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Table of Contents

Articles and Talks

Why Cervantes in China?: Hyperreality and Cervantine Cultural encounters in Beijing 2016 (Tang Xianzu, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Borges)

Juan Pablo Gil-Osle, Arizona State University.....3

Salvador Dalí's *Don Quixote*: High Art or Kitsch?

William Daniel Holcombe, Clemson University.....13

Mammoth Woolly Migrations: Transhumance, Extinction, and the Cervantine Shepherd

Margaret Marek, Illinois College.....27

Transcendental metagenre travelers: a background of the reception of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* in Spain and France

Vicente Pérez de León, University of Glasgow

Véronique Duché, University of Melbourne.....53

“ . . . And things that go bump in the night:” Narrative Deferral, the Supernatural, and the Metafictive Uncanny in *Don Quijote*

Christopher Weimer, Oklahoma State University.....74

La enseñanza y la aceptación de las obras de Cervantes en China desde métodos multidisciplinarios

Zhang Jingting, Universidad de Estudios Internacionales de Shanghái.....94

“Yo sé quién soy.” La qui jotización de Dulcinea y la dulcinización de Don Quijote en una película de Vicente Escrivá

María José Domínguez, Arizona State University.....114

21st-Century Quixotes: Interdisciplinary Approaches and Global Classrooms

Rogelio Miñana, Drexel University.....122

Program of the Conference at the University in Chicago Center in Beijing: “Cervantes in his 400th Anniversary in China.”

.....132

Book Reviews

David William Foster. Alexandre de Gusmão, *The Story of the Predestined Pilgrim and His Brother Reprobate, in Which, through a Mysterious Parable, Is Told the Felicitous Success of the One Saved and the Unfortunate Lot of the One Condemned*. Trans., with an introd. and Index by Christopher C. Lund. Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2016. Xxxv, 137 pp., plates

..... 139

Juan Pablo Gil-Osle. Barbara Fuchs, *The Poetics of Piracy: Emulating Spain in English Literature*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. pp. 186. ISBN: 9780812244755

..... 142

Andrés F. Ruiz-Olaya. Franklin G.Y. Pease, *El mar peruano: mitos andinos y europeos*. Comp. Nicanor Domínguez Faura. Lima: Sociedad Geográfica de Lima, 2015

.....145

“ . . . And things that go bump in the night”:
Narrative Deferral, the Supernatural, and the Metafictive Uncanny
in *Don Quijote*

Christopher B. Weimer
Oklahoma State University

To consider the role of the supernatural in *Don Quijote* may seem an exercise in paradox: there are, after all, no ghoulies, ghosties, or long-legged beasts in the novel except in the imaginations of the mad *hidalgo* and his superstitious, credulous squire. The *Coloquio de los perros* features its eponymous talking dogs, the *Persiles* depicts werewolves, and both include witches, but *Don Quijote* depends too much on its fundamental dichotomy between reality and delusion to allow any such departures from the Manchegan mundane. However, on at least one occasion in *Don Quijote*, things do go bump in the night, and it may be that our over-familiarity with the text as teachers and re-readers, our foreknowledge of every episode's outcome, might lead us to overlook the temporary possibility of the supernatural as a narrative mode in the text's presentation of some of the *caballero* and *escudero*'s adventures. This essay will offer a preliminary consideration of that aspect of the text in Part One of the novel and pursue certain questions its treatment might raise for the second part.

Of key importance here is a specific question of narrative technique. In the initial chapters of *Don Quijote*, Cervantes repeatedly takes pains first to present the reality of any situation in which he places his *hidalgo*, then subsequently to explain Alonso Quijano's misinterpretation of that reality. In the second chapter, for example, the narrator recounts how the knight, at the end of his first day's ride, “vio, no muy lejos del camino por donde iba, una venta,” at the door of which loitered “dos mujeres mozas, destas que llaman del partido” (I, 2; 82). Only once this scenario is established does the text describe how Don Quijote decides that the inn is a *castillo* and the prostitutes are “dos hermosas doncellas o dos graciosas

