

## CHAPTER ONE

# THE MAN OF LA MANCHA IN MINIATURE: *DON QUIJOTE* IN TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY SPANISH MICROFICTION

TYLER FISHER

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

At the close of Part I of *Don Quijote* (1605), Miguel de Cervantes issues his famous challenge for another author to take up the writing of Don Quixote's adventures where he had left off. After hinting at a third sally for the self-proclaimed knight and his squire, Cervantes defers an account of this expedition and ends his novel with an epigraph, a line slightly misquoted from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*: "Forsi altro canterà con miglior plectio"—perhaps someone else will sing with a better plectrum (I.52). Whether intended ironically or not, this challenge was, notoriously, taken up by the pseudonymous Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda, whose *Segundo tomo* had profound repercussions for Cervantes's own sequel. And though Cervantes undertook to leave his protagonist sound of mind and soundly buried at the end of Part II (1615), literary resurrections have never ceased in the centuries since; the Italian epigraph has proved far more prescient than Sansón Carrasco's epitaph.

Among continuations and adaptations of *Don Quijote*, the turn of the twenty-first century has seen a conspicuous vogue for microfiction that engages with Cervantes's novel.<sup>1</sup> In deliberately and artfully brief narrative texts (*microcuentos*),<sup>2</sup> ranging from only two dozen words to

---

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Dr Inmaculada Murcia Serrano and Professor Antonio Molina Flores for the *estancia de investigación* they provided me at the Universidad de Sevilla's Departamento de Estética e Historia de la Filosofía in June 2012, during which I gathered many of the materials that form the basis for this study.

<sup>2</sup> *Microcuento* is the prevailing term in Spanish usage, though it contends with alternatives such as *microrrelato*, *minificción*, and *cuento brevísimo*. My basic

several hundred, Spanish and Spanish American authors have, with increasing frequency, cultivated micro-literary allusions to Cervantes's text. With varying degrees of success and sophistication, they articulate a dialogue with *Don Quijote*—a dialogue which, as I will discuss, has precedents in the microfictions of Darío, Kafka, and Hemingway. Such precedents, however, are not the focal point of this essay. In order to maintain a manageable scope, my selection of texts for analysis is limited to those by Spanish authors,<sup>3</sup> published within the last fourteen years—that is to say, Peninsular *microcuentos quijotescos* of the twenty-first century thus far. Within these parameters, I have attempted to make an exhaustive survey of relevant texts by combing through the most likely sources (mostly anthologies) recorded in *Libros Editados en España*, an electronic database which Spain's Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte maintains.<sup>4</sup> My trawling succeeded in identifying thirteen such *microcuentos*, though some have no doubt slipped through my net. These thirteen constitute the corpus of texts, arranged chronologically by date of their first publication, which appears as an appendix to this essay.

Mine is certainly not the first collection of this kind to be assembled. The fourth centenary of *Don Quijote*, Part I, gave rise to a spate of anthologizing. Several projects, in print and on the World Wide Web, attempted to bring together brief, *Quijote*-inspired texts as a means of registering the novel's legacy in the short fiction and poetry of successive centuries. Major works such as Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742), Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856), Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot* (1869), and Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) are widely known and widely recognized to have drawn inspiration from Cervantes's masterpiece (Mancing 2006, 160-64), but what of the scattered, shorter texts—poems, fragments, songs, adages, *microcuentos*, and other ephemera—based on the *Quijote*? Joaquín María Aguirre's virtual library, the *Biblioteca quijotesca*, stands as the forerunner in collecting such texts. Initiated in 1997 and hosted on the virtual pages of *Espéculo*, the Universidad Complutense's electronic journal of literary studies, Aguirre's web-

---

definition of *microcuentos* here follows the general characterization that José María Merino formulates in "De relatos mínimos" (*Ficción continua* 2004, 229-37).

<sup>3</sup> Andrés Neuman is something of an exception within these Peninsular parameters. Born in Argentina, he has resided in Spain since childhood and possesses both Argentine and Spanish nationality.

<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing, this database is accessible via <<http://www.mcu.es/webISBN/>>.

anthology casts a wide net. Over the course of nine years, he solicited readers' recommendations of passages from international literature that make reference to the *Quijote*. The resulting miscellany includes eighty-one brief texts, ranging from genuine *microcuentos* in their entirety, such as Juan José Arreola's "Teoría de Dulcinea," to excerpts that feature more fleeting references, such as the instance in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* when Tom Sawyer explicitly adopts Don Quixote's rhetoric and reasoning. In the wake of Aguirre's *Biblioteca*, but with a specific focus on microfiction, Ramón Fabián Vique compiled fourteen "minificiones cuyo tema es el clásico cervantino" for *El cuento en red* (2004, 1). The following year Ignacio Arellano, in a special issue of the *Príncipe de Viana* journal of arts and letters, assembled four of the most well known "microcuentos quijotescos", alongside several poems (2005, 1041-43). Also on the occasion of the quadricentennial, Juan Armando Epple published the most notable anthology of this kind to date; his *MicroQuijotes* comprises fifty texts by Spanish and Spanish American authors, ranging from Darío's "D.Q." and Borges's quixotic speculations in miniature, to Pía Barros's previously unpublished "Reencarnación."

