The Artist as Performing Dog

Among its many branches, the modern myth of the artist as actor contains one which has scarcely flourished, although like a number of others it has its locus classicus in Baudelaire. Perhaps, unlike the clowns, pierrots, saltimbanks and strolling players who bring a sometimes facile pathos to what Michel Leiris has called le mythe de l’acteur siflé, the portrayal of the artist as a performing dog requires an especially sardonic outlook. Perhaps too, in the French tradition at least, Hector Malot’s widely-read children’s book, Sans Famille (1878) (in which many romantic conceptions of the Künstlerleben are relentlessly, albeit unconsciously, guyed) has made it difficult to take the image of the chien savant seriously: in this book the dog Capi succeeds paradoxically in hopelessly deflating the myth of the courageous mata-moré (which is best known through Gautier’s Capitaine Fracasse) while unbearably inflating that of the artist as performing dog.

Baudelaire’s text, first published in 1865, strikes a very different note. With Le vieux saltimbanque and Une Mort héroïque, recently studied by Jean Starobinski, Les bons chiens forms a series of prose-poems on the theme of the artist defeated by life; but the later text—one of the final fruits of Baudelaire’s grim Brussels period—is perhaps the bitterest of them all. The old saltimbank is only neglected and forgotten while the frenzied festival of life continues; Fancioulle, at the moment of his death, is performing brilliantly, “avec une indestructible auréole

1 I use the term “myth” in a nontechnical sense, not as a particular form of discourse, but as a collective image elaborated in conscious or unconscious cooperation by a group of artists.
autour de la tête, auréole invisible pour tous, mais visible pour moi, et où se mêlaient, dans un étrange amalgame, les rayons de l'Art et la gloire du Martyr." But the artist-dogs of Les bons chiens present a picture of courage and honor wretchedly exploited. They hungrily eye the cooking pot they have been forbidden to touch:

N'est-il pas juste que de si zélés comédiens ne se mettent pas en route sans avoir lesté leur estomac d'une soupe puissante et solide? Et ne pardonneront-vous pas un peu de sensualité à ces pauvres chiens qui ont à affronter tout le jour l'indifférence du public et les injustices d'un directeur qui se fait la grosse part et manque à lui seul plus de soupe que quatre comédiens?

The chiens saltimbanques are consequently only a special case in the whole community of those who, exploited or disregarded by society, form a miserable, marginal society of their own, a society in which men and women—be they old maids, poets, gypsies, strolling players, or simply the wretched poor—are one with the curs in the city streets. They share a sense of exclusion from the established community, but they have their own feeling of brotherhood, and also an ironic awareness of the superiority—the alertness and awareness of life—that hard times bring them. No wonder the poet is drawn to them:

Arrière la muse académique! Je n'ai que faire de cette vieille bégueule. J'invoque la muse familière, la citadine, la vivante, pour qu'elle m'aide à chanter les bons chiens, les pauvres chiens, ceux-là que chacun écarte, comme pestiférés et pouilleux, excepté le pauvre dont ils sont les associés, et le poète qui les regarde d'un œil fraternel.

. . . Je chante le chien crotté, le chien pauvre, le chien sans domicile, le chien flâneur, le chien saltimbanque, le chien dont l'instinct, comme celui du pauvre, du bohémien et de l'histrion, est merveilleusement aiguillonné par la nécessité, cette si bonne mère, cette vraie patronne des intelligences.

