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Special Issue: Reinventing Don Quixote in Cultural Production

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Images of the Third Degree: Dulcinea and the Classics

Frederick A. de Armas
University of Chicago

As Don Quixote and Sancho slowly canter down the rustic plains of La Mancha, far from the bustling cities or even the castles and palaces of Spain, the reader marvels at their wide-ranging and pleasant conversation. Indeed, it has been argued that: “The loving, frequently irascible relationship between Quixote and Sancho is the greatness of the book, more even than the gusto of its representations of natural and social realities. What unites the Don and his squire is [. . .] their equally mutual if rather grumpy affection for each other” (Bloom 130). Their friendship is at its most pugnacious when Don Quixote decides to paint over reality, imagining what is not there, so as to create the appropriate setting for a chivalric adventure. As Ian Watt has noted, most episodes are based on a threefold structure: “a visual stimulus, a misinterpretation of the stimulus by Quixote in terms of his chivalric compulsions; a realistic correction by Sancho Panza...” (64). I will add that corrections may also come from other characters, “frenemies” of the knight or simple passers-by, such as Vivaldo, the Duke and Duchess, and Sansón Carrasco.

In Chapter 8, for example, the knight responds to a visual stimulus: “Look yonder, friend Sancho Panza, where you may discover more than thirty monstrous giants, with whom I intend to fight” (I, 8, 59).¹ As Don Quixote paints over the landscape with images from the romances of chivalry, his squire wishes to bring him back to quotidian reality. A careful reading of these passages suggests that the obstinate knight at times responds with an obscure, incongruous or unexpected allusion to a classical past. This is particularly curious since his most common responses have to

¹ I cite the English translation in the main text and include the Spanish in the notes. I include first the part, then the chapter and then the page number for both the English and the Spanish. And, although I cite from the Luis Andrés Murillo Spanish edition (1978), I have also consulted the edition by Francisco Rico (1999). “Porque ves allí, amigo Sancho Panza, donde se descubren treinta, o poco más desaforados gigantes, con quien pienso hacer batalla” (1978: I, 8, 129).

do with the chivalric rather than with the antique world which would seem far removed from his readings and imaginings.

As the wind moves the arms of the windmills' sails, Don Quixote exclaims, "Well, though you should move more arms than the giant Briareus, you shall pay for it" (I, 8, 59).² If Don Quixote wanted to evoke a fearful creature from myth, he could not have chosen better. Briareus was one of three most ancient of giants, born of Gaea and Uranus and of the guardians of the netherworld. It could be argued that in this and other cases the "author" is following the "friend's" advice in the Prologue. In other words, to substitute a generic term with a specific example (classical, biblical, or belonging to the fathers of the church) so as appear to have a more learned text: Goliath instead of giants; Cacus instead of thief.³ And this does happen throughout the novel, where the Innkeeper is called "as arrant a thief as Cacus" (I, 2, 29)⁴ and where in a biblical reference the knight turns to "that huge Philistine Goliath, who was seven cubits and a half high, which is a prodigious stature" (II, 1, 477).⁵

I would argue, instead, that the allusion to Briareus is by no means a facile interjection, but a carefully crafted one. It is a very precise, somewhat obscure and very fitting allusion. It also fits with the "epic" nature of the knight's quest.⁶ As Aeneas reaches the threshold to the netherworld, led by

² "Pues aunque mováis más brazos que los del gigante Briareo, me lo habéis de pagar" (1978: I, 8, 130).

³ This is of course one more "play" in the text since the Prologue was most certainly written after the 1605 novel and thus specific allusions were already included. The allusions in the 1615 text could have been inserted going back to the Prologue of Part One. For the six women cited in the Prologue and their presence in the novel see Carolyn Nadeau (2002).

⁴ "no menos ladrón que Caco" (1978: I, 2, 84).

⁵ "aquel filastezo de Golías, que tenía siete codos y medio de altura, que es una desmesurada grandeza" (1978: II, 1, 50).

⁶ One of the main arguments first used to canonize Cervantes' novel was that it was a work akin to the ancient epics of Homer and Virgil. In turning to Virgil here, the novel points to epic while the knight seems particularly well informed as to this genre. This critical perspective, although not a central one, has continued to this day. See, for example, Marasso (1954), McGaha (1980), Barnés Vázquez (2009), and De Armas (2010).

the Sybil, he encounters an immense and foreboding tree that drips with nightmarish visions.⁷ Among the monstrous creatures that seem to materialize in this space, is Briareus, one of the dreaded *Hecatoncheires* or *Centimanes* (hundred-handed). Although evoking Virgil, Don Quixote does not consider what he sees as phantom visions that cling to the leaves of the tree. He believes that he is confronted by an epic enemy in the plains of La Mancha. While the Virgilian hero is prevented from attacking these vain images of terror by the Sybil, the knight is warned by his squire. Aeneas holds back; Don Quixote moves forward. Sancho may be correcting his master, but he does not have the authority of the Sybil. Thus, Don Quixote's "classical" images are unleashed just after Sancho gives him the third degree—in other words, when Sancho pushes him too hard. Although anachronistic, I believe that the expression "third degree" is quite fitting for this moment. It emerged at the beginnings of the twentieth century as a euphemism for torture.⁸ Many early films portray a character given the third degree by the police. The device has been traced back to Edgar Allen Poe's story "Thou art the Man."⁹ And there is even a film by this name from 1926.¹⁰

⁷ "In the midst an elm, shadowy and vast, spreads her boughs and aged arms, the home which, men say, false Dreams hold in throngs, clinging under every leaf" (6.282-84).