These compilations constitute the principal efforts to bring together micro-narrative responses to Cervantes's novel from roughly the last hundred years. The present study, rather than retreading their ground, brings these efforts up to date by adding twenty-first-century *microcuentos* from Spain. Moreover, it supplements their descriptive, taxonomic approach by offering closer, critical examinations of particular texts. To anchor these examinations, I outline a general poetics for allusive *microcuentos*. The outline, in the shape of a schematic formula, is at once descriptive, insofar as it accounts for the basic *modus operandi* of such texts, and prescriptive. Instead of merely surveying and cataloguing the *microcuentos* of the corpus, this approach affords an analytical overview—a measure against which to articulate their relative merits and deficiencies, proprieties and disproportions, felicities and faults. Ultimately, I address the broader question of what constitutes an effective allusion in microfiction. Standard definitions of *allusion*, as we will see, prove inadequate in the light of microfictional practice and poetics.

### Three Early Sallies in the Field of Quixotic Microfiction

The earliest specimens of *microcuentos quijotescos* are found beyond Spain's borders. Rubén Darío, Ernest Hemingway, and Franz Kafka initiated this manner of engaging with Cervantes's novel by means of brief, narrative texts. At just over 1,000 words in length, Darío's "D.Q."

(1899) might well be the first piece of microfiction to take the Man of La Mancha as its subject. Epple, appropriately, begins his volume of *MicroQuijotes* with this text, which adopts the form of military field notes from the Cuban front in the Spanish-American War. A soldier deployed against the *yanquis* recounts how Don Quixote mysteriously appears as the standard-bearer among a troop of reinforcements from Spain, and, just as the news of Spain's ultimate defeat arrives, Don Quixote hurls himself into a nearby abyss. The narrator, who until the apparition's final act of despair has felt only a vague recollection concerning the man's identity, then recognizes him in the description from Cervantes's first chapter. The basic technique here—that of moving the original protagonist(s) to a more contemporary setting—becomes a frequent mode of transposition in subsequent microfiction.

Although known for his own laconic, journalistic style, Hemingway satirized extreme abbreviation in an essay, "Condensing the Classics," which appeared in *The Toronto Star Weekly*, 20 August 1921. The impulse to miniaturize Cervantes's *magnum opus*, to reduce a novel of more than 385,000 words—and more than a thousand pages—to a few lines, takes centre stage in this light-hearted satire. Hemingway pokes fun at a project, purportedly financed by Andrew Carnegie, that undertook to write précis of classics by Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, and others for consumption by overworked businessmen. Instead of literary précis, Hemingway proposes, "there is a quicker way to present the matter to those who must run while reading: reduce all literature to newspaper headlines, with a short news dispatch following, to give the gist of the matter" (1985 [1921], 102). *Don Quijote* is his first candidate for such treatment. Applying the conventional form and diction of twentieth-century journalism to the novel's most famous episode produces the following:

CRAZED KNIGHT IN WEIRD TILT

MADRID, SPAIN (By Classic News Service) (Special).— War hysteria is blamed for the queer actions of "Don" Quixote, a local knight who was arrested early yesterday morning when engaged in the act of "tilting" with a windmill. Quixote could give no explanation of his actions. (1985 [1921], 103)<sup>5</sup>

Like Darío, Hemingway also transposes *Don Quijote* to the contemporary era. This transposition, however, is not a matter of inserting

---

<sup>5</sup> The capitalization and punctuation here reproduces Hemingway's own.

the Don into current events, as Darío had done with the Spanish-American War, but of retelling an iconic episode in a contemporary manner, treating the episode as if it were a current event. The reportorial format and diction render a substantially altered protagonist. Instead of attributing this knight's madness to diet, insomnia, and reading, the narrator cites "war hysteria," an early twentieth-century term for the condition now called post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD. This opens up the possibility that Hemingway's protagonist has actually experienced real combat in the past, rather than simply donning "unas armas que habían sido de sus bisabuelos" (I.1). This "crazed knight," moreover, can offer "no explanation of his actions," while the original Quixote seldom refrains from drawing on his reading to explain his actions and inactions alike. Reticence is not one of his virtues. A lack of explanation, of course, enables the dispatch to remain brief, and with the elimination of Sancho Panza from the scenario, no further follow-up statement is necessary or available. As if in recognition of these essential differences, there is no acknowledgement of Cervantes's authorship; the by-line credits only the fictional press agency.

The report of an early morning arrest in Hemingway's version may serve to telescope the novel of 1605, for it recalls the detention of Don Quijote on the morning of his final departure from Juan Palomeque's inn (the *cuadrilleros*' attempts at arresting him, and the alternative form of detention that the priest contrives [I.45-46]). The dispatch from the Classic News Service, then, bridges the most well known episode among the early chapters and the arrest that initiates Part I's dénouement, roughly and schematically encapsulating the whole. Of course, it is not simply a matter of "condensing" this Classic, as the title of Hemingway's essay would suggest, but of excerpting the basic scenario of Cervantes's eighth chapter to create a condensed version that also offers an innovative treatment of the novel's principal character and motifs by means of reconfiguring its diction, form, and style. It points at once *back* to the original and *beyond* to further possibilities of permuting protagonists, plots, and modes of presentation. While lampooning the abridgement of literary classics, Hemingway formulates a piece of microfiction that reimagines the functions of a synopsis; his newspaper passage on an incident in Madrid gives "the gist of the matter," in his phrase, and also suggests alternative readings of the original. As we will see, this text stands as a fruitful precedent for several of the more accomplished Spanish *microcuentos* of recent years.

