
- ¿Qué no *entrevan*, señores *murcios*? – respondió el otro.
- No somos de Teba ni de Murcia – dijo Cortado. [...]
- ¿No lo entienden? – dijo el mozo. [...] quiero decir, señores, si son vuestras mercedes ladrones.

Compare this with the Artful Dodger's encounter with Oliver (Dickens, 1994: 66-67):

- "Hullo, my *covey*! What's the *row*?" [...]
- "I am very hungry and tired," replied Oliver: the tears standing in his eyes as he spoke. "I have [...] been walking these seven days." [...]
- "Oh, I see, *Beak's* order, eh? But," he added [...] "I suppose you don't know what a beak is, my *flash* com-pan-i-on?"
- Oliver mildly replied, that he had always heard a bird's mouth described by the term in question.
- "My eyes, how *green*!" exclaimed the young gentleman. "Why a beak's a madgst'rate; and when you walk by a beak's order, it's not straight forerd, but always a going up, and nivr a coming down agin. Was you never on the *mill*?"
- "What mill?" inquired Oliver.
- "What mill! Why *the* mill – the mill as takes up so little room that it'll work inside a Stone Jug; and always goes better when the wind's low with people, than when it's high; acos then they can't get workmen".

The same *cant terms* appear in both works: *blanco* ~ *flat*, *yokel*; *finibusterrae* ~ *the gallows*; *gurullada* ~ *trap*; *joyosa* 'sword' ~ *barker* 'pistol'; *respeto* ~ *persuader* 'the garrotte'.

The Sevillian underclass tends to *confuse words* - variations of *paronomasia* or folk etymology. Monopodio uses *naufragio* 'shipwreck' instead of *sufragio* 'an intercessory prayer'; Juliana refers to the companion who has mistreated her as a "*tigre de Ocaña*" (a village in the province of Toledo) instead of a "*tigre de Hircania*" and our first encounter with Ganchuelo has him confusing *solomico* (a diminutive form of *solomo*, "a piece of pickled pork") with *sodomita*.⁸

⁸ Dickens, but not Cervantes, on occasion uses speech defects or social dialect variations to highlight certain characters' speech: this is the case, among others, of

When the Artful Dodger defends himself in court, he inquires "Did you *redress* yourself to me, my man?" (*redress* 'enmendar' for *address* 'dirigirse') and accuses his accusers of "*deformation* [*defamation*] of character" (Dickens, 1994: 411-12).

Both narrations are peppered with *proverbs*, *sayings* and *idioms*. "Pecador de mí", "se verá quién fue Callejas", "con su pan se lo coma" and "no me erraré en un átomo" characterize the dialogue between Cortadillo and the sacristán (Rodríguez Marín, 1969: 151-154). In *Oliver Twist* the same types of expressions occur, though generally not as a feature of certain scenes: "Stone dead", "Oh, my eye! here's a merry-go-rounder! Tommy Chitling's in love!" or "for evil winds blow nobody any good" (Dickens, 1994: 217, 220, 356).

Finally, a distinctly *ironic tone* pervades both stories. Rinconete y Cortadillo are described as being "ambos de buena gracia, pero muy descosidos [...]. Capa, no la tenían [...] los calzones eran de lienzo, y las medias de carne" (Rodríguez Marín, 1969: 133). Dickens' irony is accumulated in the first seven chapters, dealing with Oliver's birth and early years (until the beginning of his "journey"):

For a long time after it was ushered into this world of sorrow and trouble [...] it remained a matter of considerable doubt whether the child would survive to bear any name at all; in which case it is somewhat more than probable that these memoirs would have never appeared [...] The fact is, that there was considerable difficulty in inducing Oliver to take upon himself the office of respiration, - a troublesome practice, but one which custom has rendered necessary to our easy existence. [...] For the next eight or ten months, Oliver was the victim of a systematic course of treachery and deception. He was brought up by hand (Charles Dickens, 1994: 1-2, 4).