⁸ The Wickersham Commission (1931) found that use of torture or the third degree was widespread in the United States. The term "third degree" is said to have been coined by Thomas Byrnes, a "notorious cop" at the beginning of the twentieth century (Alder 19-20).

⁹ It first appeared in *Godey's Magazine and Ladies' Book*. Philadelphia: November, 1844.

¹⁰ This is a poster in Spanish for the movie *The Third Degree*, directed by Michael Curtiz, 1926.



The Third Degree.

Directed by Michael Curtiz, performances by Dolores Costello Louise Dresser, Rockliffe Fellowes and Jason Robards Sr., Warner Brothers, 1926.

Although not partaking of the mystery story or the noir films, I would argue that when others seek to shake the knight out of his beliefs, to give him the third degree, he knows how to answer his questioners. An almost disembodied classical image emerges to shield him. If in a typical ekphrasis, let's say the Homeric shield of Achilles, words seek to overwhelm an object that is so difficult to make textually present;¹¹ in *Don Quixote*, a kind of floating image from antiquity, perhaps an allusive ekphrasis, seeks to shield the knight from those that accost him and render them wordless.

In this essay, then, I will search for glimmers of a shielding classical image in moments when the knight is pressed to describe his ladylove,

¹¹ According to Murray Krieger, the student of rhetoric pursues "a language that can, in spite of its limits, recover the immediacy of a sightless vision [. . .] an original pre-fallen language of corporeal presence" (10); but reaches exasperation since "words cannot have capacity, cannot be capacious, because they have, literally, no space" (10).

turning to seven specific examples. Although in many cases he will succeed in stopping verbal aggression, he ends up forging images of Dulcinea that far from classical beauty may come to evoke the monstrous.

I. The Makings of Myth (I, 13)

Riding to Grisóstomo's funeral Don Quixote is quizzed on chivalry by Vivaldo: Must a knight have a lady? Isn't it blasphemous for a knight to call on his lady rather than on God right before a battle? As the debate heats up with examples and counterexamples, Vivaldo asks "to tell us the name, country, quality and beauty of your mistress" (I, 13, 92).¹² Given the third degree, Don Quixote is able to both answer and evade. Although admitting that Dulcinea's lineage is a modern one, he includes a catalogue of important families beginning with Roman ones, and continuing with those of different regions of Iberia. He begins with a negative that nonetheless impacts Dulcinea by association: "She is not of the ancient Roman Curtii, Caii and Scipios" (I, 13, 93).¹³ The very first of the *gens* invoked by the knight, the Curtius, was never considered a particularly important family, being of minor nobility. At the same time, the family acquired renown for a moment of valor related to a body of water that came to be called the *Lacus Curtius*. According to an early legend, when hostilities started between the Romans and the Sabines over the former's rape of many of their women, Mettius Curtius, the leader of the Sabines, became stuck in a marsh which was from then on called the *Lacus Curtius*. Cervantes actually refers to a second and later feat ascribed to Marcus Curtius: "What impelled Curtius to throw himself into the flaming gulf that opened itself in the midst of Rome?" (II, 8, 517).¹⁴ According to the sixth book of Livy's *Roman History*, when a chasm opened next to the Forum, the seers were asked what to do. The answer was to throw the Romans' most precious possession into the chasm. Marcus Curtius understood that this meant Roman valor, and thus, dressed in armor and riding his horse, he leapt into the chasm. It miraculously closed. What is crucial in these stories

¹² "el nombre, patria, calidad y hermosura de su dama" (1978: I, 13, 176).

¹³ "No es de los antiguos Curcios Gayos y Cipiones romanos" (1978: I, 13, 176).

¹⁴ "¿Quién impelió a Curcio a lanzarse en la profunda sima ardiente que apareció en la mitad de Roma?" (1978: II, 8, 96).

is not history, but legend. Curtius' valor became part of Rome's mythology. While his family was unimportant this mythical deed granted him an authority that was above history. If Curtius can acquire great fame through events that border on the fictional, then Dulcinea can also become famous in this manner. El Toboso may be a town of little renown and at times singled out for its *morisco* inhabitants. But Don Quixote, through the allusion to gens Curtius, suggests that it will become a place of mythical import. What will happen there is unknown, but that it will happen is thus prophesied by the knight.

II. Dulcinea in Elyssium (I, 13)

Not only does Vivaldo push the knight to reveal lineage, but also to defend the lady's beauty. Again, the knight is far from intimidated, as he asserts: "Her beauty more than human since in her all the impossible and chimerical attributes of beauty, which the poets ascribe to their mistresses are realized; for her hairs are of gold, her forehead the Elysian fields, her eyebrows rainbows, her eyes suns, her cheeks roses, her lips coral, her teeth, pearls..." (I, 13, 92).¹⁵ At first it may seem as if the knight is taking the easy road. He turns to Petrarch and his followers, to Clément Marot and Garcilaso de la Vega in order to praise Dulcinea as the ideal woman. Such a description was often vertical, starting from the top (the woman's golden hair) and proceeding downwards, and using apt metaphors and similes to praise each part of the body as a precious object.¹⁶

Don Quixote is utilizing a mode that seems more and more subjected to satire, as poets realize that the excessive uses of object dehumanize the woman and transform the trope into a risible exercise.¹⁷

¹⁵ "pues en ella se vienen a hacer verdaderos todos los imposibles y quiméricos atributos de belleza que los poetas dan a las damas: que sus cabellos son de oro, su frente campos eliseos, sus cejas arcos del cielo, sus ojos soles, sus mejillas rosas, sus labios corales, perlas sus dientes..." (1978: 1, 13, 176).