Finally we turn to the third of these earliest microfictions that feature the *Quijote*. Scholars have often identified Franz Kafka's brief retelling of Cervantes's novel as the first of its kind (Vique 2004, 13), but it follows Darío's by date of composition, and Hemingway's by date of publication. The text began as an entry in notebook "G" of Kafka's *Octavhefte*, dated 21 October 1917 and untitled. Max Brod formulated the title by which the text is known when he published Kafka's notebooks posthumously in 1931 (Gray et al. 2005, 290-91). "Die Wahrheit über Sancho Panza" ("The Truth about Sancho Panza") recasts Sancho as the principal protagonist of the fiction:

Sancho Panza, der sich übrigens dessen nie gerühmt hat, gelang es im Laufe der Jahre, durch Beistellung einer Menge Ritter—und Räuberromane in den Abend—und Nachtstunden seinen Teufel, dem er später den Namen Don Quixote gab, derart von sich abzulenken, daß dieser dann haltlos die verrücktesten Taten ausführte, die aber mangels eines vorbestimmten Gegenstandes, der eben Sancho Panza hätte sein sollen, niemandem schadeten. Sancho Panza, ein freier Mann, folgte gleichmütig, vielleicht aus einem gewissen Verantwortlichkeitsgefühl, dem Don Quixote auf seinen Zügen und hatte davon eine große und nützliche Unterhaltung bis an sein Ende.<sup>6</sup>

Like Hemingway, Kafka alters the fundamental character of Cervantes's characters, but he does so more explicitly. He transposes traits proper to the original pair so that Sancho becomes the instigator, the name-giver, and principal manipulator. Admittedly, germs of these traits are already present in Sancho's character as construed by Cervantes. The squire is capable of inventing new names (coining *baciyelmo*, for instance, in I.44), of following along for the sake of diversion (II.52), and of manipulating his master through fictions (detaining him with storytelling in I.20, identifying a passing peasant girl as Dulcinea enchanted in II.10); but Sancho is now the source of the chivalric romances, not the second-

---

<sup>6</sup> Reinier van Straten of Magdalen College, Oxford, offers the following translation, which helpfully eschews the many liberties that render existing, published translations in English unsuitable for the present purposes:

Sancho Panza, who incidentally never boasted about it, was able over the years, in the evenings and at night, by supplying heaps of romances about knights and thieves, to distract himself in such a way from his devil, whom he later gave the name Don Quixote, that he then indiscriminately carried out the craziest of deeds, which however, lacking their predetermined object, which should have been Sancho Panza himself, caused no one any harm. Sancho Panza, a free man, followed Don Quixote with equanimity, perhaps out of a certain feeling of responsibility, on his campaigns, and was largely and usefully diverted by them right up to his end.

hand recipient of his master's fantasies and code of conduct. Kafka's Sancho neutralizes the torments of his daemon-like Don by lavishing literature on him. In two sentences, "The Truth about Sancho Panza" turns Cervantes's simple-minded recruit into a literary exorcist, assigning to him a quasi-authorial role as manipulative agent and catalyst, and a quasi-readerly role as spectator and diverted follower. Sancho's name and his "Ende" enclose this transposition, which posits a revised explanation for the novel's central conceit.

These three *Quijote*-inspired texts inaugurated a veritable sub-genre of microfiction on the topic, and in these three specimens we already encounter principal techniques that feature prominently in subsequent efforts: namely, transpositions of temporal, geographical settings and transpositions of roles and motives. Not merely brief or abbreviated narratives, these texts construct allusions that play with or against the original novel, inviting the reader to engage in speculative, alternative readings—to reimagine the genesis of the original text itself and the back stories of its characters, for instance, or to contemplate the implications of deploying particular elements of Cervantes's work in different settings. This constitutes a hallmark of the most effective *microcuentos quijotescos*.

### **A Recipe for Microfictional Allusion: Theory and Application**

Indeed, in the light of these precedents, and with reference to the corpus of twenty-first-century *microcuentos quijotescos*, we can derive a basic, generalized formula for such texts—a poetics of microfictional allusion. One might schematically represent the essential, cooperative ingredients as follows:

#### **echo(es) + transposition(s) + implications(s)**

- a. The echo(es) of situation, character(s), or lexis may be tacit or explicit. Allusion depends on the reader's recognition of at least one echo.
- b. The transpositions may entail alternative developments of the original characters, situations, point of view, or transpositions of context (geographical or temporal contexts).
- c. The implications may be just that—implied, merely suggested—or the narrative may articulate certain implications, albeit with concisely economical expression; but the text will follow up the implications of the transposed elements or will prompt the reader to do so.

If any one of these three principal ingredients is deficient, the allusive *microcuento* will fall short. Deficiencies—or, of particular relevance to

microfiction, superfluities—in any of the three components, or in their coherence, will result in an impaired allusion. To clarify the outworking of this schema, we turn now to how it applies to specific examples—examples of varying efficacy—from the chronological corpus.