Baudelaire's fellow-feeling for street dogs had been awakened by his observations of life in Belgium: "Les chiens seuls sont vivants; ils sont les nègres de la Belgique." But there were cultural sources also. The poem is dedicated to Joseph Stevens in gratitude for the gift of a waistcoat, but also in memory of one of the latter's paintings, which showed the scene of the saltimbank's dogs eyeing the pot. The same scene, in which the pot becomes a metaphorical witches' brew, may well refer back obliquely to Cervantes' picaresque tale of a dog's life, El coloquio de los perros, for Baudelaire certainly knew and enjoyed E. T. A. Hoffmann's reprise or "imitation" (in Marthe Robert's

---

5 Ibid., p. 309.
6 Ibid., p. 307.
7 Pauvre Belgique, ibid., p. 1321.
sense) of the Cervantes text in the Nachricht von den neuesten Schicksalen des Hundes Berganza (1814), and, as a careful reader, would have followed up the German writer’s explicit invitation to consult his Spanish model. In any case, Baudelaire can scarcely have failed, when writing his own poem, to recall the Hoffmann tale, which he had twice quoted from, with obvious glee, in the Salon de 1846. For immediate purposes, the common theme of hunger would suffice to link the two texts (for Berganza is a great devourer of meat and sausages, and even, in time of need, of Butterbrot), but it is clearly the aesthetic implications of Hoffmann’s story that gave it its greatest interest to Baudelaire and its deepest relevance to Les bons chiens.

There are many points of detail in Hoffmann which Baudelaire must have appreciated, particularly Berganza’s heartfelt misogyny, his scorn of humanity’s “krasser Egoismus,” and his stand on morality in art; but equally, the stress on the social pariahhood of the Lumpenproletariat in Les bons chiens makes Baudelaire’s text as much a “criticism” and a refocusing of Hoffmann’s themes as Hoffmann’s exclusive insistence on Berganza’s status as an artist is a limiting restatement of those of Cervantes. In the overall working of the myth, there is room both for such coincidences of motif and for such divergent stress. But the alienated status of the artist in the world is what gives the myth its core of common meaning, and it is on this point that Hoffmann and Baudelaire share a deep conviction.

Returning home one evening from the tavern, Hoffmann’s narrator encounters Berganza by the river where he is bemoaning his fate while recovering from the periodic crisis which causes him to draw perilously close to human existence for a time, before returning thankfully to doghood (but so rejuvenated that his life, like that of the Wandering Jew, has become an eternal one). Each quickly recognizes in the other a kindred spirit, each is an artist, and the narrator soon proposes an association:


The conversation ranges over a number of topics, but rarely strays long from the subject of art, for which the theater is naturally taken as exemplary, since Berganza is currently employed on the stage—of the

many trades he plies in Cervantes, the last has now become his only profession. But he is disgusted at the present-day decadence of theatrical art:

... ich bin jetzt, so wie unsere Theaterhelden, ganz zahm, in gewisser Art konversationsmäßig geworden. Statt daß ich sonst, als des Ritters wackre Dogge, den Feind zu Boden warf, oder den Drachen in den Wampen packte, tanze ich jetzt nach Taminos Flöte und erschrecke den Papageno.11

This is consonant with his general attitudes, for he has already expressed himself vehemently on the subject of the devaluation of art in a society where dilettantism and superficiality reign and have replaced the true poetic function (which he defines as "im langen Schweigen den treuen Sinn zu bewahren, der die Natur in ihrer heiligsten Tiefe ergreift und aus dem die wahre Poesie emporkeimt"12). Nowadays, he complains, artistic accomplishments are merely part of a good upbringing, "und nachher glaubt ein jeder mitschwatzen und den Dichter, den Künstler, in seinem innersten Tun und Treiben durchschauen und nach seinem Maße messen zu können."13 Consequently he has witnessed the alienation of poor Johannes Kreisler, a musician and true artist, whose other-worldliness is declared to be madness; and he has come to realize not only the advantages of doghood but also that the artist's true place in life is that of the dog:


It is evident that Hoffmann's tale itself fulfills this bitter program. Finally, Berganza's doctrine is best summarized by his parting message: "Traue nicht den Gesprenkelten!"—Don't trust the spotty!—In life as in art, integrity is the only value; but integrity, in life as in art, is defeated and devalued, reduced to a corner by the hearth from which it can only observe and mock.