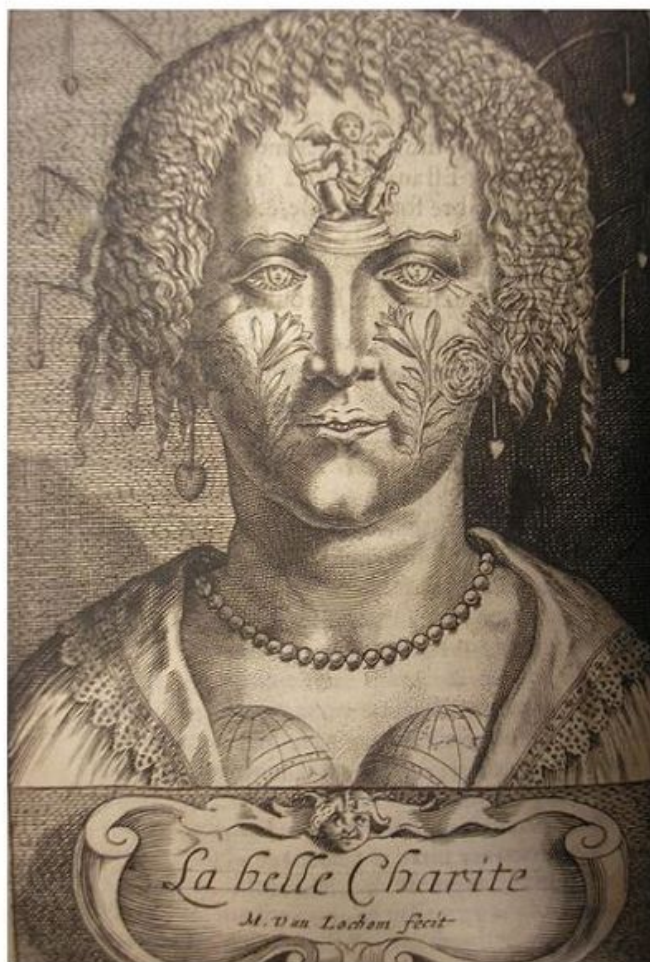
¹⁶ For Mayoral the key Renaissance texts on the matter are: "la descripción de Alcina del *Orlando furioso* y el soneto 157 de Petrarca, 'Quel sempre acerbo et honorato giorno'" (8).

¹⁷ Domínguez Matito studies stanza 20 of Garcilaso's *Eclogue* I, and Góngora's sonnet "De pura honestidad templo sagrado." Góngora would mock this style in

Shakespeare would actually deny the blazon or catalogue of women's parts writing in Sonnet 130: "My mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun." In the 1627 novel by Charles Sorel, *Le berger extravagant*, the crazed shepherd transforms his lady into a truly laughable accumulation of precious objects. The text is accompanied by an illustration of "La belle Charite," a truly grotesque representation of a woman constructed through countless objects.¹⁸

Fábula de Píramo y Tisbe (1618). Here the nose becomes "blanco almendruco" and her breasts "pechugas o pomos no maduros" (40).

¹⁸ "La belle Charite" frontispiece to *Le berger extravagant* by Charles Sorel, designed by M. Van Lochom, engraved by Crispin De Passe. "The pictorial parody of the ideal lady [. . .] shows the petrarchistic images literally depicted: roses and lilies in her cheeks, eyebrows as bows, lips as (sticks of) coral, breasts as (terrestrial) globes, etc. Even so, the attacks never seriously called in doubt the validity of the convention or its usefulness as a means of poetic expression" (Foster 57).



“La belle Charite”
frontispiece to *Le berger extravagant* by Charles Sorel,
designed by M. Van Lochem,
engraved by Crispin De Passe.

But such commonplaces hide two instances where Quixote puts up a classical defense against the third degree. The Petrarchan forehead of a woman is usually ivory white. Dulcinea’s forehead, however, resembles the

Elysian Fields. This paradise for the virtuous and the blessed where the inhabitants rested in pleasant fields devoid of architectures was described by Homer and Virgil and was a commonplace in the Renaissance. However, it was rarely (if at all) used as a metaphor for the forehead.¹⁹ This inventive moment, points not just to the classical era but to a number of Renaissance works which seek to envision the Elysian Fields. Dosso Dossi, for example, painted *Aeneas at the Entrance to the Elysian Fields* for the Duke of Ferrara around 1514.²⁰



Dosso Dossi. *Aeneas at the Entrance to the Elysian Fields*. c. 1514.

In the far left, Aeneas accompanied by the Cumaean Sybil enters this paradise. Pagan nudes recline throughout taking their leisure, conversing or even assuming amorous poses.²¹ By placing the Elysian Fields in the forehead or mind of Dulcinea, the knight may be reflecting his own mind.²² True, sensuous images may reflect his daydreaming about his beloved. More importantly, throughout the novel, he seeks to bring paradise to earth. In his first major speech the knight expresses his desire to

¹⁹ To commemorate Michelangelo's death, Alessandro Allori painted *Michelangelo in the Elysian Fields*, with classical artists on one side and modern ones on the other. Thus, he is seen as supreme and worthy of praise even in paradise (Pilliod 168).

²⁰ *Aeneas at the Entrance to the Elysian Fields*, by Dosso Dossi, c. 1514.

²¹ To commemorate Michelangelo's death, Allori painted Michelangelo in the Elysian Fields, with classical artists on one side and modern ones on the other. Thus, he is seen as supreme and worthy of praise even in paradise.

