

“Lighting Out”: Place, Space, and the Question of the Modern in *Don Quijote*

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IT HAS BEEN A commonplace of Cervantine criticism for many years to call *Don Quijote* the first modern novel, based on its apparent rejection of traditional narrative models such as romance and the pastoral as well as its metafictional concerns with the nature of literature and narrative themselves. A more recent trend, however, has christened the work a novel about modernity itself, and even one that “seems also to contain all the future possibilities of the genre” (Cascardi, “Romance, Ideology” 33).¹ Thus, Carroll Johnson, in *Cervantes and the Material*

¹ Friedman, in “The Subject of the Novel,” argues somewhat to the contrary: “the novel is in place in seventeenth-century Spain, and the picaresque and *Don Quijote* foreshadow the break from realism to metafiction and postmodernism” (65). Morón Arroyo, however, maintains that at least *Don Quijote* I does not itself comprise a novel because “Cervantes no tiene argumento ni concepto de argumento en el sentido moderno” (165), and in spite of trying, “no llega a la intensificación de la intriga, de los sentimientos y de la expectación del lector, que introduce Mme. de Lafayette en *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) y que sirve de modelo definitivo a la novela moderna.” There is clearly a certain amount of confusion of the modernity of content and that of narrative structure in the criticism, which may have its roots in Américo Castro’s *El pensamiento de Cervantes* (1925). Presberg argues for the work’s influence upon those who present “the view of Cervantes as a proto-modern, or even a modern, abreast of Renaissance philosophy and poetics, whose fictional heterocosm dramatizes a philosophy akin to existentialism and perspectivism” (89–90).

In contrast to the tendency to see both the content and the genre of the *Quijote* as “modern,” this study emphasizes the continuity of the romance tradition, as do studies such as Edward

World (2000), sees in all of Cervantes' works "a recurrent preoccupation with the clash of two different economic systems, a reenergized feudalism and an incipient capitalism" (1). David Quint's 2003 study calls *Don Quijote* "Cervantes's Novel of Modern Times," and he argues that its various threads are "related by the similar stories they tell about the arrival of a modern world reshaped and increasingly dominated by money" (17). Part I, for example, therefore involves a "progressive unfolding...that brings the novel from a nostalgic evocation of earlier social conditions and values... to the conditions and values of modernity that supersede them" (18), ending in "the mentality and social arrangements of Cervantes's present-day Spain" (19) and even "the way that we live and love now, stories of modern desire." Roberto González-Echevarría, in *Love and the Law in Cervantes* (2005), also emphasizes the modernity of its social, political, and economic concerns, and characterizes Don Quijote himself as "the first hero in the Western tradition to be a fugitive from justice, one whose life is defined by flight from the authorities of an organized state" (61).

While it is certainly true that much of the comedy (and pathos) of Cervantes's masterpiece derives from the intersection, indeed, the (literal, in some cases) collision between the hero's anachronistic program to re-institute the values of chivalry and the hostility of the world in which he lives to such a project, privileging the latter over the former undermines the exquisite balance that makes *Don Quijote* the literary achievement that it is. For just as Dulcinea must, impossible as it may seem, be an enchanting princess, an earthy peasant girl, and a baseless fantasy all at the same time,² Don Quijote's world is both the space of

Dudley's *The Endless Text: 'Don Quixote' and the Hermeneutics of 'Romance'* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997) and Edwin Williamson's *The Half-way House of Fiction: Don Quixote and the Arthurian Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

² Many recent studies of Dulcinea, it must be said, have a tendency to overturn this delicate balance. Iffland, for example, literally erases the idealized lady in phrases such as "se encomienda a su señora Dulcinea (campesina de un pueblo de moriscos)" (230), while González Echevarría declares "what we have in their romance is the love of a middle-aged petty nobleman, an hidalgo, for a country girl from his district" (41). Such readings conveniently forget that Dulcinea begins, not as Aldonza, but as an absence: she is a lady for whom Don Quijote must look, for if he were to defeat some giant, "¿no será bien tener a quien enviarle presentado?" (I, 1; 77, emphasis added). It is, moreover, the narrator who identifies the supposed model "a lo que se cree" as "una moza

chivalric adventure and that of something rather like Baroque Spain, for, as Jehenson and Dunn observe: “any text, because it is written at a specific historical moment, necessarily resonates with crises and contradictions of the historical moment that has produced it” (xiv). Given that the novel projects the hero’s perspective at the same time that it parodies and burlesques it, we should not be surprised to find that to the extent that contemporary-like events occur in the novel, they do so in a space and in places that reflect Don Quijote’s medieval frame of reference, even if that frame is challenged by those of the author and other characters.