damas” taking the air (I, 2; 82). This initial narrative structure develops further after Sancho sallies forth with his new master. As at the *venta*, the narrator begins with the reality of the situation: “En esto, descubrieron treinta o cuarenta molinas de viento que hay en aquel campo” (I, 8; 128), a description which precedes Don Quijote’s announcement – or instruction – to Sancho, “... ves aquí, amigo Sancho Panza, donde se descubren treinta, o pocos más, desaforados gigantes ...” (I, 8; 129). Jeremy Medina positions the latter moment at the start of a symmetrical five-step sequence which Cervantes will frequently utilize in the novel: Don Quijote proclaims the scenario which he has created in his imagination, Sancho contradicts him, Don Quijote willfully acts out his fantasy with negative results, Sancho faults his master for refusing to acknowledge the reality he had accurately asserted, and Don Quijote “claims interference from enchanters” (Medina 166). The account of Don Quijote’s actual misadventure is framed on either side by Sancho’s affirmations of reality, which are respectively preceded and succeeded by the *hidalgo*’s announcements of his chivalric vision. For this repeated structural unit to function, however, the reader must first understand each mundane scene onto which the aspiring *caballero andante* attempts to impose his mimetic urges in the opening step of the sequence. In such episodes, the narration offered by Cervantes’s surrogates, whether the *primer autor* delving into La Mancha’s *archivos* or the *segundo autor* transcribing the *morisco* translator’s rendering of Cide Hamete’s found manuscript, is most likely taken by even skeptical readers as reliably providing those necessary descriptions of the settings and situations onto which Don Quijote and Sancho stumble.

When we arrive at Chapters 19 and 20 of the first part, however, the adventures of the *encamisados* and the *batanes* are presented differently. Here Cervantes’s narrator becomes less omniscient, or at least chooses to reveal less than he knows. As the pair ride their mismatched mounts through “la noche oscura,” we are told that they:

vieron que por el mismo camino que iban venían hacia ellos gran multitud de lumbres, que no parecían sino estrellas que se movían. Pasmóse Sancho en viéndolas, y don Quijote no las tuvo todas consigo: tiró el uno del cabestro a su asno, y el otro de las riendas a su rocino, y estuvieron quedos, mirando atentamente lo que podía ser aquello, y vieron que las lumbres se iban acercando a ellos, y mientras más se llegaban, mayores parecían. A cuya vista Sancho comenzó a temblar como un azogado, y los cabellos de la cabeza se le erizaron a don Quijote ... (I, 19; 229)

The narrator gives us no objective preliminary explanation of this mysterious sight, restricting himself entirely to the knight's and squire's subjective sensory perspectives and to the explicit description of the physical manifestations of their fear. They remain confused by what they see in the rural darkness: "tornaron a mirar atentamente lo que aquello de aquellas lumbres que caminaban podía ser, y de allí a muy poco descubrieron muchos encamisados, cuya temerosa visión de todo punto remató el ánimo de Sancho Panza, el cual comenzó a dar diente con diente, como quien tiene frío de quartana" (I, 19; 230). Even once the procession comes close enough for the pair to count the participants and see that what they thought were horses are mules, "Esta estraña visión, a tales horas y en tal despoblado, bien bastaba para poner miedo en el corazón de Sancho y aun en el de su amo" (I, 19; 230). It is only when the injured *bachiller* Alonso López explains the particulars of this nocturnal funeral cortège that the ominous air of mystery is fully dispelled, but for a significant portion of the episode, Cervantes withholds that necessary information, leaving readers to view what occurs through Don Quijote's and Sancho's eyes and to formulate their own interpretations.

This same narrative strategy is deployed in the following chapter, when the weary knight and squire's happiness at the sound of nearby running water is interrupted by unidentified and unidentifiable noises: "oyeron que daban unos golpes a compás, con un cierto crujir de hierros y

cadenas” (I, 20; 237). The account of the pair’s emotions at this moment would not seem out of place in a horror novel:

Era la noche, como se ha dicho, oscura, y ellos acertaron a entrar entre unos árboles altos, cuyas hojas, movidas del blando viento, hacían un temeroso y manso ruido, de manera que la soledad, el sitio, la oscuridad, el ruido del agua con el susurro de las hojas, todo causaba horror y espanto, y más cuando vieron que ni los golpes cesaban ni el viento dormía ni la mañana llegaba, añadiéndose a todo esto el ignorar el lugar donde se hallaban. (I, 20; 237-8)

This time Cervantes extends the interval between the introduction of the apparently threatening sensory phenomenon and its explanation far longer than he did in the previous episode, thanks to Sancho’s inventive hobbling of Rocinante to prevent his master from leaving him alone and frightened in the darkness. Only after knight and squire debate the norms of storytelling and the night gives way to sunrise does the suspense end and do the adventurers and the readers together learn the mundane truth:

... al doblar de una punta pareció descubierta y patente la misma causa, sin que pudiese ser otra, de aquel horrísono y para ellos espantable ruido que tan suspensos y medrosos toda la noche los había tenido. Y eran (si no lo has, ¡oh lector!, por pesadumbre y enojo) seis mazos de batán, que con sus alternativos golpes aquel estruendo formaban. (I, 20; 248)

Neither this episode nor its predecessor follows the pattern discerned by Medina: both begin with encounters, rendered mysterious to the reader by strategic narrative omissions, which provoke emotional reactions shared by Don Quijote and Sancho rather than a debate between them, and they end not with Don Quijote’s insistence on his chivalric vision but instead with his acceptance of the realities which he and Sancho belatedly comprehend.