²² And in this place, Renaissance thinkers argued, were to be found all the great painters of antiquity—Apelles, of course being the supreme example. A poem by Nicholas Bourbon in praise of Holbein begins thusly: “One day Apelles wondered into the Elysian field / And Zeuxis and Parrhasius happened to be nearby” (String 116-18).

bring back the Golden Age of humankind.²³ Dulcinea thus echoes this desire. She becomes a state of mind, a yearned-for place. If the rest of the description is filled with commonplaces, this metaphor calls on the revivification of classical ideals.²⁴

It seems as if the knight has subtly triumphed over Vivaldo. First of all, he shows that a lineage forged in myth is more important than historical genealogies. Secondly, he sees in Dulcinea the fulfillment of a myth that impels his quest. Indeed, he hides a key classical image among commonplaces. But there is more. His whole speech begins by asserting that his lady actualizes all chimerical attributes of beauty. By evoking the chimera, Don Quixote is actually recalling a horrendous creature that appears along with Briareus as Aeneas and the Sybil seek to enter the underworld.²⁵ This monster has a lion's head, a tail that ends in a serpent's head, and a middle forged of a goat's body and head. Very much like the impossible attributes of a Petrarchan lady, the chimera is made of impossible parts that are put together. If one part of Dulcinea recalls the Elysian Fields, her figure as a whole may be nothing but a monster made up of disparate images that do not fit. The chimera arises out of Vivaldo's third degree, both protecting the knight and suggesting an anxious knight who is finding it impossible to create a beautiful woman out of his deranged imagination.

Arthur F. Kinney has argued that "What holds its various perspectives and elements of history and fiction together is the Don's willful act of the imagination" (272). I would add that in the case of Dulcinea, it is a mythical imagination at work. The mythical trumps the historical. The memory, even more than the imagination, is deployed

²³ The speech of the Golden Age the knight had already demonstrated his knowledge of classical minutiae when, on picking up an acorn, he begins his talk, acknowledging that it was a known foodstuff from that era.

²⁴ Lisa Rabin has shown, in many of these Petrarchan sonnets, the conquest of the lady is tied to the conquest of land and riches, thus becoming a metaphor for empire. Don Quixote must conquer and hold his ladylove since he is a knight that seeks to master a whole empire if not the whole world. Thus, he would paradoxically bring about peace and a new Golden Age.

²⁵ Avellaneda takes up the use of the chimera in chapter XIII of his 1614 continuation of Cervantes' novel.

against historical facts. Quixote hides a wealth of classical tales that serves as armor against those who would shake his forever fragile beliefs.

III. Zenxis and the Maidens (I, 25-26)

In Sierra Morena, Don Quixote decides to do penance for his lady, much as he has read in books of chivalry. He tells Sancho that as his squire, he must then go and tell his beloved of the great suffering he is enduring. Long before this is to take place, the knight makes a mistake and reveals to Sancho the names of Dulcinea's parents, from which he gathers that Don Quixote is actually speaking of a peasant from his neighborhood named Aldonza Lorenzo. Delighted at this turn of events which he can fully understand and is not at all chivalric, Sancho begins to describe Aldonza. The knight is irked by Sancho's view of her as a manly woman whose voice is louder than any man's and whose ways are not at all those of a lady or even those of a peasant woman (I, 25, 201-2).²⁶ Furious at Sancho's third degree, Quixote claims that she is as he paints her in his own mind.²⁷ He claims that she surpasses the great women of antiquity: "Helen is not comparable to her nor is she excelled by Lucretia, or any other of the famous women of antiquity" (I, 25, 203).²⁸ Although this passage and what follows has already been commented in depth (De Armas, *Quixotic Frescoes* 170-188), I think it is important to review it, albeit briefly, in terms of the classical turn.

As we continue reading, we come to view yet another opposition since the knight does not know if he is to imitate Amadis, the faithful lover of Oriana in the chivalric romance, or Orlando the passionate lover of the not so faithful Angelica from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*. It seems, then, that Don Quixote actually mentions four models for the ideal woman. This

²⁶ Carlos Mata Induráin asserts: "Así pues, Dulcinea se nos aparece aquí con su revés burlesco, Aldonza, formando un compuesto de perfección ideal y de carnal terrenalidad" (669).

²⁷ Javier Herrero asserts: "Don Quixote gives us a surprising insight into the workings of his mind, we hear him assert that he is aware that Dulcinea is in a certain way a creation of his will in order to make possible the world of adventure" (7).

²⁸ "y ni la llega Elena, ni la alcanza Lucrecia, ni otra de las famosas mujeres de las edades pretéritas" (1978: 1, 25, 314).

recalls the importance given by Cicero to the ability to imitate from a number of models. This principle is also found in classical art. From Pliny we learn that, when asked to paint the portrait of a beautiful woman for the temple of Juno in the city of Agrigento (in Sicily), the Greek painter Zeuxis chose five women as models. While Pliny does not specify the subject of the painting, Cicero in *De Inventione* asserts that Zeuxis was given his commission by the citizens from Croton. The Greek artist decides “to paint a picture of Helen so that the portrait though silent and lifeless might embody the surpassing beauty of womanhood” (Cicero II, 1, 167). Numerous paintings have sought to re-create this scene including François-André Vincent’s *Zeuxis choosing his Models for the Image of Helen from the Five Girls From Croton*.²⁹



François-André Vincent. *Zeuxis Choosing his Models for the Image of Helen from among the Girls of Croton*. 1789.

²⁹ *Zeuxis Choosing his Models for the Image of Helen from among the Girls of Croton*, by François-André Vincent (1789).

Furious at Sancho's third degree, the knight has come up with a series of images, the first being that of Helen. Instead of using five women of flesh and blood, to fashion his Dulcinea / Helen, Don Quixote takes four of them from art and literature, and adds a hidden model, Aldonza. Helen becomes that classical talisman that stops all discussion, "the face that launched a thousand ships / And burnt the topless towers of Ilium." (Marlowe 5.1.92-3). Don Quixote's allusion thus stops speculation on Aldonza by evoking the most famous of classical women. But in doing so, and hinting at five models for Dulcinea (two of which are from antiquity), he also brings up the notion of how to craft perfect beauty and how such an image may become monstrous.