In *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, Robert Pogue Harrison observes: “Nature is where we go to get lost, so that we may find again that which in us is irrevocable” (227). There is in much of Cervantes’s work the medieval sense that the value of home, of in-dwelling, cannot be grasped without first leaving, and Don Quijote is his most radical expression of this idea. Unlike the younger protagonists in medieval romance, as well as other Cervantine works such as the *Novelas ejemplares* or, indeed, the numerous adolescents in the throes of passion with which the mad knight himself comes into contact, Don Quijote’s is not a youthful body coming into its own, testing itself against the world, and finding the place (and space) in which to live the rest of a long, socially productive, and conventional life. Instead it is a body uncanny in a number of ways, many of which have already been noted: he is too old for a knight errant, and so, out of time; his health is poor, the rickety old man’s body a metaphor for the apparently equally unstable mind within it, and it declines steadily throughout the novel as a result of the beatings to which Cervantes subjects his protagonist; his body lacks grace of any kind; and it is, seemingly, sexually impotent without ever having been potent.

But perhaps the most uncanny thing about Don Quijote’s body is the way in which it experiences the architectural structures of ordinary life in seventeenth-century Spain as if it were a medieval knight’s body, thereby projecting a medieval concept of space over the Baroque landscape. At an age when most men of his time (and many of those of ours)

labradora de muy buen parecer de quien él un tiempo anduvo enamorado,” but even in this case, the narrator has to admit “ella jamás lo supo, ni le dio cara dello” (I, 1; 78). It is, therefore, forcing the issue to call this distanced, one-sided desire “a romance.”

were content, when able, to take advantage of their class and retire to the armchair by the fire, Don Quijote is propelled out of the dubious comfort of his crumbling manse. Although the narrator famously opines that “del poco dormir y del mucho leer se le secó el cerebro de manera, que vino a perder el juicio” (I, 1; 73), this only occurs because he has taken up reading chivalric romance to occupy “los ratos que estaba ocioso (que eran los más del año)” (I, 1, 71). The more ordinary outlets for his late-blooming enthusiasm, such as writing a romance himself,³ or debates with his fellow readers over the relative quality of various literary heroes, do not suffice. Instead, his body, albeit so unlike the conventional body of the medieval knight errant in many ways, nevertheless consistently experiences architectural space as confinement, just as those romance bodies do. We remember, for example, that Chrétien’s Lancelot is rarely indoors when not imprisoned, and he is the only one of the Round Table knights not at court when the Queen is so famously spirited away. For Don Quijote, too, open space is the place of wonder, fulfillment, and adventure, as well as danger and suffering. As he says proudly to the innkeeper and sniggering prostitutes of the inn where he seeks to be named a knight, “mis arreos son las armas, / mi descanso el pelear” (I, 2; 84), and despite the comic aspects of the spectacle he presents, he is not lying. Even the peasant Sancho argues when his wife asks what concrete goods—what “saboyana,” what “zapaticos” (I, 52; 602)—he has brought back from his voyage, “No traigo nada de eso,” but: “es linda cosa esperar los sucesos atravesando montes, escudriñando selvas, pisando peñas, visitando castillos, alojando en ventas a toda discreción,” not the least because the last is done “sin pagar ofrecido sea al diablo el maravedí” (I, 52; 603).

The topographical emphasis that we find in Sancho’s comment, along with his pleasure in physically experiencing the landscape that he evokes—“crossing mountains, searching through forests, treading peaks”—echoes the theological and philosophical debates about the nature of space. Medieval thinkers had gradually developed an idea of infinite space that was, as Casey states, “*imaginal-hypothetico-speculative*” (114),

³ “[M]uchas veces le vino deseo de tomar la pluma y dalle fin [a *Belianís*] al pie de la letra” (I, 1; 20).

in which “the closely confining circuit of place-as-perimeter dissolved” (115). This insight, although it was to find its greatest secular expression in the explorations and conquests of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,⁴ was a medieval achievement, and its appeal informs the notion of space expressed in chivalric romance and, even more so, in *Don Quijote*. Here the speculation that space must be infinite if it is to contain an “indefinite plurality of worlds” (Casey 108) comes to fruition in Don Quijote’s reinterpretation of what he sees: the perimeter that limits movement in *space* to this *place* is also the perimeter placed on imagination by mundane reality, and the absence of one implies the absence of the other. Don Quijote’s greatest flights of fancy, therefore, whether they are “realized” in action, like the great battle between the armies of what turn out to be sheep and goats or the freeing of the galley slaves, or simply stories spun for Sancho’s edification, always take place out of doors.