These *aventuras* ultimately create a comic effect similar to that of earlier scenes like that of the windmills, provoking laughter by means of the contrast between imagination and actuality, but they take a different narrative route to achieve it. The anticipation of what new havoc the mad *hidalgo* will wreak among the unwitting and the unwary is initially replaced by a more fundamental question for the reader: what exactly is happening in these scenes? It is the eventual answers to that question which will render Don Quijote and Sancho's fears literally ridiculous in hindsight, as each acknowledges to a different degree when they behold the *batanes*.

In these scenes, Cervantes relies on the deferral of information, on descriptions withheld from the reader rather than immediately provided. We may thus add the two episodes to the lengthy inventory of delays essential to Cervantes's narrative technique in *Don Quijote*, his inventive variations on and playful deployments of the Renaissance literary device of *dilatatio*: dilation in its sense of postponement as well as of rhetorical expansion and amplification. As Patricia Parker observes (192-98), the verb *dilatar* and its related noun and adjective forms recur throughout the novel, perhaps nowhere more famously than in the 1615 prologue's promise for the second part: "en ella te doy a don Quijote dilatado, y, finalmente, muerto y sepultado" (II, Prólogo; 37). Cervantes repeatedly extends, interweaves, and interrupts his numerous plot lines, suspending one narrative after another to leave readers in suspense. The episodes of the *encamisados* and the *batanes*, however, occupy a specific category: rather than only deferring their final outcomes, as in other instances of *dilación* (e.g., will Anselmo discover Lotario and Camila's affair? how will Don Quijote die?), they also conceal necessary information about the unexplained phenomena which, when perceived but not understood by knight and squire, initially set the episodes into motion. These chapters could be said to rely on forms of the hermeneutic code Barthes discerned at work in Balzac's *Sarrasine*, the various discursive strategies with which a text delays laying bare the truth behind its fundamental enigma (19, 75-76).

One such strategy, evident in any murder mystery with a surplus of plausible suspects, is to distract the reader with alternative explanations. Their respective capacities for reason overcome by fear of the unrecognized and the incomprehensible, Don Quijote and Sancho immediately imagine supernatural perils, with no contradiction or even overt skepticism from the narrator. For the uneducated Sancho, the lights floating in the darkness are *fantasmas* (I, 19; 229), and the subsequent torchlit sight of the mourning-clad riders and horses accompanying their grim burden only heightens the nightmarish quality of the scene for him. Don Quijote, likewise frightened, tries to make sense of these strange sights and sounds with precedents from his chivalric novels (I, 19; 230-31), but his understanding of the scene proves no more sophisticated than Sancho's: as the *hidalgo* explains to Alonso López, he attacked the riders because he took them for “*fantasmas y ... vestiglos del otro mundo*” and “*los mismos satanases del infierno*” (I.19, 233-35). Moreover, the startled *encamisados* interpreted the knight's unexpected nocturnal attack on them from much the same perspective, indicating that such beliefs were not limited to the uneducated and the mad: “*todos pensaron que aquel no era hombre, sino diablo del infierno, que les salía a quitar el cuerpo muerto que en la litera llevaban*” (I, 19; 232).¹ In the following chapter, neither knight or squire can make any sense of the fearsome hammering and the clanking of chains, though Don Quijote again chooses to regard the noises as an opportunity for him to display his knightly prowess and courage in the manner of his role models. It may be precisely the unknown aspects of his encounters with the *encamisados* and the *batanes*, in contrast to the willful transformations required of him by visible, tangible windmills and *ventas*, that on these specific occasions lead Don Quijote, as Gutiérrez Trápaga notes, to attempt to create for himself in imitation of his novels *aventuras guardadas*, trials reserved by magical means for only one chosen, prophesied hero who will prove his identity and worth with his triumph (16-17). He and Sancho are agreed, however, that their fright must be justified by the danger posed by the unseen sources of the noises, to the extent that Don Quijote gives Sancho instructions for

his possible death in battle and Sancho, offering a relatively early glimpse of his own quixotic mimesis, weeps at the prospect of his master's imminent demise in an adventure "donde no se puede escapar sino por milagro" (I, 20; 239).