Some versions of the Helen story even claim that she never went to Troy at all; that she was left in Egypt while the world became embroiled in war.³⁰ As an eidolon for war, Helen may well be an image of Dulcinea, her many parts reflecting the gruesome nature of warfare. As Renaissance artists began to study corpses and its parts, Zeuxis' image became even more apt.³¹ Harry Berger contends that Zeuxis' idea of imitation is based on the "principle of selective amputation" (238). Not only do we have a beauty made of others, but we intuit that the parts do not fit, that the knight has fashioned a disruptive figure, not far from Frankenstein's monster. Dulcinea may recall the most beautiful of women (Helen) and to a lesser extent, the most chaste of maidens (Lucretia), but in reality, she is a pagan eidolon and an icon of war.

³⁰ Matthew Gumpert explains: "The eidolon is the phantasm fashioned by the gods to provoke the Trojan War—a copy, that is, of the real Helen who, depending on the text and the particular version of the story may have spent the war in Egypt, or who may never have left Sparta at all" (12). More complete versions of the story can be located in Herodotus and in Euripides.

³¹ During the Renaissance Antonio Pollaiuolo may have been the first major artist to use dissection. We can almost see this in his *Battle of Naked Men* where it almost seems as if their skin has been peeled off. Leonardo and Michelangelo also used dissection. Harry Berger asserts: "Zeuxis metaphorically treats living women the same way the anatomist treats dead men (cadavers were normally—not always male)" (222).

IV. The Lost Eurydice (II, 8)

Let us recall that the knight had sent Sancho in an embassy to deliver a letter to her describing both his penance and his love. After having heard of Aldonza, Sancho realizes that he cannot find Dulcinea, since she does not exist. On his return, he evokes a lady who is closer to a peasant woman. Arthur F. Kinney explains: “When Sancho *lies* about Dulcinea on returning to the Don in Sierra Morena, he describes her in truthful terms—right down to her foul smell—and the Don in response *lies* about her perfection while asking Sancho to tell him the whole *truth*” (272). Truth and lies are so intermingled that the figure of Dulcinea becomes more and more disparate and monstrous. This conversation is taken up again in chapter 8 of Part Two as the pair journey to El Toboso, where the knight expects to find his lady’s palace. Don Quixote imagines the galleries and loggias of aristocratic architectures, with its gardens and iron grates. There, Dulcinea must be weaving tapestries. Sancho does not agree, and argues that she sieves or winnows wheat, and that she is covered in dust (II, 8, 515). Being pushed beyond his abilities to comprehend this kind of Dulcinea, the knight tells Sancho to remember some verses by Garcilaso: “our poet’s verses in which he describes the labours of those four nymphs, in their crystal mansions, when they raised their heads above the delightful Tagus, and seated themselves in the green meadow, to work those rich stuffs” (II, 8, 515).³² If Sancho did not see her thus, then enchanters must have transformed his vision.

Since Sancho has so pressed Don Quixote, it might be worth investigating the classical turn, what specific classical image or images serve as talismans to stop the squire. Don Quixote’s description of Garcilaso’s *Third Eclogue* is quite accurate. After one of the nymphs has discovered a pleasant spot on shore where the shade of trees can protect them from the sun, all four emerge from the river to enjoy the site. They carry with them their threads and tapestries, as each is weaving a different scene. All four are of tragic love affairs. Thus, these expansive lyrical verses, turn to death

³² “de nuestro poeta donde nos pinta las labores que hacían allá en sus moradas de cristal aquellas cuatro ninfas que del Tajo amado sacaron las cabezas y se sentaron a labrar en el prado verde aquellas ricas telas” (1978: II, 8, 94).

at every turn. And it is this classical turn that is used by the knight to both stop Sancho and subtly express his concern for the future of his love.³³ Perhaps the most poignant of the four tales is that of Orpheus, whose beloved, bitten by a snake, dies not long after they exchange vows of love. Even though Orpheus braves the underworld, he is not able to bring her to the light of day. Discussing the death of Eurydice in Garcilaso's poem, Mary Barnard calls it: "a drawing out of time to make the instant of dying a profound realm of its own, a passage of the beloved from life to colorless exile from the living; the gradual disappearance of the loved one from the lover's grasp" (319). In many ways, Don Quixote is beginning to experience the gradual disappearance of Dulcinea. He desperately needs to hear from her, sending Sancho to her. But the squire brings him only bad news, a Dulcinea that is not "true." The bright and brilliant colors which painted her in a Petrarchan manner are no longer with us. Now, the knight may be experiencing a strong foreboding that his search for his beloved will also end in disaster: that he will not be able to bring her out of El Toboso or disinter her from the depths of his tormented imagination.³⁴

³³ Filódoce weaves the myth of Eurydice; Dinámene draws the story of Apollo y Daphne; Climene envisions the tragic tale of Venus and Adonis; while Nise prefers to draw the present, the death of Elisa.

³⁴ Christian Gottlieb Kratzenstein's *Orpheus and Eurydice*, 1806, in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen.



Christian Gottlieb Kratzenstein,
Orpheus and Eurydice, 1806,
in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen.