The *chapter titles* of *Oliver Twist* also seem to bear a resemblance to the structure and tone of those found in *Don Quixote*: "Que trata de la condición y ejercicio del famoso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha" (I, i) / "Treats of the place where Oliver Twist was born, and of the circumstances attending his birth" (I); "Donde se prosigue la aventura de la Sierra Morena" (I, xxiv) / "Oliver continues refractory" (VII); "Donde se cuenta la graciosa manera que tuvo don Quijote en armarse

Barney, the innkeeper: "Is anybody here, Barney?" inquired Fagin. 'Dot a shoul,' replied Barney; whose words : whether they came from the heart or not : made their way through the nose." (Dickens, 1994: 131).

caballero" (I, iii) / "Containing further particulars concerning the pleasant old gentleman and his hopeful pupils" (IX).

Linguistic features may, of course, be equally attributable to the language of the day – as can be seen in both novels –, the literary canon in vogue or the uses of the genre in question. The latter may also be used to explain the structure of a work. Nevertheless, the similarities detected in *Rinconete y Cortadillo* and *Oliver Dickens* seem too great to be due to mere happenstance. This leads to the necessity of tracing the possible points of contact between Cervantes and Dickens.

Although neither of the two works can be classed as picaresque novels, both undoubtedly share picaresque elements. Though the picaresque novel is native to Spain, it was soon translated into other European languages and became quite popular. Once a work is published in another language, however, it loses part of its uniqueness and is open to new interpretations. Thus, the *novela picaresca* in Europe came to be defined as a story of a *journey* written in a *humorous* tone during which the hero comes into contact with a wealth of characters from all walks of life (note that the moral or ethical aspect is neglected).⁹ It is on this basis that Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* came to be compared to *Don Quixote*.

England prizes itself on its reception of Cervantes. It was an Englishman who discovered his birthplace and who commissioned his first biography. The English were the first to fully understand the meaning of *Don Quixote* as well as to publish a critical edition (A. Peers, 1947: 227). Robert Rudder's (1975: 136-158) *Literature of Spain in English Translation* proves just how popular Cervantes has always been among English readers. Although *Don Quixote* was by far the most well-known work, published in a number of different translations (Knowles, 1969: 278-89) of varying style and importance, *Rinconete y Cortadillo* was first translated in the 18th century in *Two Humorous Novels . A Diverting Dialogue Between Scipio and Berganza. The Comical History of Rinconete and Cortadillo* (Rudder, 1975: 151).¹⁰

⁹ The *Reader's Guide to Prose Fiction* (Lenrow, 1940) lists fifteen "picaresque novels", including such differing works as *Don Quijote*, *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane* (A.-R. Lesage, 1715-1735), *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (T. Smollet, 1748) and *Candide* (F.M. Voltaire, 1758).

¹⁰ Translated by Robert Goadby and published in London by H. Kent for Ward and Chandler. The first edition appeared in 1741 and there were a total of five before 1767. Long (1994: 117-18) cites another translation by Thomas Roscoe published in London in 1832.

The question is to what extent Dickens was familiar with Cervantes' works. Dickens not only formed his own library, but had access to that of his friend John Forster (Forster, 1888), which contained three editions of *Don Quixote* (Gale, 1973: 136, 138), although we have not been able to find a direct reference to *Rinconete y Cortadillo*.¹¹

A second rapprochement to Cervantes' critical fortune in England can be made by tracing the references to his person or his works, a collection of which are to be found in Burton (1968: 1-15) and Gale (1973: 135-41).

Gale's (1973: 141-56) comparative study of *Don Quijote* and *Pickwick Papers* proves Dickens' indebtedness to Cervantes in such aspects as character (Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller as alter-egos to Don Quixote and Sancho) and plot (a journey to diverse destinations through which the characters come into contact and interact with a wide range of personages) narrated with good humor.