Might first-time readers of the novel, still learning Cervantes's codes and parameters less than halfway through the first part's fifty-two chapters, consider supernatural explanations of what Don Quijote and Sancho see and hear as plausible narrative developments? Writing of the *batanes* episode, Hernán Sánchez points out that no reader can exclude that possibility with certainty until the *caballero* and *escudero* see the mills for themselves: "El lector podrá solamente suponer, dado el sendero cómico por el que señor y criado se deslizan, la sinrazón del miedo. Pero no conocerá en la noche la objetiva realidad del temor, el misterioso origen del estruendoso ruido" (924). An initial supernatural reading of either episode was not out of the question for *Don Quijote's* original readers: though it is common to think of horror fiction only in its more modern iterations, such narratives certainly existed in Cervantes's era.² The chivalric novels which Alonso Quijano read so obsessively, as well as their medieval source material, frequently included marvelous events, though not always of the fear-inducing variety. As Rogelio Miñana points out, seventeenth-century Spanish prose fiction is replete with instances of characters returning in spectral form from the dead, reflecting the beliefs and tastes of a cultural moment in which, despite the vigilance of the Inquisition, "era grande la credulidad respecto a estas apariciones de ultratumba" (*La verosimilitud*, 127). David R. Castillo also calls attention to supernatural tales sometimes included in the miscellanea which were popular in late sixteenth-century Spain. These volumes served as the textual equivalents of curiosity cabinets, compilations stuffed with descriptions of "the odd, the shocking, and the rare" (37). The supernatural could fall into any or all of those categories, as in Antonio de Torquemada's 1570 *Jardín de flores curiosas* – a book Cervantes has the priest (whose literary judgment is decidedly suspect) scorn as "mentiroso" in *Don Quijote* (I, 6; 112) and of which he

would subsequently make significant use in the *Persiles*. In the *Jardín*, the third *tratado*'s chapter heading declares that it contains “qué cosas sean fantasmas, visiones, trasgos, encantadores, hechiceros, brujas, saludadores, con algunos cuentos acaecidos y otras cosas curiosas y apacibles” (246). Among these accounts, Castillo notes, are narratives “employing stylistic resources that will be familiar to anyone who has ever read a horror story” (51) – and to anyone who has read the episodes of the *encamisados* and the *batanes* in *Don Quijote*, published only thirty-five years later. Indeed, Cervantes, whose novel incorporates so many other genres of his day, appears in these chapters to tease his readers with at least the possibility of such spectral manifestations as well.

Common to many such narratives, both then and subsequently, are the intertwined confusion and fear experienced by “ordinary” fictional men and women who are surprised by apparently supernatural events, feelings these texts encourage readers to share by restricting the narration to the characters' own perceptions. Surprise, José Antonio Maravall explains, was essential to the Baroque artistic strategy of *suspensión* and was often linked to *el espanto*; it was deployed to elicit in the reader or viewer “un efecto psicológico que provoca una retención de las fuerzas de la contemplación o de la admiración durante unos instantes, para dejarlas actuar con más vigor al desatarlas después” (Maravall 437-38). This limited interval during which an emotional reaction such as surprise or fear “disrupts the subject's ability to react or comprehend” (Childers 54) recalls – or anticipates – Edmund Burke's 1756 conceptualization, so influential in Gothic horror fiction, of the sublime's capacity for provoking astonishment, which Burke defined as “that state of the soul, in which all its motions are *suspended*, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it” (57, italics mine).³ Torquemada appears to exercise Baroque *suspensión* in some of the ghostly encounters in *Jardín*, among them one (267-71) in which “the reader is literally pulled into the scene, asked to put himself or herself in Ayola's place and imagine the

character's growing sense of dread as he feels his way through the impenetrable darkness in the company of a living corpse" (Castillo 51). Cervantes, as we have seen, likewise employs this technique in the episodes of both the *encamisados* and the *batanes*, detailing Don Quijote and Sancho's terror in the face of sights and sounds neither they nor first-time readers can decipher. Those familiar with the novel already know what Don Quijote and Sancho will discover at the end of each *aventura*, but new readers do not. Whether or not such readers might give themselves over to a pleasurable frisson of vicarious fear, they must by necessity share some degree of the knight and squire's perplexity during the moments of *suspensión* between the text's introductions of those sights and sounds and their elucidations. It is this interval of narrative deferral, this gap in which a reader's rational attempts at textual analysis are confounded by the absence of necessary information and by the possible induction of emotional response, which is so ingeniously exploited by Cervantes in these ultimately unconsummated flirtations with the literary supernatural.