José María Merino's "La cuarta salida" offers an aptly illustrative case.<sup>7</sup> The fourth sally of the title is that which the novel denies its protagonist with his death at the close of Part II. Merino takes up Cervantes's own game of refracting authorial personae, source texts, and redactions, thereby rejecting the original ending by having his bookish protagonist revisit documentation from the "alcaná de Toledo" to propound a victorious expedition for the hero. This *microcuento*'s echoes of Cervantes are both apparent and subtle. The apparent echoes link it unmistakably to the language of the original, reproducing verbatim various names and epithets ("el alcaná de Toledo," "doña Dulcinea del Toboso," "el ingenioso hidalgo") and a chapter title in its entirety (a salutary reminder that economy of language does not necessarily trump all other techniques in microfiction). Subtler is the use of quixotic language in the form of invective against despotic authorities. Don Quixote and Sancho use the now archaic form "hideputa" twenty seven times in all throughout the two parts of the novel, and Merino's pairing of "follones" and "malandrines" echoes Don Quixote's own recurring rhetoric. To cite only three instances of the latter usage in the novel, Don Quixote berates Sancho as a "malandrín, follón, y vestiglo" when the squire asks for wages (II.28); in the episode of the enchanted boat, he boasts, "Mira qué de malandrines y follones me salen al encuentro" (II.29); and he later brags to the Duke of his exploits: "Gigantes he vencido, y follones y malandrines le he embiado [a Dulcinea]" (II.31).

These lexical echoes, whether apparent or subtle, undergird the transpositions in this *microcuento*. The two chief transpositions here are the substitution of Cervantes's first-person authorial persona of I.9 with Merino's Profesor Souto, and the alternative ending which brings events up to our present day (signalled by the use of the present tense and the first person plural). The lexical echoes undergird the transpositions, then, because on them depends the reader's sense of the precision of the

---

<sup>7</sup> Irene Andres-Suárez, in *El microrrelato español*, highlights Merino's "La cuarta salida" as an example of intertextual "microtextos que establecen una relación estrecha con los [...] personajes [y] escenas paradigmáticas de la literatura universal, como *El Quijote* de Cervantes" (2010, 82-83). She paraphrases and summarizes "La cuarta salida" but does not offer an analysis of it.



academic persona and the plausibility of the premise of long-lost documentation for the alternative ending. They lend a touch of veracity to the fanciful claim. Although Merino's *microcuento* reports the content of the documents indirectly, rather than quoting them directly, the archaism and glimpses of Golden Age diction convey an impression of authenticity and affinity with the original novel.

In this case, the reported account of the documents' content spells out the kinds of implications that might otherwise be left to inference and speculation: Don Quixote's "verdadero final" is to realize his chivalric ambitions; he marries Dulcinea and sires a line of successful knights errant. But in this *microcuento*, which enacts the very overthrow it recounts, the implications go beyond the explicit terms of Professor Souto's discovery. By aligning the "mago" with the recognizable "antiguo soldado manco," enchanter with author, Merino takes up and elaborates a fiction that Don Quixote constructs in the original: that an enchanter is altering the diegetic reality (on the basis, of course, of the ruse initially perpetrated by the priest, barber, and housekeeper in I.7). Vanquishing this authorial *mago* means restoring a "texto primitivo" and the traditions of chivalric romances, here embodied in Don Quixote's progeny. The prototypical romance of chivalry, *Amadís de Gaula*, which featured the knightly adventures of its eponymous hero, generated a string of sequels relating the exploits of Amadís's son Esplandián and of Esplandián's son in turn. Throughout the sixteenth century, imitations and further sequels abounded in this line. Thus, the victories of Don Quixote's and Dulcinea's "linaje de caballeros andantes," predicated on "La cuarta salida," represent the resumption of chivalric fiction, while the present tense conclusion with its use of the first-person plural manifests the Don's escape from the diegetic "interpolación" into an extradiegetic reality (an implication which Merino imagines more fully in "Un autor caprichoso"). Echoes, transpositions, and implications—the three interdependent components of allusive *microcuentos* closely cohere and cooperate in this example.

Textual echoes are by no means always as conspicuous as some of those we have seen in "La cuarta salida." Andrés Neuman's "Héroes" makes no explicit mention of Cervantes's masterpiece, but it offers at least three clues by which an alert reader can recognize this as a *microcuento quijotesco* and Neuman's errant superhero is, in fact, inscribed within the *Quijote*'s points of reference. First, one recognizes the correspondence between this would-be hero's "acceso de lucidez" and Don Quixote's occasional lapses into sanity, "un entreverado loco," as one character describes him, "lleno de lúcidos intervalos" (II.18). Secondly, the

reference to “una docena de malhechores” recalls the well known incident in Don Quixote’s second sally, when he liberates a chain-gang of prisoners condemned to the galleys: “doce hombres a pie, ensartados como cuentas en una gran cadena de hierro” (I.22). And thirdly, the original Don Quixote’s propensity for moralizing aphorisms is here echoed when the hero passes the time writing “tres o cuatro aforismos morales.” It is precisely in his lucid intervals when the Don is most disposed to offer ostensibly edifying speeches and aphorisms, which other characters take to be signs of sanity. What Neuman’s abbreviated artistry achieves is to suggest a clear link based on much less commonly noted characteristics and elements of the novel. As E. C. Riley cogently observes, Cervantes’s two main figures have attained a remarkable iconographic status, an “instant and almost unrivaled recognizability” although their overt characterization is minimal (1988, 105). But Neuman’s *microcuento* omits one half of the famous pair and demonstrates that other elements of the novel can combine to achieve a comparably recognizable allusion.