The doctrine is illustrated by the main anecdote of the conversation which concerns Berganza's stay in the household of a lady given to attitudinizing and dilettantism, whom he compares (to Baudelaire's delight) with Mme de Stael's Corinne, and in whom we see an ancestor of Proust's Mme Verdurin, for she too reigns over an "artistic" salon. The lady takes it into her head to perform tableaux vivants and chooses the role for which she is least suited, that of the Sphinx; but an ironic-

11 Ibid., p. 124.
12 Ibid., p. 94.
13 Ibid., p. 95.
14 Ibid., p. 103.
ally minded professor perceives the possibilities of Berganza’s noble visage (he is a bull-terrier), costumes him suitably, and arranges for the two sphinxes—the lady and the *chien savant*—to be seen staring soulfully into each other’s eyes. He points the message in an amusing sonnet, which ends:

Sie leben in der Kunst! Hund *er*, *sie* Dame;
Pagliasso *er* und *sie*—Arlekinette.15

Deflation, then is the function of the performing dog, of the artist as *pagliaccio*; but he can no longer prevent the prostitution of the truly sublime. Berganza’s young mistress, the pure and divinely beautiful Cációlia—for whom a poet and a philosopher sigh—is unceremoniously married off to a materialistic and self-seeking young man, unambiguously described as *eine Bestie*. All that the devoted dog can do is to creep into the marriage chamber and there attack the insensitive Georg, being driven from the house for his pains; not only does he fail to prevent the rape of Cációlia, the personification of the highest values of true art, but he is now hunted and pursued like Johannes Kreisler himself, and barely escapes with his life. He was able to survive his mocking salon of art, but not the open attack on its underlying materialism. One realizes that Hoffmann must have been aware that his own humor and fantasy, as well as his irony, were an instrument of survival as much as a weapon of discreet attack; and Baudelaire must have seen very clearly in Hoffmann the operation of that instinct which, he says, is “merveilleusement aiguillonné par la nécessité, cette si bonne mère.”

Baudelaire’s dogs do not speak, except with their hungry eyes. Hoffmann’s Berganza does, as wittily and eloquently as his predecessor in Cervantes. He even draws attention fleetingly to the analogy between his intermittent power of speech and artistic inspiration:

*Ich*: Weiß ich denn aber nicht, daß es nicht von dir abhängt, zu sprechen wenn du willst?

Berganza also foresees the publication of his conversation, and fusses (in which he is not unlike Cervantes’ Ensign Campuzano) over the setting out of the dialogue within the dialogue which occurs at one point. But it remained for the twentieth century, preoccupied with

15 Ibid., p. 111.
16 Ibid., p. 135-6.
language, to perceive what is strongly hinted at in Cervantes, that of
al the accomplishments of the artist as performing dog, the power of
speech is the strangest. Samuel Beckett's Molloy is not a dog; but he
is as genuinely uncertain of belonging to the human race as he is ob-
sessed with the phenomenon of language, "qui veut qu'on mente ou
qu'on se taise," and P. H. Solomon has shown that a concealed meta-
phor runs through the novel which makes Molloy's world a dog's world.
"In Molloy," he writes, "human beings are condemned to lead a dog's
life and to die like a dog" (I am personally not so sure about the
dying). Since, in addition, Beckett's picaresque technique is sometimes
compared with that of Cervantes, it is instructive to compare his
world, and in particular that of Molloy (1951), with the world of the
Coloquio de los perros (1613).

Not, in this case, that there is any direct link. Beckett does not know
the Coloquio, and we are dealing, not with any form of imitation, but
with the opposite phenomenon, whereby, as Gérard Genette has put it,
each author creates his own predecessors. Just as we cannot now do
otherwise than read Dujardin through Joyce's eyes, or Nerval through
Proust's (although in these two cases a direct "influence" is acknowl-
dged), it is possible to read Cervantes with Beckett in mind—and
conversely Beckett with Cervantes in mind—as a way of forming a
particular interpretation of each work. A number of important features
of the works will, of course, escape such an analysis: for example, Cer-
vantes' interest in detailed social observation is not reflected in Beckett,
whose concern with repetition (most clearly expressed in the relation-
ship of Molloy and Moran) is only remotely hinted at in Cervantes by
the friendship of the two dogs, Cipión and Berganza, and the unreal-
ized plan for Cipión to relate his adventures on the night following
that in which Berganza tells the tale of his life. But this is where the
real value of the method can be seen, for each work acts as a reactive
agent on the other, bringing into prominence details that might other-
wise pass unnoticed, such, precisely, as this proposal to hear Cipión's
story on another occasion, and its possible significance.