From Don Quijote’s perspective, therefore, interior spaces are not, as they will be for the bourgeois homebody, places of comfort and safety. Instead, confinement frequently holds him fast, making it impossible for him to escape greater abuses. It is not irrelevant, first of all, that the hero never willingly or happily returns home. Indeed, his reluctance to do so already sounds a warning about what will happen when his return is final, perhaps because “The domestic interior is...in some sense mortuary” (Harrison, *Dominion* 40). Thus, after his first sally, although he is on his way home to acquire, along with a squire, such unchivalric, even bourgeois, necessities as “dineros y camisas” (I, 4; 94), Don Quijote’s first return actually occurs under the twin auspices of a beating he receives at the hands of the servant of some “mercaderes toledanos” (I, 4; 99), which leaves him unable to move,⁵ and those of the kindly peasant neighbor who “procuró levantarle del suelo, y no con poco trabajo le subió sobre su jumento...y se encaminó hacia su pueblo” (I, 5; 105). In spite of his battered, and unimposing, condition, as long as Don Quijote remains out

4 See Casey: it was “an age that set out expressly to explore a terra incognita of interconnected places within the larger space of the earth itself as well as the still larger space of the heavens” (I, 4; 94).

5 “...no podía menearse” (I, 5; 1024). Proponents of the view that the novel represents a modern world would point out that Don Quijote here is pummeled by a representative of the commercial class.

of doors he is able to maintain his view of the world as one of possibility. When his rescuer tries to set him straight, therefore, by arguing that Don Quijote is not Abindarráez Abencerraje, nor is he himself Rodrigo de Narváez, the self-proclaimed knight declares “Yo sé quién soy...y sé que puedo ser, no sólo los que he dicho, sino todos los doce Pares de Francia y aun todos los nueve de la Fama” (I, 5; 106).

In an age and place that exalts the power of the individual to become what and whom he chooses, it is astonishing how negatively this statement of high idealism is often read. Parr states unequivocally that “he clearly does not know who he is at that point, and it is a grievous error to attach an existential interpretation to the phrase cited, freighted as it is with irony” (112). For Cascardi, the statement proves that “the eclipse of imitation as a normative practice for containing the force of desire in relation to the past in fact generates a *proliferation* of models, none of which can satisfy the desire that self-assertion demands” (“Archaeology” 53). We should, however, distinguish the irony imposed by author and narrator from that which may be expressed by a character. There is little doubt that Cervantes and his representatives within the narrative present Don Quijote in this way to demonstrate his lunacy: how, after all, can one know who one is, if one believes he can be anyone at all? Don Quijote’s meaning is more complex, and rather startling, given that he is being consistently portrayed as incapable of judging reality from fantasy. He asserts, out of the midst of a literary recitation, that he *does*, in fact, know who he is, but that knowledge does not mean that who he “really” is limits who he might become. Self-fashioning, in other words, is an act of will. Given that will, moreover, there is no logical reason why the possibilities should not be multiple, at least beyond the restrictions imposed by home and town. Once he is returned to the (suffocating) care of his home,⁶ however, his attempts to remain within the world of adventure are brushed aside with the curate’s jovially sarcastic “¡Ta, ta! ...¿Jayanes

⁶Robert Pogue Harrison posits that wilderness, the forest, is by its nature antithetical to the family: “Folding time within its promiscuous matrix, the forests would have promptly disoriented the line of genealogical succession. In short, for the family to establish itself as a divine institution under the open sky, it had to clear a space for itself in the forest’s midst” (*Forests* 6). The family’s “space,” in this reading, is obviously not the open space of chivalric adventure, but the enclosed place of the home against which Don Quijote rebels.

hay en la danza?" (I, 6; 108) and his vow to burn all of the romances that have consumed his friend's sanity.