“Héroes” transposes this recognizably quixotic protagonist and his exploit to an unspecified present time and location. This transposition and the particular echoes that Neuman selectively deploys serve to maintain a focus on quixotic vigilantism (as opposed to reckless feats of other sorts in the seventeenth-century precedent). The superhero-vigilante type is part of today’s popular culture and today’s current events. Like the teenage protagonists in *Kick-Ass* (Matthew Vaughn’s 2010 film and its 2013 sequel based on a comic book of the same title), Neuman’s hero assumes the role of a self-made superhero. Nor are similar cases lacking in the daily press. To cite just two instances, a youth dressed as Superman foiled a shoplifter in Sheffield (Silverman 2013), while self-styled Phoenix Jones and Purple Reign, a husband and wife who work in finance and education by day, don masks and rubber bodysuits by night to fight crime on Seattle’s streets (Bolton 2013). These various analogues in fiction and contemporary society, alongside the plural “Héroes” of the *microcuento*’s title, imply that the lone vigilante is more broadly representative in some sense and invite the reader to seek other referents, to perceive a wider commentary. Likewise the open ending for this fable of misdirected ideals impels speculation about subsequent events. In the light of the original novel, will these liberated convicts, like Ginés de Pasamonte, alias Maese Pedro, re-emerge to prey upon their liberator? Will this “héroe,” an interloper in the processes of crime and punishment, succumb to unintended consequences, social control, and backfiring heroism? The text, essentially a prelude to potential after-effects, leaves these

possibilities open. But an open ending does not allow untrammelled speculation. In addition to the echoes of *Don Quijote* that condition the reader's selection of speculative outcomes, the text curtails attempts to draw a moral from this story. "Héroes" calls into question any confident categorization of the heroic by repeatedly labelling its unnamed protagonist "el héroe" from the start, in spite of his vigilantism gone awry. By making this dubious hero a cocksure composer of unstated, loosely quantified "aforismos morales," the *microcuento* leaves the reader uncertain of the moral categories at play in the text. Again, like "La cuarta salida," Neuman's *microcuento* integrates echoes, transpositions, and implications in such a way that the quixotic subtext is sufficiently discernible and the transpositions open fresh scope for implications, while the destabilizing checks on potential implications save the text from being merely a facile joke or sententious *exemplum*.

A third example of an effective microfictional allusion is Juan Pedro Aparicio's "El azar." In this case, the echoes involve, first, the citation of the novel's title, and, more importantly, situational echoes. Aparicio refreshes a hackneyed cliché. Revising the Infinite Monkey Theorem, he produces an example of what Christopher Johnson prescribes and describes as "repurposed clichés" (2011, 190-96). French mathematician Émile Borel (1871-1956) formulated the whimsical theorem concerning monkeys and typewriters in order to explore concepts of infinity and random chance, and the image has since passed into popular lore (Arp 2013, 643). In "El azar" the transposition entails not only replacing Shakespeare's plays (the more common formulation of the theorem) with *Don Quijote*, but also setting the protagonist in a situation that echoes many of those in Part I: in a rural environment or on the open road, quotidian phenomena give way to fantastic visions, particularly when seen from a distance.

This *microcuento*'s pretence of precision in identifying the specific setting, the proper names, and the time elapsed lends credence to the brief fantasy; in the abbreviated form, these names and numbers draw particular attention to themselves. As in Merino's "La cuarta salida," where precision contributes to the conceit of academic discovery, here the precise details construct an illusion of veracity in this reportage. As a report of ornithologist Artemio Alcántara's experience, this *microcuento* resonates with the matter and manner of contemporary anecdotes about "the one that got away," big fish stories, glimpses of Bigfoot or Nessie, and other accounts that nourish cryptozoology. In typical stories of such encounters, a lone eyewitness, such as a hunter, fisherman, or birdwatcher, catches

sight of a paranormal phenomenon and may or may not capture fishy evidence to support claims of their sighting. By inscribing a *Quijote*-inflected variation on Borel's theorem into this pattern of popular lore, Aparicio turns the focus from a question of mathematical probability to questions of fantasy and fiction. What might take monkeys infinite millennia to produce, the storyteller can achieve within a few lines of microfiction. Fiction can render possible the impossibly fantastic phenomenon. The predominance of acute, angular *V*s, *As*, *Ms*, and *Ns* in the verbs that the flocks of geese spell out mimics here a flock of migratory birds in flight (a narration of their own action which would pose a special challenge for translation). This mimesis encapsulates the problematic relationship between realism and fantasy in artistic representations of nature. Just as fiction can drive Don Quixote to perceive fantastic beings in the Spanish countryside, so too can the devices of fiction prompt readers to entertain the notion of paranormal phenomena. In this, the cliché generates an original, speculative reflection on chance and credibility, coincidence and perception.