The short-term possibility of a supernatural element in these episodes makes particularly applicable and useful to this analysis Tzvetan Todorov's mapping of what he defines as the fantastic, the marvelous, and the uncanny in literary texts. Focusing on precisely such narrative intervals of uncertainty, he describes the fantastic as present during "that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event" (25). He further develops this definition by adding to the character's cognitive dilemma that of the implicit reader: "But if the reader were informed of the 'truth,' if he knew which solution to choose, the situation would be quite different. The fantastic therefore implies an integration of the reader into the world of the characters; that world is defined by the reader's own ambiguous perception of the events narrated" (31). According to Todorov, once this dilemma is resolved and the character's and reader's shared hesitation ends, there are two possibilities. If the bewildering events turn out to be true, the text enters the territory of the marvelous, in which the laws of the fictional world are

revealed to encompass what the reader would consider supernatural phenomena; we might think here of Harry Potter’s discovery of the Wizarding World’s existence. If the events are not what they appear, we have the uncanny, in which what appears to be supernatural is revealed to have purely mundane causes. This is Gothic novelist Ann Radcliffe’s famous “supernatural explained,” as employed in countless novels in which a castle or mansion’s ghostly noises are found to originate from a concealed captive’s attic or dungeon prison. Xavier Aldana Reyes considers *Don Quijote* “an interesting proto-form” of this Gothic sub-genre (*Spanish Gothic* 8), and it is the uncanny with which Cervantes experiments in the adventures of the *encamisados* and the *batanes*, even as Don Quijote strives to view the world through the lens of the marvelous literature to which his beloved *libros de caballerías*, full of enchanters and magic, belong.⁴

With the exception of the two episodes we have already considered, Cervantes uses this interval of uncertainty relatively little in Part One, relying instead on omniscient, reliable, and all-revealing narrators to better illuminate and make fun of Don Quijote’s follies. Even when the knight is set upon in his sleep and imprisoned in the oxcart by the “contrahechas figuras” whom he takes for “fantasmas de aquel encantado castillo” (I, 46; 554-5), certainly an episode ripe for narration from the bewildered *hidalgo*’s perspective, the text describes his capture with a full account of his companions’ preparations before executing their plan. In Part Two, however, Cervantes will deploy this device more frequently and more variously than in the earlier volume. In the 1605 text, Don Quijote and Sancho stumbled upon the *encamisados* and the *batanes* entirely by accident before mistakenly but understandably attributing what they saw and heard to the supernatural. In the 1615 continuation, however, they will become the victims of elaborate deceptions intended by their perpetrators – most of whom have read the first part, including the episodes of the *encamisados* and the *batanes* – to be taken by them for supernatural occurrences.

These *engaños* fall into three groups, within each of which narrative deferral has a distinct function and degree of importance. The first such

group is also the largest: those staged by the *duques*, for whom Don Quijote and Sancho provide the occasion to mount their extravagant and fantastic practical jokes. After the knight and squire arrive at the estate, the idle aristocrats choose the nocturnal countryside, possibly in imitation of the *encamisados* and the *batanes* episodes, as the setting in which Merlín will reveal the means of Dulcinea's disenchantment: "se les pasó el día y se les vino la noche, y no tan clara ni tan sesga como la sazón del tiempo pedía, que era en la mitad del verano; pero un cierto claroescuro que trujo consigo ayudó mucho a la intención de los duques" (II, 34; 308). Rather than limit the reader's perspective to that of Don Quijote and Sancho, the narrator makes immediately explicit with that final phrase the aristocrats' complicity in what is to come, a design so successfully executed that even they are not immune to the shock provoked by the sudden light of the fires and the deafening outcry of the *bélicos instrumentos* surrounding the hunting party: "Pasmóse el duque, suspendióse la duquesa, admiróse don Quijote, tembló Sancho Panza, y, finalmente, aun hasta los mismos sabidores de la causa se espantaron" (II, 34; 309). Despite the superficial similarities between this adventure and those in Part One, here the descriptions of the unexpected sights and sounds in the darkness and of the characters' frightened reactions do not cause the reader any *suspensión* or suspicion of the supernatural, precisely because the text presents those events to them as the product of mere human invention directed at the hapless, unknowing *caballero* and *escudero*. Such statements to the reader, in this instance and others which follow it, conspicuously diminish narrative deferral in these contrived, literally artificial adventures and render it appropriately hollow and superfluous: although Cervantes does later briefly explain, for example, that it was the *duque's mayordomo* who "hizo la figura de Merlín y acomodó todo el aparato de la aventura pasada, compuso los versos y hizo que un paje hiciese a Dulcinea" (II, 36; 320), the reader already knows that Don Quijote and Sancho are being gulled and by whom. There is little uncertainty to dispel, only gratuitous details to add. This dynamic holds true in the presentation of subsequent events within the *duques'* desmesne,