In a general way, I propose to use Berganza's explicit doghood to
throw light on the implicit doghood of Molloy, and to use the very de-

---

18 "Samuel Beckett's Molloy: a Dog's Life", French Review, October 1967,
p. 91.
19 For example, by John Fletcher in Samuel Beckett's Art (London, 1967),
chapter 5.
20 "I do not know The Dogs' Colloquy and have never alluded to it" (personal
note to myself, dated from Paris 12.8.68).

317
tailed working-out of the problem of language in Beckett to bring out something similar in Cervantes. But details of technique, as well as themes, may benefit from a similar approach. One may ask, for example, why Cervantes has the dog’s conversation overheard and recorded by the ensign Campuzano, and framed by comments on its doubtful veracity from the licentiate Peralta. This technique is not dissimilar from the way Beckett’s characters write their reports for absent, judging authorities like Youdi, and in each case it serves to point up the fictional quality of the writing. Characteristically enough, Hoffmann thought Cervantes was commenting on the licentiate’s philistinism, but we are equally justified, particularly in view of the criticism of literature in Don Quixote, in seeing in the technique a comment on the lie that is language, a foreshadowing of Moran’s remark that “tout langage est un écart de langage.”

The similarity of Molloy’s and Berganza’s life stories lies partly in the fact that they have a common ancestor—explicitly or implicitly recognized—in the Odyssey; but each departs from the model also in a similar way, for the narrative perspective in each case is the retrospective view of a hero (if hero is the word) who, having attained a refuge, looks back on the course of his life up to that point. Berganza has withdrawn from life into the Hospice of the Resurrection (an institution reminiscent of Beckett’s madhouses and mercyseats, and in whose name he would have discerned a particular irony). There—according to a law of autobiography to which Beckett’s people also conform—he contemplates the series of events which have made him what he is, that is, an artist. Born in the slaughterhouses of Seville (and Molloy also recalls the “quartier des abattoirs” where he first saw the light of day), Berganza relates, as Molloy does, the successive stages of his “education”: first his service as a shepherd dog (an episode built around the Beckett-like theme of homo lupus homini and of the shepherd as cruel guardian of his flock); then his servanthood and education in the schools (where the unifying strand seems to lie in the theme of the search for the right master, for Berganza is not unlike Watt or Clov in his awareness of the problematical character of servanthood, and he draws as sharp a distinction between book learning and wisdom or knowledge as most of Beckett’s characters do, however dubious knowledge itself may appear to the latter). He relates his successive en-

---

22 Hoffmann, op. cit., p. 91.
23 Beckett, op. cit., p. 179.
24 As a simplification, I am assuming Molloy’s tale to be in a sense representative of Moran’s, which I take to be an earlier stage in the unending process of which Molloy’s adventures are a later episode.
counters with policemen, criminals, pimps and prostitutes, soldiers, witches, gypsies, Moors, poets, and actors, in short with those who, like him, are marginal members of society. Finally, he tells of being taught the tricks which make him a perro sabio—the play on the idea of wisdom being a deliberate one—and enable him to join a troupe of strolling players, until at last he comes to join Cipión in the refuge of the hospice. The analogy of some of these episodes to those of Molloy’s story is evident, particularly in the case of the encounter with the sorceress Cañizares, which (if only because in each case the Circe figure is a mother figure) invites comparison with the Lousse episode in Molloy.