V. Dulcinea Enchanted (II, 10)

Since there is no Dulcinea in Toboso, and the knight has ordered Sancho to bring her to him, the squire has to create an elaborate ruse. After all, he, like Don Quixote, has been subjected to the third degree. Is his invention, one based on the classics a way to mimic his master? Is he sufficiently clever to figure out Quixote's classical turn? Sancho points to three peasant women riding their donkeys as being Dulcinea and her two attendants. This episode is a masterful moment in which Cervantes creates a dramatic ekphrasis of Botticelli's *Primavera*. The three peasant women

replicate in a grotesque manner the three Graces dancing in the midst of the painting. The attention to detail in Cervantes' dramatic ekphrasis is quite striking. Sancho in his rustically exalted description of the peasants claims: "She and her damsels are one blaze of flaming gold; all strings of pearls and diamonds, all rubies, all cloth of tissue" (II, 10, 527).³⁵ The Spanish text emphasizes the brocade or rich design woven into the cloth of the imagined ladies, and as such it appears in the three Graces of Botticelli's painting. As for the pearls, diamonds and rubies, they appear in the jewels worn by the two Graces that face the spectator.

It is not my purpose here to describe the full ekphrasis and point to all the elements at play.³⁶ "Flowers and perfumes" point to Flora, goddess of flowers and springtime (II, 10, 510);³⁷ Zephyr, the west wind in the canvas becomes the wind that carries the three peasant ladies (II, 10, 530);³⁸ while portly Sancho is none other than the slender Mercury in the painting. As messenger of the gods, he is transformed into the squire. Indeed, at least three times in this chapter Sancho is described as messenger.

Mercury is known for his eloquence, and here he imparts some of that quality upon Sancho. But in spite of the squire's unusually poetic description and in spite of his ability to transform the quotidian into the extraordinary, Don Quixote does not react to the visual stimulus. Eric Auerbach considers this is a key episode, arguing that: "Don Quixote's ability to transform events to harmonize with his illusion breaks down before the crude vulgarity of the sight of the peasant women" (339). Whatever the reason, the knight cannot see. He has been pushed too far and he cannot shield himself from the third degree. He laments: "now some wicked enchanter persecutes me, spreading clouds or cataracts before my eyes" (II, 10, 529).³⁹ As his adventures continue, his ladylove will seem

³⁵ "Sus doncellas y ella toda son una ascua de oro, todo mazorcas de perlas, todas son diamantes, todas rubíes, todas telas de brocado" (1978: II, 10, 108).

³⁶ For a brief summary see De Armas ("Cervantes and Italian Renaissance Art" 52).

³⁷ "entre ámbares y flores" (1978: II, 10, 112).

³⁸ "they all fly like the wind" (II, 10, 530); "todas corren como el viento" (1978: II, 10, 111).

³⁹ "el maligno encantador me persigue, y ha puesto nubes y cataratas en mis ojos" (1978: II, 10, 110).

harder to attain or even visualize. The knight becomes more and more melancholic as he abandons hope that he will ever see his Dulcinea again.

VI. Dulcinea in the Underworld

Don Quixote does, however, see Dulcinea one final time. In chapter 22 of the second part, he experiences a dreadful adventure, the descent into the Cave of Montesinos. It all begins ominously. Tearing down brambles that impeded entrance to the cave, he witnessed “an infinite number of huge ravens” that flew away “and had he been as superstitious as he was Catholic, he would have taken it for an ill omen” (II, 22, 612).⁴⁰ The cave, as described by Cervantes, is accessed by a hole or chasm in the earth, and it is difficult to enter. Once inside, a visionary darkness envelops the adventurer. It is not surprising then that the title of chapter 23 warns “the greatness and impossibility of which make this adventure pass for apocryphal” (II, 23, 614).⁴¹ Inside, there are many figures that were once enchanted, waiting to be released. We need not discuss the many strange and grotesque happenings there. Only one group is important. Montesinos, the knight claims: “showed me three country wenches, who were dancing and capering like any kids about those charming fields” (II, 23, 620).⁴² The key words in Spanish are “saltando y brincando como cabras” (1978: II, 23, 221). Sancho had shown the knight three peasant women and named them as Dulcinea and her retinue. Now, the knight finds them in the cave, jumping like goats. The number three and the image of goats recall the chimera, a tripartite monster whose middle section is a goat. Don Quixote has returned with gusto to the classics, if only to take revenge on Sancho. Yes, the enchanted Dulcinea exists. He also seems to intuit that it is difficult to portray perfection from the depth of his deranged imagination. Indeed, as the prologue to Part One indicates, the book is but a whimsical

⁴⁰ “una infinidad de grandísimos cuervos y grajos [...] y si fuera él tan agorero como católico cristiano, lo tuviera a mala señal” (1978: II, 22, 209).

⁴¹ “cuya imposibilidad y grandeza hace que se tenga esta aventura por apócrifa” (1978: II, 23, 211).

⁴² “tres labradoras que por aquellos amenísimos campos iban saltando y brincando como cabras” (1978: II, 23, 220).

child of the author; and thus the author's characters can themselves only produce whimsical or even monstrous offspring.