even the episode in which their castle most resembles one of its countless Gothic successors: the nocturnal attack on Doña Rodríguez and Don Quijote in his chamber by unseen, unnamed, and uncanny assailants. The narrator calls them “callados verdugos” and “fantasmas” yet also undermines the supernatural aspect by specifying that one of them, described as “otra persona” as well as a paranormal being, pummels Doña Rodríguez not with some spectral instrument of torture, but with a slipper (II, 48; 403). Cide Hamete identifies the intruders as the *duquesa* and Altisidora two chapters later and explains how their attack came about (II, 50, 415-16), but in the interim there is small chance of a reader failing to immediately suspect something of the truth, especially given the *dueña*’s revelation of the *duquesa*’s intimate secrets to Don Quijote only moments before the door bursts open.

The second group of *engaños* in Part Two employs narrative deferral more substantially and consists of deceptions previously devised by individuals whom Don Quijote then encounters by chance: the linked episodes of the *mono adivino* and the *cabeza encantada*, in which the knight confronts what he takes to be instances of magical or demonic knowledge. While the *duques* are inspired by Don Quijote’s presence to devise their scenarios, “Maese Pedro” had already been using his monkey to separate the gullible from their coins before he and Don Quijote cross paths at the inn and Don Antonio Moreno only includes Don Quijote and Sancho in the audience for his magical artifact’s debut because they happen to ride into Barcelona shortly before its intended unveiling. Parodi notes that Don Quijote takes both these opportunities to try to verify another marvelous event which may or may not have happened (117): his visit to Montesinos’s cave, the elements of which – a descent into an underworld peopled by the living dead, including a man whose heart was cut from his chest but still speaks – would certainly qualify from a different narrative perspective as supernatural, not to mention terror-inducing (Aldana Reyes, *Spanish Gothic* 8). In the first episode it is the *ventero* who (likewise deceived) explains to Don Quijote and Sancho how Maese Pedro astonishes the public with “un

mono con la más rara habilidad que se vio entre monos”: the ability to answer questions “de modo que nos hace creer que tiene el diablo en el cuerpo” (II, 25; 234). When Maese Pedro arrives and the monkey appears to speak into his ear, the puppeteer immediately kneels to Don Quijote and hails him by name, to the surprise, confusion, and fear of those who witness this uncanny, possibly diabolical feat of recognition by a total stranger. The text does not reveal that “Maese Pedro” is in fact the new identity assumed by the criminal Ginés de Pasamonte, previously encountered in Part One, until after the subsequent debacle of his puppets’ performance, and then that information is confided only to the reader (II, 27; 249-51). This latter detail demonstrates a significant shift from Part One in the novel’s handling of such revelations, one also present in the events staged by the *duques*: the narrator ends the readers’ interval of uncertainty by revealing the mysterious event to be uncanny rather than marvelous, but like the innkeeper and his other guests, Don Quijote and Sancho are left in ignorance with regard to the truth of the monkey’s alleged powers.

The same holds true, nearly forty chapters later, in Don Quijote and Sancho’s encounter with Don Antonio Moreno’s *cabeza encantada*. After the knight arrives in Barcelona and becomes the nobleman’s houseguest, Don Antonio shows him the bronze bust on its jasper table and reveals in strictest confidence its occult “propiedad y virtud de responder a cuantas cosa al oído le preguntaren” (II, 62; 511). He subsequently demonstrates its putative powers, not only to the *hidalgo* and squire but also to a small group of his own equally mystified friends, leaving them to marvel at its answers to the questions posed to it. Though the text refers enigmatically to “el busilis del encanto” of the bronze head (II, 62; 514) and to the two select confidants “que el caso sabían” (II, 62; 516), these vague phrases provide the reader with no actual explanation of its secret prior to or during Don Antonio’s demonstration; they do not even eliminate the supernatural as a possibility. As in the case of Maese Pedro’s monkey, however, the narrator indulges Cide Hamete’s insistence that readers be informed after the fact