This, in effect, is what Don Quijote's friends and family do, and guarantee further that he has no access to the books that fired his imagination by walling up the library.⁷ That this action is an attempt by the "contemporary" world to literally contain the medieval and its space, is made explicit by the hero's niece, who asks her uncle: "¿No será mejor estarse pacífico en su casa, y no irse por el mundo a buscar pan de trastigo, sin considerar que muchos van por lana y vuelven tresquilados?" (I, 7; 124) Each time, therefore, that Don Quijote is compelled to return to his home, it represents a similar imposition of "real-world" limits on the unlimited possibilities of medieval romance space, and inevitably implies his death. He returns at the end of Part I imprisoned in a cage, a spectacle of ruin and insanity: "entraron en la mitad del día, que acertó a ser domingo, y la gente estaba toda en la plaza, por mitad de la cual atravesó el carro de don Quijote. Acudieron todos a ver lo que en el carro venía" (I, 52; 602). Although all look at him, and recognize him in his sad state, after his family strips him and puts him to bed, "mirábalas él con ojos atravesados, y no acaba de entender en qué parte estaba" (I, 52; 603). His final, and fatal, return, at the end of Part II, is engineered by Sansón Carrasco, as a representative of Don Quijote's hometown, who defeats him in battle and as his price requires "que el gran don Quijote se retire a su lugar un año" (II, 65; 535). This punishment, which imposes a limit of both time and space, leads the hero to take to his bed,⁸ and to repudiate his chivalric identity, with all of its possibilities, leaving him "[tendido] de largo a largo en la cama," where "se desmayaba muy a menudo" (II, 74; 591). Upon his death, the disjunction between immobility and the medieval romance knight is noted: "Hallóse el escribano

⁷As Harrison observes: "The 'in' that the dead abide in—whether it be in the earth, in our memory, in our institutions, in our genes, in our words, in our books...this 'in' of the dead's indwelling defines the human interiority which our houses build walls around and render inhabitable" (*Dominion* 39–40).

⁸At first he claims that he will continue to help those in need, whether it be as "caballero andante; o pastor por andar" (II, 73; 585, emphasis added), where the relationship between the possibilities for action that those roles entail is indicated by forms of the verb *andar*, with its reference to movement.

presente, y dijo que nunca había leído en ningún libro de caballerías que algún caballero andante hubiese muerto en su lecho tan sosegadamente y tan cristiano como don Quijote" (II, 74; 591). But it is not, of course, the knight-errant, the wanderer in the space of adventures, who dies at home, calmly, in his bed, but the decayed seventeenth-century gentleman Alonso Quijano.

Don Quijote's home and village, and the people who inhabit it, are not the only examples of the effect that confinement to interior space has upon him as medieval romance knight, however. Although throughout the novel, the character is shown discoursing with apparent pleasure about topics that interest him at dinner tables in structures as various as a drover's shabby inn and a gentleman's gracious abode, such occasions are rare in the lengthy novel and represent momentary respite. More often, Don Quixote suffers illness, nightmares, fever, and hallucinations, as well as cruelty both physical and emotional, whenever he must spend time within walls. At no time does his project seem more brutally impossible than when Don Quixote finds himself living in a castle with a real-life duke and duchess, a situation which ought to be the fulfillment of his dream and is instead a subversion of it.⁹

In the first place, the narrator makes it clear that the castle does not contain Don Quijote's version of himself, but that of his host, who "dio orden a todos sus criados del modo que habían de tratar a don Quijote" (II, 31; 273). From that moment, therefore, the hero is constantly surrounded by people who control everything that he does and everything that happens to him, from what he wears to where he sits.¹⁰ The coercive

⁹ Perhaps not surprisingly, Quint claims that "the courtly palace life of these grandees represents a far more successful adaptation of the aristocracy to modern times" (131) and that, by staging a version of romance for Don Quijote, "they lay claim to be the modern heirs of chivalry."

¹⁰ First, "seis doncellas le desarmaron y sirvieron de pajes" (II, 31; 276), with the hero crowded in his room and shamed by his shabby underclothes. They then give him "el mantón de escarlata" plus "una montera de raso verde" to wear (II, 31; 278), which make him more a figure of fun than of knighthood. As Quint points out, "there is something regressive and infantilizing in this bathing and dressing of Don Quijote" (133). However, Quint follows his argument of the modernity of the novel too far when he claims: "The Duke and the Duchess, representatives of an aristocracy whose power is still entrenched and socially dominant, drag *Don Quijote* back toward the past" (133). While it is true that on an empirical level, "their class may exert a similar

seating arrangements, and the way in which they limit Don Quijote's movement, establish the leitmotiv for the entire episode:

finalmente, cogiendo a don Quijote en medio, se fueron a sentar a la mesa. Convidó el Duque a don Quijote con la cabecera de la mesa; y aunque él rehusó, las importunidades del Duque fueron tantas, que la hubo de tomar. El eclesiástico se sentó frontero, y el Duque y la Duquesa, a los dos lados. (II, 31; 278)