But there are strong hints that Berganza’s retirement is a temporary one only, and Hoffmann, who made Berganza a Wandering Jew, must have been sensitive to these. Berganza’s life follows a rhythm of repose and movement, of voyaging and remembering, no less clearly than do the lives of Beckett’s characters. At his very first halt (with the shepherds) he had already fallen partly into the characteristically Beckettian stance he adopts at the hospice:

Vime harto y contento con el segundo amo y con el nuevo oficio; mostréame solicitó y diligente en la guarda del rebaño, sin apartarme dél sino las siestas, que me iba a pasarlas, o ya a la sombra de algún árbol, o de algún ribazo o peña, o a la de alguna mata, a la margen de algún arroyo de los muchos que por allí corrian. Y estas horas de mi sosiego no las pasaba ociosas, porque en ellas ocupaba la memoria en acordarme de muchas cosas, especialmente en la vida que había tenido en el Matadero...

In Beckett’s trilogy and in Comment c’est, it is clear that this alternating rhythm forms an infinitely repeated pattern of endlessness; but there is some suggestion of similar hopelessness also in Cervantes. At the end of his tale, Berganza describes the kind of people who end up in the hospice; all of them—the poet without a prince to whom to dedicate his work, the alchemist without the money to purchase the wherewithal for making gold, the mathematician obsessed with Archimedes’ fixed point and the squaring of the circle, the dreamer with a plan for paying off the King of Spain’s debts—are caught in the trap of the impossible, and involved in a circle no less vicious than that of Molloy, who says:

... savoir ne rien pouvoir savoir, voilà par où passe la paix, dans l’âme du chercheur incurieux. C’est alors que la vraie division commence, de vingt-deux par sept par exemple...

Like them, Berganza is faced with an insoluble problem. It is possible,

---

as he has learnt from the sorceress, that he and Cipión are brothers, and that they are the sons of a witch, on whom a jealous colleague has put a curse, so that instead of being born human they have been ejected into a dog’s world. Molloy also feels obscurely that the secret of his “race” has something to do with his mother, and he expresses the feeling in a characteristically canine metaphor:

Et si je dois un jour chercher un sens à ma vie, on ne sait jamais, c’est de ce côté-là que je gratterai d’abord, du côté de cette pauvre putain unipare et de moi dernier de mon engace, je me demande laquelle.28

His problem and that of Berganza are very similar. For, according to the terms of the prophecy, Berganza and his brother may expect one day to regain their true dignity as men:

"Volverán en su forma verdadera
"Cuando vieren con presta diligencia
"Derribar los soberbios levantados,
"Y alzar a los humildes abatidos,
"Con poderosa mano para hacello."29

Reflecting on this pronouncement, Berganza and Cipión decide that it refers to Fortune’s wheel, and more specifically to a game of skittles; and Cipión adds deflatingly: “Mira, pues, si en el discurso de nuestra vida habremos visto jugar a los bolos, y si hemos visto por esto haber vuelto a ser hombres, si es que lo somos.”30 The French expression for the unwanted and unwelcome uses the same image: “un chien dans un jeu de quilles”; and it would apply equally to Berganza and to the whole race of artist-dogs whose ancestor he is, including Beckett’s “people.” In a universe whose laws are not theirs, they find themselves incomprehensibly and unwillingly present, without means of escape into a more satisfying form of life of which they are nevertheless highly conscious. One may recall the “wild laughter” with which Mr. and Mrs. Rooney, in All that Fall, greet the announcement of the text for tomorrow’s sermon, which is in essence the same as Berganza’s prophecy: “The lord upholdeth all that fall and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.”31

Berganza’s excitement on receiving the gift of speech is, then, understandable, for it comes as the partial fulfillment of a promise; but finally the power of speech is a no less ironical gift for him than it is for Beckett’s heroes, who like Berganza view “humanity” as an ideal to be attained, but set little store on art as a means of reaching it. To be able