that Don Antonio's concealed nephew supplied the head's words and knowledge, “por no tener suspenso al mundo, creyendo que algún hechicero o extraordinario misterio en la tal cabeza se encerraba” – but “en la opinion de don Quijote y de Sancho, la cabeza quedó por encantada” (II, 62; 516-17). The knight and squire remain convinced of the head's magical abilities even as the readers learn that it is only a trick devised by the nobleman – who would appear to fancy himself a connoisseur and practitioner of Baroque *suspensión* – “para entretenerse y suspender a los ignorantes” (II, 62; 517).

The third and final group of *engaños*, perhaps the most intriguing of all, consists of Sansón Carrasco's two masquerades as Don Quijote's opponents, which unexpectedly shift the resolution of the fantastic toward the metafictional rather than the uncanny. The first of these adventures, almost inevitably, begins at night in the countryside. Sancho, of course, sleeps soundly, while his master dozes until “le despertó un ruido que sintió a sus espaldas,” at which he rises “con sobresalto” (II, 12; 124). As in the episodes of the *encamisados* and *batanes*, we have the elements of darkness and an unexpected, fear-inducing noise, but Don Quijote soon sees two mounted riders approaching and concludes from the familiar sounds of armor and weapons that one must be a *caballero andante*, who confirms his status and vocation when he begins to sing, sigh, and lament of his unrequited love for the “serenísima Casildea de Vandalia” (II, 12; 125). The knight's surprise and fear this time are brief, but his recovery is due only to his chivalric delusions, according to which the presence of another knight errant is not at all remarkable. His moment of uncertainty ends. Cervantes leaves the readers, however, in a state of confusion, since this arrival seems to contradict the fundamental opposition on which the novel so far has depended between the mundane world in which Don Quijote (and, implicitly, the reader) lives and the purely imaginary world of his marvelous literary fantasies. Though some first-time readers may suspect an impersonation, very likely only the most attentive will recall at this moment how, in response to Don Quijote's intended departure ten

chapters earlier, Sansón Carrasco reassured the distraught *ama* and “fue luego a buscar al cura, a comunicar con él lo que se dirá a su tiempo” (II, 2; 86). Others will be left in a new variation on Todorov’s interval of hesitation, concerned not with the possibility of the marvelous or the supernatural but unable as yet to make sense of the lovelorn *Caballero del Bosque*, an unexpected apparition from the chivalric literary world which the reality of the novel has repeatedly excluded and ridiculed. Only once Don Quijote defeats this liminal figure after sunrise and lifts his visor is the truth revealed in a deliberately hyperbolic description: “¿Quién podrá decir lo que vio, sin causar admiración, maravilla y espanto a los que lo oyeren? Vio, dice la historia, el rostro mesmo, la misma figura, el mesmo aspecto, la misma fisonomía, la mesma efigie, la perspectiva mesma del bachiller Sansón Carrasco” (II, 14; 143). This discovery frightens Sancho into crossing and blessing himself, at least until he also realizes the identity of his fellow squire, but along with the lengthier explanations of Sansón’s scheme which follow, it resolves the reader’s confusion and reaffirms the laws which govern the novel’s depiction of Don Quijote’s La Mancha as a place in which there are no true knights errant, only those who adopt that literary persona out of mimesis, either direct or indirect. To borrow and adapt Todorov’s taxonomy, in this adventure Cervantes deploys the fantastic interval of hesitation to present what we might term the quixotic or metafictional uncanny: the text raises but quickly discards the possibility of a marvelous event in favor of a longer narrative interval which, until its resolution, destabilizes for the reader the distinction between “reality” and “literature” as those categories are presented within the novel.