VII. Veils and Sorrows (II, 32, 35)

When arriving at the Duke and Duchess's palace, Don Quixote begins to feel that he is finally being treated as a real knight—that there is hope. But little does he know that he is there for the aristocrats' amusement. Here he must answer the duchess's request for a verbal portrait of Dulcinea who is reputed to be “the fairest creature in the world and even in all La Mancha” (II, 32, 679)⁴³ The knight answers that such an endeavor must be left to the painters of old such as Apelles, Parrhasius and Timanthes; to the sculpting skills of Lysippus or to the rhetoric of Cicero and Demosthenes. The proliferation of classical artists and rhetoricians seems to no avail (or so it appears). As the conversation weaves back and forth between reality and the imagination, Quixote is more and more frustrated, no longer sure if there is a real Dulcinea. Seeking surer ground, he returns to the discussion he had with Sancho where he evoked Garcilaso's *Third Eclogue*. Curiously, the poem calls on two of the painters from antiquity that the knight had already mentioned: Apelles and Timanthes. The first is forever present in works of the period as the locus classicus. But why repeat the name of Timanthes? His most famous painting was the *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*. Here, he drew Agamemnon's daughter being taken to be sacrificed to the gods, and surrounded by those who mourned her fate, each expressing their sorrow. But such was the pain felt by her father, that the painter could not depict it. Thus, he covered Agamemnon's face with a veil.⁴⁴

⁴³ “la más bella criatura del orbe y aun de toda la Mancha” (1978: II, 32, 288). Notice how the duchess makes fun at the knight by equating the whole world with La Mancha, a little-known part of Spain.

⁴⁴ The fresco *The Sacrifice of Iphigenia* is perhaps based on 4th B.C. painting by Timanthes.



The Sacrifice of Ephigenia. C1st A.D.,
perhaps based on C4th B.C. painting by Timanthes.

As the knight recollects Dulcinea's enchantment, he repeatedly states that it is impossible to contemplate her visage. It is as if the enchanters have darkened the scene, or the dust from sieving wheat had obscured her countenance, or worse still, the knight's eyes had been clouded.⁴⁵ All three images suggest a kind of veil that covers Dulcinea. It is a veil akin to that conceived by Timanthes, one that makes the lady's great

⁴⁵ "el maligno encantador me persigue y ha puesto nubes y cataratas en mis ojos" (1978: II, 10, 110).

beauty invisible or phantasmal, and like the veil in the painting, it is associated with the greatest of sorrows. Timanthes' veil becomes the most apt response to the third degree and the sorrows of the knight. All can now be hidden.

Three chapters later, a series of chariots materialize in the night and surprise knight and squire. The penultimate carries Merlin, his head covered by a black veil, who asserts and prophesies that Dulcinea can be disenchanted, but only if Sancho Panza can sustain three thousand three hundred lashes by his own hand. As if continuing the motif of the veil, the last figure is a nymph "clad in a thousand veils of silver tissue, bespangled with numberless leaves of gold tinsel" (II, 35, 699).⁴⁶ These last words in the original read as "argentería de oro"—and we will return to them. As she removes her veil, she claims to be Dulcinea, hoping to be disenchanted. But this task is no longer assigned to Don Quixote, who loses protagonism. Sancho, not at all adept at discipline and suffering must do so. Thus, the knight is twice disappointed: he knows his squire will be incapable of such service, thus preserving Dulcinea's enchantment. And he no longer is the one to undo wrongs, thus being forced to become a passive figure.⁴⁷

We are left with a strangely new view of Dulcinea. First, her dress includes "hojas de argentería" and soon thereafter she is called the "argentada ninfa" (1978: II, 35, 315). The term nymph is preserved from Garcilaso's eclogue, but the adjective used does not belong to his poetry. It is true that he uses it once in his *Second Eclogue*.⁴⁸ However, it becomes a key term for the poetry of Góngora and his followers. In fact, it is used at the inception of his most famous poem, *Polifemo y Galatea*: "Donde espumoso el mar siciliano / el pie argenta de plata al Lilibeo" (vv. 25-26, 134). Here, a

⁴⁶ "vestida de mil velos de tela de plata, brillando por todos ellos infinitas hojas de argentería de oro" (1978: II, 35, 312).

⁴⁷ Agustín Redondo states: "Merlín desempeña un papel importante, desde este punto de vista. Es el que inspira indirectamente las predicciones de la primera parte y el que profetiza directamente en la segunda. Pero al desviar burlescamente la elección heroica en la persona de Sancho, va a provocar el derrumbamiento de las esperanzas del caballero quien no ha de conseguir ver a su dama desencantada. La trayectoria de don Quijote se invierte, pasando de la exaltación a la desilusión y al fracaso" (Redondo, *En busca del Quijote* 85).

⁴⁸ "El remo que descende en fuerza suma / mueve la blanca espuma como argento" (Garcilaso de la Vega 127, vv. 1498-99).

promontory named Lilibeo, on the eastern end of Sicily, is surrounded by the sea. Its blue color is transformed into silver / *argentum* as it strikes the foot of the hill. *Argentum*, as a neologism taken from the Latin, refers to silver. Góngora will use the verb repeatedly, while his follower, Villamediana is even more keen to utilize it. It was such a common mark for the new poetry's Latinized and precious style that, in his recipe on how to write Góngora's *Soledades* in one day, Quevedo tells his readers to use terms such as "palestra, liba, meta, argento, alterna, / si bien, disuelve, émulo, canoro" (1185). As Dulcinea moves to the court, then, she is taken over by the Duke and the Duchess and made to appear as part of the latest trends in poetry. Don Quixote becomes a mere spectator in these new and rather sadistic games played by the aristocrats. He can only envision her veiled, separated, almost invisible.

VIII. *Holding the Hare*

It is time to conclude with one final scene. Defeated by Sansón Carrasco in the beaches of Barcelona, the knight and his squire travel home. As they reach the village two events shake Don Quixote. First he hears two boys arguing (apparently over a cage of crickets), as one tells the other: "you shall never see it more while you live" (II, 73, 934).⁴⁹ Don Quixote takes this to be a perfect example of cledonomanancy, the art by which words uttered by others should be applied to oneself.⁵⁰ Pedro Ciruelo and many others decried this method as a devilish superstition.⁵¹ Don Quixote, in spite of his own protestations, believes it: "the meaning is, I shall never see

⁴⁹ "no la has de ver en todos los días de tu vida" (1978: II, 73, 581).