When Don Quijote courteously refuses to take the Duke's rightful place at the head of the table, he is made to sit there regardless; then he is hemmed in by the priest in front of him, and his hosts on either side. Thus trapped, he must endure both the indignities of having his beard washed by servants improvising on the Duke's original orders, and of the priest declaring: "*volveos a vuestra casa, y criad vuestros hijos, si los tenéis, y curad de vuestra hacienda, y dejad de andar vagando por el mundo, papando viento*" (II, 31; 282, emphasis added). Once again, the bourgeois value of remaining at home and caring for the family is opposed to the medieval romance option of freedom of movement through space.¹¹

Don Quijote, in turn, emphasizes this opposition in his own defense, when he himself sets the education of a priest, "habiéndose criado algunos en la estrechez de algún pupilaje, sin haber visto más mundo que el que puede contenerse en veinte o treinta leguas de distrito" (II, 32; 283) against the life of a knight-errant "que se gasta en vagar por el mundo, no buscando los regalos dél, sino las asperezas por donde los buenos suben al asiento de la inmortalidad." And when he finally takes leave of the Duke and Duchess, he equates the "ociosidad" (II, 57; 466) of life in the castle with "estar encerrado," a contraposition made all the more absolute when later combined in one phrase: "parecíale que había

drag on Spanish society and culture as whole" (XX), the past encoded by Don Quijote's project is an idealized, and idealistic, spacious one, not the stifled, decadent version that the Duke and Duchess represent.

¹¹Harrison points out that the house, in its character as mortuary (house of the dead, of memory) is also that of "the unborn in their projective potentiality.... A house is a place of insiderness in the openness of nature where the dead, through the care of the living, perpetuate their afterlives and promote the interests of the unborn" (*Dominion* 40).

de dar cuenta estrecha al cielo de aquella *ociosidad y encerramiento*" (II, 57; 467, emphasis added).¹² That this passive and imprisoned condition is antithetical to the life of chivalric action is made clear in the hero's relief at escaping what appeared to have been the realization of his dreams: "Cuando don Quijote se vio en la campaña rasa, ...le pareció que estaba en su centro, y que los espíritus se le renovaban" (II, 58; 470). He declares: "La libertad, Sancho, es uno de los más preciosos dones que a los hombres dieron los cielos; con ella no pueden igualarse los tesoros que encierra la tierra ni el mar encubre; por la libertad, así como por la honra, se puede y debe aventurar la vida; y por el contrario, el cautiverio es el mayor mal que puede venir a los hombres" (II, 58; 470).

It must be emphasized, moreover, that this freedom from captivity that Don Quijote equates with the landscape of chivalric action is not only his own deluded projection of an anachronistic space; it is a value that attracts many of the other characters as well, because of its association with life.¹³ We have already noted that the comfort-loving Sancho, for whom the physical annoyances of adventuring are a continuing source of dissatisfaction, comes to recognize the attractions of the wandering life. Critics frequently read Sancho as a representation of "a jornalero, [who] has grown up in a culture of poverty" (Johnson 22), who worked in "the most demanding and least remunerative jobs," given that the narrator tends to portray Sancho (and indeed, he often sees himself this way) as the sacrificial victim of Don Quijote's beliefs and practices, thereby proving them to be dangerous, impractical, and self-serving. How can the reader *not* sympathize with the poor, practical fat man, model for so many other road buddies who trail in the wake of a dreamer, paying the bills, picking up the pieces, and calling for the god-struck hero to return to earth? In spite of the bourgeois lure of a place and a salary of his own, however, Sancho learns to appreciate the

¹² Quint, too, notes: "The court-castle of the Duke and Duchess becomes a place of confinement.... Don Quijote has been caged again, as he was in Part One, however golden the cage of Part Two may appear to be" (151).

¹³ We can only speculate as to the connection between many of Cervantes's characters' aversion to enclosure and the author's own five years of imprisonment in Algiers, as well as his more mundane time spent in Spanish jails for debt. Garcés states unequivocally: "Captivity radically marks the life of Cervantes" (79).

freedom from the responsibilities and annoyances entailed by rootedness. After the abuse that he suffers at the hands of the Duke's servants during his ill-fated governorship of his "island," Sancho departs therefore with the declaration: "Abrid camino, señores míos, y dejadme volver a mi antigua libertad" (II, 53; 444), where he can "andar por el suelo con el pie llano" (II, 53; 445).