In his presentation of the *bachiller*’s second impersonation of a *caballero andante* some fifty chapters later on the beach at Barcelona, Cervantes dispenses entirely with the trappings of early modern horror fiction: the *Caballero de la Blanca Luna* confronts Don Quijote in the plain light of morning and no inexplicable noises herald his coming. It is also more likely that a reader, having been previously deceived, might immediately suspect this unknown opponent’s true identity. Nevertheless,

while Don Quijote in his madness accepts that a random knight, even one of whom he has never heard, might challenge him to defend Dulcinea's beauty, Cervantes reminds readers that they do not know precisely what is occurring by taking pains to describe the confusion the knight's arrival causes the *visorrey* and Don Antonio Moreno, who have of course been – like the reader – parties to the mockery already visited upon the unwitting Don Quijote in Barcelona:

Llegóse el visorrey a don Antonio y preguntóle paso si sabía quién era el tal Caballero de la Blanca Luna o si era alguna burla que querían hacer a don Quijote. Don Antonio le respondió que ni sabía quién era, ni si era de burlas ni de veras el tal desafío. Esta respuesta tuvo perplejo al visorrey en si les dejaría o no pasar adelante en la batalla. (II, 64; 534)

The city's nobles cannot identify this challenge as one of the deceptions intended for their amusement, leaving them in a confusion analogous to that of Cervantes's readers in earlier episodes: if the unknown knight is not a co-conspirator in their game, the aristocrats wonder, then who might he be? The *visorrey*, we should note, only lets the combat proceed “no pudiéndose persuadir a que fuese sino burla” (II, 64; 534), and after the outcome leaves him no wiser, he insists that Don Antonio learn the victor's identity, which is revealed, or at least confirmed, to readers by Sansón's confession to Don Antonio in the following chapter. The uncanny aspect of this adventure no longer lies in any suggestion of the supernatural as one possible explanation, but instead in the noble spectators' and the readers' inability to determine whether or why the intruder behind the visor might have deliberately assumed a (meta)literary chivalric identity. The victorious challenger's true identity must be definitively established and, far more important, his purpose must be explained to the readers in order to completely close their interval of uncertainty.

In conclusion, the contiguous adventures of the *encamisados* and the *batanes* in Part One of the *Quijote* perform two interwoven (inter)textual functions: they add early modern Spanish supernatural or horror texts to the list of literary paradigms appropriated by Cervantes, and in so doing they introduce another manipulation of narrative deferral, a specific form of Baroque *suspensión*, into the novel. Rather than laughing at Don Quijote's willful contradiction of the mundane reality of a rural inn or its resident prostitutes, at these moments we are left in the dark – quite literally – along with him when he and Sancho confront frightening, initially inexplicable phenomena. Cervantes then develops new forms of this technique in Part Two, not only in certain episodes devised by those who seek to mock the knight for their own amusement, but also in Don Quijote's two encounters with the disguised Sansón Carrasco, who has very different intentions. Intriguingly, these final examples of narrative enigmas and deferrals demonstrate how Cervantes chooses his intertextual version of the uncanny as the means by which he brings about Don Quijote's downfall and Alonso Quijano's death. Whatever fear, trembling, ridicule, or humiliation might result from the errors and impostures of those episodes in which Cervantes plays with the possibility of the supernatural, they neither deter the aspirant knight errant nor rob the *hidalgo* of the will to live. It is instead the liminal figure of the *Caballero de la Blanca Luna*, a phantom from the purely literary world which Don Quijote seeks to impose on La Mancha, who puts an end to the invented knight-errant's career and sends his creator Alonso Quijano to his deathbed. The possibility of ghosts or demons or damned souls may frighten, but in Cervantes's novel, the metafictional uncanny kills.

“ . . . And things that go bump in the night”:
Narrative Deferral, the Supernatural, and the Metafictive Uncanny
in *Don Quijote*

¹ Hessel notes a monstrous aspect to Don Quijote himself in such episodes, comparing him to “a horrific entity that occupies the unoccupied areas and preys upon those who are unlucky enough to find themselves so far from the comforts of civilized existence” (31). See also Miñana’s considerations of monstrosity in the novel (*Monstruos* 137-203).

² On the development of horror fiction, see Aldana Reyes 2016 and Joshi. Aldana Reyes also briefly considers medieval and early modern Spanish antecedents to the Gothic in the introduction to his *Spanish Gothic* (6-11). Joan Estruch does likewise and includes Cervantes in his anthology of seventeenth-century Spanish “literatura fantástica y de terror,” but he chooses an overtly fantastic excerpt from the *Persiles*. See also García Sánchez on Spanish contributions to the literary fantastic.

³ See also Cascardi.

⁴ As noted in the introduction, Cervantes incorporates fantastic events with no definitive mundane resolution in the *Persiles* and the *Coloquio de los perros*. See Childers on his conceptualization of the “ambivalent marvelous” in these texts (55-69). Falkenberg’s notion of the “poetical uncanny” is likewise applicable (29-37).

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“ . . . And things that go bump in the night”:
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