⁵⁰ Cledonomanancy may have originated with Pausinias who would ask the gods a question at the temple, then cover his ears, wait till he was outside, uncover them, and the first statement he would hear would be the gods' answer to his question.

⁵¹ "quando está el hombre con cuydado en algún negocio suyo y no sabe determinarse qué es lo que más le conviene hazer, acaesce que en aquella hora otro que passa por allí dize alguna palabra o haze alguna obra a otro propósito suyo y no pensando en el cuydado del otro. Viene el agorero vano y toma aquella palabra a su propósito y por ella se determina a lo que debe hazer, como si fuera palabra de Dios o de algún ángel que le quiso avisar de lo que devía hazer por la boca del otro hombre" (Ciruelo 93).

Dulcinea more” (II, 73, 934).⁵² Just then, a frightened hare comes running, pursued by hunting dogs. Don Quixote quickly interprets it, shouting twice “*Malum signum! Malum signum!*” (II, 73, 934; 1978: 73, 581). Steven Wagschal explains: “His rare use of Latin here combined with his unusually choppy syntax [. . .] sound oracular, harking back to a time when interpreting the symbolic meaning of animals was customary” (22). At a moment of desperation, he unwittingly reveals his knowledge of classical divination. In fact, he becomes the diviner, a kind of roman Augur. This flicker of ancient knowledge soon vanishes.

Sancho, seeking to mend the situation in Don Quixote’s favor, picks up the hare and hands it to the knight: “let us suppose now that this hare is Dulcinea del Toboso and these dogs that pursue her, those wicked enchanters who transformed her into a country-wench: she flies, I catch her, and put her into your worship’s hands, who have her in your arms and make much of her” (II, 73, 934).⁵³ We thus have a tender scene of love: the hare, symbol of Venus, the enchanted Dulcinea, now in Don Quixote’s arms.⁵⁴

⁵² “quiere significar que no tengo de ver más a Dulcinea?” (1978: II, 73, 581).

⁵³ “presupongamos que esta liebre es Dulcinea del Toboso y estos galgos que la persiguen son los malandrines encantadores que la transformaron en labradora; ella huye, yo la cojo y la pongo en poder de vuesa merced, que la tiene en sus brazos y la regala” (1978: II, 73, 581).

⁵⁴ In recent years, a number of critics have turned to this moment. Riley equates the hare with Dulcinea (161-74); Redondo relates it to the procession of the dead (*estantigua*) (*Otra manera de leer el Quijote* 101-19); and D’Onofrio points to “los sentimientos de debilidad y menoscabo de don Quijote vencido y melancólico” (229). Some have even argued that the hare is an image of the soul before death and is thus an image of the knight’s future: “Diego de Yepes acude a la anécdota de la liebre que busca refugio bajo las ancas de caballo de san Anselmo de Canterbury (1033-1109) para ilustrar un pasaje relativo al bien morir [. . .] Ahí empieza, en este san Anselmo de Canterbury, la comparación del peligro de la liebre con el del alma en el trance de la muerte, merodeada de demonios y en necesidad de amparo y socorro” (Layna Ranz 240-41). There are many other saints that grant refuge to the hare: “San Martin de Tours, san Marculfo, san Bernardo, san Anselmo, san Juan de la Cruz [. . .] santos que dan una orden para evitar el acoso a la liebre” (242).

Sancho hands back to Don Quixote a classical image of love. The squire no longer presses the knight to stop imagining. He is not giving him the third degree. Instead, he asks him to see the frightened animal for what it is and may be. There is a chance that the knight will react, that he will fight those that come to take away this frightened creature, his beloved. But such is not the case. The outcome is told in one cruelly sparse statement: "The hunters came up, and demanded their hare, and Don Quixote gave it them" (II, 73, 935).⁵⁵ The knight abandons the hare to the devilish hunters without even thinking. He is so consumed by his grief, that he cannot even consider redemption.

His new form of redemption soon becomes obvious: "They went on their way, and, at the entrance of their village, in a little meadow, they found the priest, and the bachelor Sampson Carrasco, reading their breviaries" (II, 73, 935).⁵⁶ This is the final and true sign. Don Quixote no longer gazes into the horizon searching for adventure. His many moments of exalted imaginings have come to naught. Maybe Dulcinea was a way to Elysium, a way to bring back the Golden Age of humankind; or maybe she was the beautiful but wanton Helen that led to war. Perhaps he could have saved her from the enchanters and brought her back to life as a new Eurydice. A corporeal woman she never was. But even if she were only a chimera, a whimsical creature of his imagination, filled with contradictions, she was his creation and he cared for her as much as he cherished his most exalted ideals.

Only Sancho, in the end, by having Don Quixote hold the hare in his hands, had sought to bring affection and corporality to an idea. But this was not even considered. Beauty, however alluring, majestic or monstrous, was no longer to be yearned for in this world. As the reader closes the book on the life of Don Quixote, only the breviaries of the knight's "frenemies" remain open; only their prayers to contain the knight are the ones to be heard. Of the classical world, nothing remains—only our astonishment at how this gentleman from La Mancha, a reader of chivalric books, while

⁵⁵ "Llegaron los cazadores, pidieron su liebre, y dióselo don Quijote" (1978: II, 73, 582).

⁵⁶ "y a la entrada del pueblo toparon en un pradecillo rezando al cura y al bachiller Carrasco" (1978: II, 73, 582).

wanting to be a knight, carefully hid a remarkable knowledge of antiquity, exhibiting it as a weapon against those who innocently or maliciously would want him to desist; would not want him to look beyond a small village in La Mancha.

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