Marcela, in a very different situation, similarly rejects the normal life of a Spanish rural heiress, destined to marry and maintain her household and family because "tengo libre condición, y no gusto sujetarme" (I, 14; 187-88). Instead, "la conversación honesta de las zagalas destas aldeas y el cuidado de mis cabras me entretiene. Tienen mis deseos por término estas montañas, y si de aquí salen, es a contemplar la hermosura del cielo, pasos con que camina el alma a su morada primera" (I, 14; 188). Many critics have nevertheless, and somewhat surprisingly, regarded Marcela's choices as harshly as Grisóstomo's friends do. Anne Cruz, for example, argues: "Marcela, the prototypical *mujer esquiva*, wanders alone into the woods after rejecting her many enamored suitors. Against her desire for freedom, and in a departure eerily similar to Grisóstomo's suicidal ending, her character self-destructs, and is never heard from again." (14, emphasis added). González Echevarría similarly opines: "Marcela's flight into the monte is a self-inflicted punishment" (89), perhaps for a "reciprocal [i.e. incestuous] attraction of Marcela and her uncle" (Johnson 90).¹⁴ It is valid to note that Cervantes, no more than any other author (male or female) of his time, cannot apparently imagine in positive terms what a woman's life would be like away from hearth or home (or convent). Therefore, the life that Marcela does choose is (inevitably, in *Don Quijote*), the fictitious one of a particular literary genre (the pastoral).

¹⁴ Although *Material World* finds Johnson working in the materialist/historicist mode, he nevertheless states: "I am unwilling to abandon the psychological reasons I adduced in 1983 to explain why Sancho chooses to leave home and sign on with Don Quixote as his *escudero* in the first place, namely that his home is charged with a forbidden eroticism, just as Don Quixote's is, and he needs to escape" (24). While the problem of incestuous desire and the taboo against it is a compelling at the anthropological (i.e. cultural) level, every household, in literature or outside of it, is not torn literally apart by incestuous desires. Some girls (such as Marcela) and many men (including nearly all literary heroes) find domesticity deadly dull. For them, leaving home is just a plot, or an adventure, just as, sometimes, a cigar is only a cigar.

She nevertheless expresses a clear idea of the freedom that she finds in the monte, and it is neither suicide nor punishment. Moreover, in a novel as long as *Don Quijote*, many characters appear only once and are “never heard from again” (Don Diego de Miranda is one, as is the singularly languid “leoncito” whose abortive joust with Don Quijote brings Don Diego into the hero’s sphere), but they are not therefore assumed to have done away with themselves.

In the case of the Captive, too, whose soldier’s story parallels Cervantes’s own, both his choice of career and that of his brother, who “escogió el irse a las Indias” (I, 39; 474), speak to a preference for space and movement. The Captive’s narrative thus juxtaposes his constant motion as a soldier (“Embarquéme en Alicante, llegué con próspero viaje a Génova, fue desde allí a Milán” [I, 39; 476], etc.¹⁵) with his eventual captivity, “donde ya había probado mil maneras de huirme, y ninguna tuvo sazón ni ventura; y pensaba en Argel buscar otros medios de alcanzar lo que tanto deseaba, porque jamás me desamparó la esperanza de tener libertad” (I, 40; 485). His desire for freedom finds its counterpart, and its opportunity, in that of the Moorish girl Zoraida, whose house abuts the Captive’s prison and is itself prison-like, with its windows that “como de ordinario son las de los moros, más eran agujeros que ventanas, y aun éstas se cubrían con celosías muy espesas y apretadas” (I, 40; 486). Although Zoraida’s immediate reason for escaping from her father’s house is not freedom of movement but freedom of religion, it results in the same thing: a series of adventures undertaken in pursuit of a new identity and a new life.

In fact, virtually all of the characters with whom Don Quijote comes into contact during his journeys are themselves “lighting out”: on the road in search of something that they could not achieve if they had remained at home: love, justice, fortune, freedom, adventure. Whereas in the modern, urban, bourgeois world these things either come about when one stays at home and fulfills one’s destiny and responsibilities, or

15 Johnson interprets these references to suggest that the *Cautivo* “would have preferred to go into business instead of following in his father’s footsteps as a soldier,” given that he goes through Alicante (which, according to Johnson, is not “the most direct route”), “where he embarks on a Genoese merchant ship loaded with wool bound for Genoa” (*Material World* 8).

they are seen as disruptive to the stability that is the highest good, in the medieval romance world, one finds them “out there,” in the wilderness, the *floresta*. Even the Duke and Duchess, who do so much to undermine Don Quijote’s vision of himself as a romance knight, must go out into the forest to find him before they can torment him. The false Arcadia of Part II also represents an aristocracy that, however frivolously, is in search of a more authentic view of itself, which inevitably lies in the past and the space of romance adventure.