But not all *microcuentos quijotescos* achieve this level of artistry and sophistication. The basic formula I have proposed for allusive microfiction can also expose areas of weakness in *microcuentos* that overdo or underutilize echoes, transpositions, and implications, or fail to integrate them in a coherent manner. One such text, which admittedly shows some glimmers of brilliance alongside its shortcomings, is Julia Otxoa's "De cómo el *Quijote* fue quemado en Morano." This story "revive desde la actualidad el tema de la Inquisición que Cervantes aborda en el episodio de la Biblioteca," one critic helpfully summarizes; "El traslado temporal es utilizado [...] para afirmar la pervivencia de las prácticas inquisitoriales en el ejercicio de la crítica literaria cuyos precursores fueron precisamente los sacerdotes" (Correa-Díaz 2005, 88).

As this critic succinctly notes, the main echoes here are of the sixth chapter of Part I, and the chief transposition is temporal. The title even echoes the format of Cervantes's often prolix chapter titles, like that of the aforementioned chapter, "Del donoso y grande escrutinio [...]," and that of I.27, "De cómo salieron con su intención el cura y el barbero [...]." The text also echoes Cervantes's techniques of morphologically creative nomenclature, as in *Micomicona*, *Brandabarbarán*, *Clavileño*, and the names of the would-be shepherds in II.67. There is no real *aldea* named Morano in Spain, but this name effectively conveys the impression of a remote, little known yet concrete village. It also bears an unmistakable resemblance to *marrano* (swine), a term applied pejoratively to the crypto-

Jews or *anusim* at the time when their persecution by the Spanish Inquisition was at its peak, and thereby reinforces this *microcuento*'s evocation of inquisitorial oppression. The name Morano, like the priest's full name, receives particular emphasis by being repeated three times, most prominently as the final word of the title and the last word of the story. Repeating these proper names aligns the narrative voice with the "férreo principio de concreción máxima" on which the parochial censor insists. Pietro Asnoglionne's factitious surname combines connotations of asinine and affected, bombastic, overly ceremonial qualities. The Italianate name, with papal overtones, suggests foreign imposition from the very heart of the curia in Rome (Pietro, the Italian for Peter, is derived from the name of the Apostle whom Roman Catholics hold to have been the first pope). Asnoglionne may also recall a surname like Castiglione; two members of the Castiglione family became popes. Or it may be a nod to Baldesar Castiglione, author of *The Book of the Courtier* (*Il Libro del cortegiano*). If this is the case, the relation is one of irony because *The Book of the Courtier* itself advises against the sort of affectation and ostentation that Asnoglionne displays (2003 [1528], 58-70), and it is germane to the inquisitorial theme, because Castiglione's book was listed on the index of prohibited books. The result is something of an anti-courtier, a caricature of Castiglione's ideal Renaissance gentleman. These echoes of Cervantes's style of wordplay can support a wealth of connotations.

But Otxoa's "párroco" has none of the playfully contradictory ambiguities of Cervantes's *cura*. Asnoglionne serves merely as a one-dimensional vehicle for this tendentious representation of literary censorship-cum-Inquisition. Granted, the transposition of inquisitorial processes to the eve of the *Quijote*'s fourth centenary does subtly exploit some features of the original tribunal; the fact that this priest's conferences take place in "la sala municipal," and "la plaza mayor" is the site of destruction by fire, recalls the civil and ecclesiastical collusion in the Inquisition's trials and *autos de fe*. But potential implications inherent in this *microcuento*'s central relationship with Cervantes's novel are left unexploited. "De cómo el *Quijote* fue quemado en Morano" ultimately comes across as simply, insipidly anticlerical—ironically, a rather simplistic critique of superficial censorship.

In yet another example, echoes and transpositions proliferate but fail to cohere, and the text fails to exploit their implications. Miguel Ángel Marín Varela's *microcuento* transposes Cervantes's model to twenty-first-century Andalusia, where Don Quixote is an otiose, indolent youth. At 293

words, this is quantitatively the second longest piece of microfiction in the corpus of *microcuentos quijotescos*, yet it somehow says too much and not enough. After its title, “Un Don Quijote andaluz del Siglo XXI” signals its allusive nature principally by means of direct echoes of Cervantes’s first chapter, direct quotations which vary only one or two words or the verb tense (changing the imperfect tense to the present). The text reproduces entire clauses from the opening paragraphs of the novel. For example, Cervantes’s description of Don Quixote, “Es, pues, de saber, que este sobredicho hidalgo, los ratos que estaba ocioso—que eran los más del año—, se daba a leer libros de caballerías,” becomes, “Es, pues, de saber que este sobredicho hidalgo los ratos ocioso [*sic*] (que son los más del año) se da a jugar a video-juegos de caballería.” In line with the temporal transposition, the substitution of video games for romances of chivalry is promising, but the *microcuento* does not pursue its possibilities. Instead, it moves on to additional transpositions, recasting Cervantes’s windmill-and-wineskin giants, “sabios encantadores,” and knights as a parent figure, educators, and unspecified, derisive adversaries, respectively, within the Andalusian Quixote’s daily milieu. The technique is one of analogically mapping elements from the novel onto the lifestyle of this twenty-first-century youth; the confrontations that the *microcuento* mentions remain undeveloped.