29 Cervantes, op. cit., p. 293.
30 Ibid., p. 312.
to speak is, in the end, to be plunged into even greater puzzlement, since it comes as an apparent confirmation of a future status which there is no way of bringing about. So long as Berganza remains a dog, what use is the gift of speech to him? He can enjoy it, just as Beckett’s characters do, to unburden himself of the inexhaustible contents of his memory, or alternatively to speak ill of the world and its inhabitants (for how else speak of it?):

A la fe, Cipión, mucho ha de saber y muy sobre los estribos ha de andar el que quisiere sustentar dos horas de conversación sin tocar los límites de la murmuración . . .[32]

Or indeed, he can use it, archetypally, to rail like Hamm (and how many other Beckett people?) at his “accursed progenitors”:

. . . por lo cual vuelvo a decir lo que otra vez he dicho: que el hacer y decir mal lo heredamos de nuestros primeros padres y lo mamamos en la leche. Véase claro en que apenas ha sacado el niño el brazo de las fajas, cuando levanta la mano con muestras de querer vengarse de quien, a su parecer, le ofende; y casi la primera palabra articulada que habla es llamar puta a su ama o a su madre.[33]

But he remains a dog, punished, as the son of a witch, not simply by belonging to an inferior order of existence, but especially by knowing, while he belongs to it, of a superior order to which he is called, but which he cannot attain. Berganza’s doghood is very like the human condition of Beckett’s “people.” And to him, as to them, speech is something both inexplicable and unnatural, a power mysteriously given and mysteriously taken away, useless to change either his own condition or the world in which he leads a dog’s existence; for all the good it can do, he might as well be barking his head off. Berganza wishes to discuss certain social reforms with the corregidor:

. . . alcé la voz, pensando que tenía habla, y en lugar de pronunciar razones conciertadas, ladré con tanta prisa y con tan levantado tono, que, enfadado el Corregidor, dió voces a sus criados, que me echasen de la sala a palos . . .[34]

And so, whatever his delight in it and for as long as he enjoys it (and he does not know how long that will be), the gift of speech serves Berganza only to converse with his brother, double (and fellow-artist?) Cipión; it is a self-indulgent, self-enclosed, and gratuitous exercise, which he takes pleasure in for its own sake, giving of the fruits of his wisdom, discussing the fine points of the art of narration, commenting on the effectiveness or otherwise of his tales as he tells them, launching into lengthy and time-consuming digressions, terrified of lapsing into

---

[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., p. 337.
silence (because of the fatal significance the loss of the power of speech would have), but unable, in Beckett’s metaphor, to use language to “avancer son histoire”—that is, to change his alienated condition for the better. The dialogue is sometimes strikingly reminiscent of Godot or Fin de Partie:

Cipón: . . . y por tu vida que calles ya y sigas tu historia.
Berganza: ¿Cómo la tengo de seguir si calló?

Like Berganza and his brother wondering, now that they can speak, what to do with their new-found power, and how best to fill in the time until morning, Molloy also concludes that “ce dont j’ai besoin c’est des histoires.” Language is a useless gift, but the only alternative is silence, as Molloy knows too:

Autrement dit, quoi que je dise, ce n’était jamais assez ni assez peu. Je ne me taisais pas, voilà, quoi que je dise je ne me taisais pas.

Until the impossible silence of final contentment is attained, to lapse into speechlessness is an unbearable admission of defeat; il faut continuer, as the Unnamable desperately concludes. Berganza’s naïve enjoyment of language is not so very different, at bottom, from the obscure pensum at which Beckett’s artist-heroes tiredly but untiringly labor.