One of the greatest errors that the nec-romancer¹⁶ critics—those for whom, in Parr’s words,

it calls for an act of quixotic reading, a concomitant leap of faith, even a certain willfulness, for one to feel affinity for the main character against the grain of the text, ignoring his subversive characterization and running counter to the multitude of signals counseling distance rather than involvement (119),

—make is to fall into the trap set by the narrative apparatus¹⁷ when it insists on the protagonist’s literal insanity. If we regard *locura* as an essentially involuntary state, then Don Quijote cannot be said to be suffering from such a malady. When we compare his decisions and actions to those of the many characters whose paths cross his and whose stories intersect with his, what we find is that the hero, as well as most, if not all, of the others, have made a decision to step into another intellectual and/or emotional realm and out of their “historical” context. The worlds into which they decide to pass may be chivalric (Don Quijote, the *cura*, the *barbero*, Sansón, the *duques*), pastoral (Marcela, Cardenio), picaresque (Ginés de Pasamonte), *morisco* (the *Cautivo*¹⁸), or simple wish fulfill-

16 I use this play on words with the term for sorcerers who reanimate the dead to create one that refers to those critics who oppose the possible viability of the romance ethos and form within the novel.

17 By narrative apparatus I mean the interlocking system of fictional authors, historians, narrators, and translators, including those that are portrayed in the two prologues, as well as certain characters such as the curate and the barber, Sancho Panza, and the series of men of a sarcastic bent that begins with the first *ventero* and includes, most famously, Sansón Carrasco.

18 Bandera, in his most recent book, in contrast, insists on the unique status of the *Cautivo*’s tale within the novel: “A los ojos de Cervantes la historia del capitán cautivo, testimonio, señal,

ment (Sancho), but none of them constitute a direct confrontation with the socio-historical context of seventeenth-century Spain, nor are they involuntary descents into a state of madness recognizable to modern medicine. Instead, they must be seen as strategic adaptations to certain conditions in which the characters find themselves which, for various reasons, do not permit them to take action in a direct and straightforward way.

This is nowhere clearer than in the extended section of Part I that takes place in Juan Palomeque's inn. Although much has been made of both Don Quixote's gullibility (in believing the farrago of the story of the Princess Micomicona, his friends' unconvincing disguises, and Sancho's trumped-up tale of his visit to Dulcinea) and passivity (he spends much of the time sleeping or simply listening, and plays no role in the resolution of the numerous conflicts), few have focused on the implausibility of the entire proceedings. They feature abandoned literary manuscripts carefully maintained by illiterate innkeepers; not one, not two, but *four* amorous plots (not counting the one read aloud from the aforementioned manuscript), whose principals *all* fetch up at the same rural inn, which itself seems to keep expanding to accommodate yet more guests; not one, not two, but *four* beautiful girls, each of whom would be the most beautiful in the world if not for the others; and the reunion of family members previously separated by many years and miles, just to mention a few of the elements. It would take the art and science of film and the outrageous comedic talents of the Marx Brothers to produce a similarly hilarious crowd in the famous stateroom scene of *A Night at the Opera*.

In fact, the ultimate effect of these implausible arrivals, their repetitive stories, and the inn's protean transformation is to convert the episode into a romance. Although "El curioso impertinente" resembles one of the novellas from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, the traveler's tales all involve romance-type plots. In addition, the presence of so many nobly-born characters changes the nature of the place in which they find themselves.

indicador, dentro de la ficción novelística, de una realidad histórica que trasciende esa misma ficción, tiene dentro de sí, en cuanto parte de esa realidad, una riqueza y un alcance muy superior al de cualquier ficción puramente imaginada" (357).

Surely a small, rural drovers' inn would be unlikely to shelter such a relatively exalted company, especially in such great number. In effect, if not in fact, the inn has *become* a castle.¹⁹ In such a context, Don Quixote's belief in the viability of romance, including the assumption that wineskins are giants, seems quite unexceptionable, and indeed, once again indicates the danger that interior spaces imply for the knight. Although all concerned take the hero's statement about events as evidence of his mental incapacity, it once again expresses a truth that goes beyond the moment itself:

son tantas y tan estrañas las cosas que en este castillo, en dos veces que en él he alojado, me han sucedido, que no me atreva a decir afirmativamente ninguna cosa de lo que acerca de lo que en él se contiene se preguntare, porque imagino que cuanto en él se trata va por vía de encantamento. (I, 45; 541)

The gathered company's enchantment of Don Quixote himself therefore occurs as a logical result of the narrator's constant assurance that the hero is, in fact, insane, together with the similar conviction held by those around him, and the conversion of a stopping place in the exterior world of freedom and adventure into the confining space of a medieval castle.