An “escudero” (incongruous in the transposed context) and Dulcinea also make an appearance. The latter is dubbed “Dulcinea de Al-Andalus,” while the sidekick is “el canijo.” Of interest here is Marín Varela’s inversion of the basic physical traits of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. The colloquial nickname, “el canijo,” signals short stature, but also lean, lanky frailty and ill health—traits that are more characteristic of Cervantes’s gaunt Quixote. The Andalusian *hidalgo*, on the other hand, is rotund, “metido en carnes, rollizo de rostro.” The text makes no apparent use of this transposition of traits, unless it is to point up the sedentary nature of the video-game aficionado. Again the *microcuento* neglects to exploit—or even to prompt the reader to explore—the implications of these alterations and updates. Why connect Dulcinea to Andalusia’s Moorish past? To what end a scrawny Sancho? Who are these “otros caballeros”? Marín Varela ultimately offers a brief character sketch of his “Don Quijote andaluz” with scant narrative content. The text is interesting for what it could become, yet it leaves potential avenues unexplored. A more successfully allusive *microcuento* might well sustain focus on one or two of the main transpositions of geography, temporal setting, or character traits. With such sustained, coherent engagement, even in an extremely

brief text, the allusion could support fruitful, narrative implications, allowing the reader to reflect on how the text plays with and against the original and on how the transpositions open further vistas.

### Miniature Allusions Reconsidered

What, then, can one conclude about the nature of literary allusion in these *microcuentos quijotescos*? Standard, current definitions of *allusion* are notably insistent on the indirect, implied, or cursory nature of this literary device. M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, for example, define literary allusion as “a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or historical person, place, or event, or to another literary work or passage. [...] allusions are not explicitly identified” (2012, 12).<sup>8</sup> But such a delimiting definition is unnecessarily restrictive. It fails to account for the allusive techniques in these *microcuentos*. We need to rethink the defining descriptors of allusion in order to accommodate this particular mode of intertextuality. More than a passing reference, the allusions in these highly abbreviated narratives often constitute a central, prolonged reference that dominates the text, from the title onward. Merino’s “La cuarta salida” and Care Santos’s “La adolescencia triste del buen señor Quijano” are prime examples to the contrary. Nor are allusions in *microcuentos quijotescos* lacking in “explicit identification,” as a brief survey of the titles in the chronological corpus makes plain (Juan Ramón Santos’s “Capítulo VI, Primera Parte” could scarcely be more explicit). Even when the reference is seemingly made in passing, as in Aparicio’s “El azar,” or when an allusion is less explicit, as in Neuman’s “Héroes,” we have seen how “El azar” includes a brief reference to the novel’s title while also patterning its basic scenario after episodes of Part I, while “Héroes” offers several echoes that reveal the *microcuento* to be inscribed within the terms of its literary precedent. Taken together, these are texts that, largely due to their extreme brevity,

---

<sup>8</sup> A sampling of recent definitions in literary glossaries like that of Abrams and Harpham reveals a consistent emphasis on allusion’s mode of reference as being “indirect or passing” (Baldick 2008, 9). Allusion, according to such definitions, entails “An indirect reference, often to a person, event, statement, theme, or work” (Murfin and Ray 2009, 12), “Usually an implicit reference” (Cuddon 2013, 25); and for John Peck and Martin Coyle its referent is primarily distinct from the text’s principal subject: “An allusion is a passing reference to a person, place or event beyond the obvious subject matter of a text, or a reference within a text to another literary work” (2002, 143).

presume a greater dependence on allusion than conventional definitions would allow.

In order to expand the categorical strictures for literary allusion, it may be helpful to note the origins of the term and one obsolete acceptance. The root of *allusion* is *ludus*, a game, play, or diversion—the same root that gave rise to the English adjectives *ludic* and *ludicrous*. This fundamental sense of play survived in a post-classical Latin usage of *allusio* as a literary, rhetorical term meaning a play on words, a pun. Wordplay, indeed, has much in common with allusion in microfictional form. Just as puns are better when not belaboured, so, too, subtlety and restraint characterize the echoes and transpositions in the best among the baker’s dozen of texts I have gathered together in the chronological corpus. Playful reworking of the original text—what I have called transpositions—is essential. And ultimately, the most effective of such *microcuentos* prompt the reader to join in the game by imagining the implications of this reworking, with reference to the original and in alternative contexts.

“Perhaps someone else will sing with a better plectrum,” Cervantes mused, in his own playful allusion to *Orlando furioso*. The best quixotic continuations in microfiction are sung with a very small, if not better, plectrum; they play with elements that echo those of the novel, transpose key components, and offer scope for exploring innovative implications of the Man of La Mancha’s exploits in miniature.

### Works Cited

- Arp, Robert, ed. 2013. *1001 Ideas that Changed the Way We Think*. New York: Atria Books.
- Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. 2012. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 10th ed. Boston: Wadsworth.
- Aguirre, Joaquín María, ed. 1997-2006. *Biblioteca quijotesca*, available at <http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/bquijote> [accessed 26 March 2013].
- Andres-Suárez, Irene. 2010. *El microrrelato español: Una estética de la elipsis*. Palencia: Menoscuarto.
- Aparicio, Juan Pedro. 2005. “El azar.” *Quimera* 257: 57.
- Arellano, Ignacio. 2005. “Poemas y microcuentos quijotescos.” *Príncipe de Viana* 66.236: 1039-43.
- Baldick, Chris. 2008. *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.