We will limit our study to Cervantes in England to what could have been seen through Dickens' eyes. *Oliver Twist* was first published in monthly installments in 1837-1838 (Wilson, 1985: 12). In the "Author's Prologue" (Tillotson, 1982: xxiv-xxviii) to the third edition of 1841, Dickens defends the novel against the criticisms it has received, appealing both to his own personal experiences and to the great writers who preceded him. Should the opening lines of *Oliver Twist* -

Among other public buildings in a certain town, which for many reasons it will be prudent to refrain from mentioning, and to which I will assign no fictitious name, there is one anciently common to most towns, great or small (Dickens, 1994: 1).

be deemed insufficient to prove Dickens' familiarity with *Don Quijote*, he cites Cervantes as a voice of authority, whose model he himself has dared to follow:

Cervantes laughed Spain's chivalry away, by showing Spain its impossible and wild absurdity. It was my attempt, in my humble and far-distant sphere, to dim the false glitter surrounding something which really did exist, by shewing it in its unattractive and repulsive truth (Tillotson, 1982: xxvii).

¹¹ The Forster Collection (1888) had the 1731, 1833 and 1840 translations of *Don Quixote*. The translation of the *Exemplary Novels* dates from 1855. We have not been able to consult Stonehouse (1935).

Furthermore, most of the English precedents he names have authored works directly or indirectly related to Cervantes. Space again impedes a detailed study of this influence, but a few comments are in order. The writers will be studied in the order in which Dickens names them.

Henry Fielding (1707-1754) played a fundamental role in the development of the modern English novel and deals with social injustice. On the cover of *Joseph Andrews* he declares that the work was "written in the manner of Cervantes" (Pujals, 1988: 265-66). Dickens could have been influenced by *Tom Jones* with regard to the mystery surrounding the identity of the newborn child as well as certain clauses of the father's will.

In *Moll Flanders* Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) narrates the journeys between England and Virginia of a female rogue who has not chosen a life of crime, but is forced into it by destiny. In the *Memoirs of a Captain Carleton* one of Defoe's characters, a Spanish gentleman, asserts that the decadence of Spain and the lack of spirit of her people is a direct result of *Don Quixote* (Burton, 1968: 3-4).

Oliver Goldsmith's (ca. 1730-1774) *The Vicar of Wakefield*, the most widely-read English novel written by the last great 18th century English novelist, presents life not as it is but as it should be. The happy ending owes to the prudence of Mr. Burchell, who saves the Primrose family from the Vicar's kindly innocence (Pujals, 1988: 274-75).

Throughout his career as writer and translator Tobías Smollet (1721-1771) had ample contact with Cervantes and the picaresque novel: he authored the English versions of *Don Quixote* and *Gil Blas de Santillana*. In the prologue to his novel *The Adventures of Roderick Random* Smollet confesses his deep admiration for Cervantes (Pujals, 1988: 261-62).

Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) introduces sentimental and psychological elements into the English novel. His style is characterized by *tempo lento* and the absence of a plot, pervaded by a certain amount of moralizing as well as compassion for the lower classes (Pujals, 1988: 261-62).

In this brief summary of English literature as seen through Dickens' eyes, we have remarked on characteristics which are also present in Cervantes.

Although Dickens does not mention Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), Fitzmaurice-Kelly (1926: 283) cites him as saying that he owes his "ambition of excelling in fiction" to the *Novelas ejemplares*. Fitzmaurice-Kelly further claims to see a relationship between "a passage from *Rinconete y Cortadillo*" and the "famous description of

Alsacia in *The Fortunes of Nigel*," one of the novels of the Waverly series published in 1822.

There is no doubt that Cervantes was well-known and admired in 18th and 19th century English literary circles. It is also undeniable that Dickens had first-hand access to at least three English versions of *Don Quixote*. While the true extent of Cervantes' influence on Dickens may never be proven, the series of literary elements which both use in the same manner would seem to indicate that Charles Dickens had more than just a passing knowledge of *Rinconete y Cortadillo*.

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