It is not surprising, therefore, that until almost the end of Part II (and, significantly, only after his luxurious imprisonment with the Duke and Duchess has prepared him), Don Quijote manages to avoid cities, nor is it surprising that the defeat by Sansón Carrasco, which leads ineluctably to his death, occurs in a city: Barcelona, the only city that he visits. As Jehenson and Dunn comment in their new study, *The Utopian Nexus in Don Quixote*,

Once Cervantes changes his protagonists' direction from Saragossa to Barcelona in Part II, the text describes a "real" world of urban power and institutional violence in Barcelona and at the ducal palace. In such a world Don Quixote's functional mechanisms of dis-

¹⁹I owe this conclusion to a student at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, Jeannette Mein, who did an independent study of the novel with me in the fall of 1999.

avowal are impotent. (xi)

It is therefore in the urban setting that the terms are set for his defeat:

no quiero otra satisfacción sino que dejando las armas y absteniéndote de buscar aventuras, te recojas y retires a tu lugar por tiempo de un año, donde has de vivir sin echar mano a la espada, en paz tranquila y en provechoso sosiego, porque así conviene al aumento de tu hacienda y a la salvación de tu alma (II, 64; 532-33)

Those critics who argue that in *Don Quijote*, Cervantes gives us a novel of “modern times,” see that novel take shape within the limits imposed by the hero’s defeat in Barcelona: “The future of the novel will chronicle the stories of middling people like Don Diego, like Camacho, and now like Don Quijote himself, and of their quiet, imperfect heroism, rather than tales of great captains and kings. Among such people the novel will find its readers” (Quint 162). Bandera is more emphatic yet: “Cervantes no es ningún romántico; ...no cree que la ficción literaria sea un himno a la libertad, una expansión de la realidad, un rompimiento de las limitaciones de un mundo real visto como algo que constriñe, estrecho, rutinario, repetitivo” (340). Even for Quint, however, “the death of Don Quijote looks like the demise, *in a crazy and vestigial form*, of heroism and the imagination” (161, emphasis added).

There is, however, nothing crazy nor vestigial about it, in part because we are confronted by a doubled space, and a doubled point of view. The wilderness into which Don Quijote and Sancho flee after freeing the *galeotes*, for example, is the site of chivalric adventure and amorous suffering, “a new and ideal space, a compatible setting within which desire and fantasy can take shape” (Jehenson and Dunn 4),²⁰ as well as the *despoblado* cited by González Echevarría, where “Don Quijote, who has freed convicted criminals by violent means, is now himself a common criminal” (7). If Cervantes’s whole point, therefore, were the inevitability,

²⁰Jehenson and Dunn’s study shows a tendency to conflate two other nostalgic spaces: that of the utopia of the Age of Gold, and that of medieval chivalric romance.

if not the desirability,²¹ of such a world and the novel that it writes and that writes it, we could argue that the story would *begin* when Alonso Quijano repudiates his romance alter-ego; it would detail precisely how he built up his property and saved his soul. *Don Quijote* would be, that is to say, not the first novel, or the first modern novel, but the first *bourgeois* novel. Instead, it is necessary to literally enclose Don Quijote in his tomb to allow

reposar en la sepultura los cansados y ya podridos huesos de don Quijote, y no le quiera llevar, contra todos los fueros de la muerte, a Castilla la Vieja, haciéndole salir de la fuesa, donde real y verdaderamente yace tendido de largo a largo, imposibilitado de hacer tercera jornada y salida nueva. (II, 74; 593)

Only the confinement of the tomb, implied from the very beginning in the ancestral home that Don Quijote repeatedly escapes, can close off permanently the multiple possibilities represented by the medieval romance perspective that animated the hero. Cervantes thus uses space as a metaphor for historical time, where Don Quixote's body, as well as his mind, rejects the limits of modernity. It is not surprising, therefore, that to go home is, for literature's most famous medieval fantasist, literally to die. It remains to be seen, even in this post-modern age, whether this represents a return to sanity, or only another, and less glorious, form of madness.

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²¹ Quint admits: "Cervantes does not unquestioningly embrace the money relations of his time," but goes on to assert: "But he has shown beyond challenge that the attempt to return to the past is madness. The modern world of money is here to stay" (162). I would argue that such a simple, obvious, and banal message is unlikely to have motivated such a complex and multilayered work.

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