The difference is, nevertheless, worth noting. However incomplete this brief survey, it has enabled us, in moving from the two nineteenth-century texts backward in time to Cervantes and forward to Beckett, to examine the myth first in its most explicit form and then at stages which might respectively be called (without pejorative intention and for want of simpler terms) inchoative and disintegrative. Cervantes’ dog is interested in the process of becoming an artist; it is only towards the end that he treads the boards, and the gift of speech appears as the final stage in the process. At the same time his racy style and confident realism, his scorn of Latin and his enjoyment of speech as a kind of new toy strongly suggest the freshness and self-confidence of a newly established vernacular literature, opposed equally to comfortable scholasticism and comforting romance, and aware both of its modernity and of its faithfulness to real experience. In Hoffmann and Baudelaire, the dog’s profession is taken for granted, his status as actor-artist is accepted, and the problem of language recedes, to be replaced by that of the artist’s social role; this social awareness in nineteenth-century texts,

---

85 Ibid., p. 251.
86 Beckett, op. cit., p. 16.
87 Ibid., p. 50.
88 An obvious gap is Kafka’s Forschungen eines Hundes, which might be linked to Molloy’s “savoir ne rien pouvoir savoir.”
together with an apparently naïve trust in the artist's powers, is not surprising, although it does invite serious sociological investigation. But in Beckett the difficulty of simply being an artist is again to the fore, and with it the puzzle of language—the difference being that Molloy is no saltimbank-dog: he has forgotten the more theatrical and entertaining functions of the artist in order to come to grips with essentials. To be faithful to real experience no longer seems simple, partly because the wisdom of the *perro sabio* has become epistemological puzzlement, and partly because expression is itself problematical; and Molloy's weary preoccupation with language as a lie, although it is foreshadowed in Cervantes (whose realism implies a contestation of the very language in which he delights), strongly suggests the decadence of an art which has lost faith in its own assumptions.

Through all the changes, however, the myth remains surprisingly true to its central meaning. Grotesque as the image may be, and however sardonic or defeated the themes, there is a kind of clear-sighted courage in the artists who see themselves as performing dogs. Baudelaire speaks of an "instinct"; perhaps we may call it the spirit of Berganza and say (remembering the very last anecdote in Cervantes) that it lies in being the natural enemy of all lap-dogs. Berganza is, without provocation, attacked and bitten on the leg by a tiny, yapping bitch, so small, as he says, that it could have taken refuge between its mistress's breasts. He comments serenely: "Consideré en ella que hasta los cobardes y de poco ánimo son atrevidos e insolentes cuando son favorecidos, y se adelantan a ofender a los que valen más que ellos."

This sense of superiority derives from faithfulness to an ideal of "humanity" which makes it unthinkable to share the comfortable lives of ordinary, unthinking, gesprenkelt mankind. Molloy resists Lousse's attempt to "amollir Molloy" because his mind is on a more important question:

Je resterais chez elle, où je ferais comme chez moi. J'aurais à boire et à manger, à fumer aussi si je fumais, à titre gracieux, et ma vie s'écoulerait sans soucis. Je remplacerais en quelque sorte le chien que j'avais tué et qui lui tenait lieu d'enfant . . . Je l'interrompais de temps en temps, pour lui demander dans quelle ville je me trouvais.40

But in Cervantes too, Berganza's interest in becoming a man is severely inhibited by the recognition that he would thereby acknowledge his devilish origins as the son of a witch, and he flees the house of Cañizares, with her diabolical practises and her hypocrisy. In Hoffmann, we see the witch actually attempt, to his great dismay, to make him a man, with

---

Hexenöl and spells. Baudelaire's dogs, fascinated by the witch's cauldron or cooking-pot, which spells economic servitude for them, are explicitly excused by the poet. And Molloy in Lousse's house finally understands and obeys the voice that tells him "Barre-toi, Molloy, prends tes béquilles et barre-toi." For them all, compromise is an Armida's castle or island of Circe, and with their minds undeviatingly fixed on an impossible purity, they derive integrity, strength, and value from their alienation itself.

The University of Sydney

41 Ibid., p. 90.
42 Since this article was written, P. H. Solomon has published an interesting study of the relationship between Beckett's Lousse episode and the "bowers of bliss" of the Renaissance epic (Australian Journal of French Studies, 1969).