- Bolton, Olivia. 10 July 2013. "Meet the 'Real-Life Superheroes,' Phoenix Jones and Purple Reign." *The Telegraph*.
- Caprara, Arturo. 2008. "Silencio al pasar las hojas." In *Micromundos*, 138. Madrid: Incógnita Editores.
- Castiglione, Baldesar. (1528) 2003. *The Book of the Courtier*. Trans. George Bull. London: Penguin.
- Cervantes, Miguel de. (1605 and 1615) 1978. *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Ed. Luis Andrés Murillo. 5th ed. 2 vols. Madrid: Castalia.
- Correa-Díaz, Luis, Florencia Henríquez, Miguel Arce Viaux, et al. 2005. "En torno a los *MicroQuijotes* editados por Juan Armando Epple: Una lectura compartida." *Taller de letras* 37: 22-102.
- Cuddon, J. A. 2013. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. 5th ed. Malden, Oxford, and West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Epple, Juan Armando, ed. 2005. *MicroQuijotes*. Barcelona: Thule.
- Fisher, Tyler. 2013. "El perro que no siguió la corriente." *Céfiro* 12: 89.
- Galán, Pilar. 2007. "IV Centenario." In *Relatos relámpago: Una muestra del microrrelato en Extremadura*, 51. Mérida: Editora Regional de Extremadura.
- Gray, Richard T., Ruth V. Gross, Rolf J. Goebel, and Clayton Koelb. 2005. *A Franz Kafka Encyclopedia*. Westport: Greenwood.
- Hemingway, Ernest. 1985. *Dateline, Toronto: The Complete Toronto Star Dispatches, 1920-1924*. New York: Scribner.
- Johnson, Christopher. 2011. *Microstyle: The Art of Writing Little*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Kafka, Franz. (1917) 2010. "Die Wahrheit über Sancho Pansa." In *Kleine Formen*. Ed. Hartmut Abendschein and Fritz Michel, 24. Bern: Taberna Kritika.
- Mancing, Howard. 2006. *Cervantes' Don Quixote: A Reference Guide*. Westport: Greenwood.
- Marín Varela, Miguel Ángel. 2011. "Un Don Quijote andaluz del Siglo XXI." In *Tercer Certamen Universitario "Campus-Microrrelatos"*, 43-44. Cádiz: Departamento de Didáctica de la Lengua y la Literatura, Universidad de Cádiz.
- Merino, José María. 2002. "Un autor caprichoso." In *Días imaginarios*, 63. Barcelona: Seix Barral.
- . 2003. "La cuarta salida." *Quimera* 235: 61.
- . 2004. *Ficción continua*. Barcelona: Seix Barral.
- . 2007. "Historia de Don Quijote." In *La glorieta de los fugitivos*, 220. Madrid: Páginas de Espuma.

- Murfin, Ross C., and Supryia M. Ray. 2009. *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*. Boston: Bedford and St. Martins.
- Neuman, Andrés. 2009. "Héroes." In *Alumbramiento*, 115. Madrid: Páginas de Espuma.
- Otxoa, Julia. 2006. "De cómo el *Quijote* fue quemado en Morano." In *Un extraño envío*, 297-98. Palencia: Menoscuarto.
- Peck, John, and Martin Coyle. 2002. *Literary Terms and Criticism*. 3rd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Pellicer, Gemma. 2012. "Comentario al *Quijote* de un desocupado lector." In *La danza de las horas*, 40. Zaragoza: Eclipsados.
- Riley, E. C. 1988. "Don Quixote: From Text to Icon." *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America* 8: 103-15.
- Roas, David, ed. 2010. *Poéticas del microrrelato*. Madrid: Arco Libros.
- Santos, Care. 2009. "La adolescencia triste del buen señor Quijano." In *Por favor, sea breve II: Antología de microrrelatos*, 128. Madrid: Páginas de Espuma.
- Santos, Juan Ramón. 2007. "Capítulo VI, Primera parte" and "Exégesis." In *Relatos relámpago: Una muestra del microrrelato en Extremadura*, 122 and 127. Mérida: Editora Regional de Extremadura.
- Silverman, Rosa. 4 July 2013. "Superman Fan Catches Shoplifter While Dressed as Superhero." *The Telegraph*.
- Sturniolo, Norma. 2008. "Fantasía, humor, y metaliteratura en la mitificación de José María Merino." *Cuadernos hispanoamericanos* 691: 111-15.
- Tomassini, Graciela, and Stella Maris Colombo. 1996. "La minificación como clase textual transgenérica." *Revista interamericana de bibliografía* 1-4: 79-94.
- Vique, Ramón Fabián. 2004. "Minificaciones quijotescas." *El cuento en red: Revista electrónica de teoría de la ficción breve* 9: 1-18. [Vique's article was published in the spring 2004 issue of *El cuento en red*, but was later deleted from the electronic journal. The author kindly sent me on 23 June 2012 the PDF he had retained of the original web publication.]

## Appendix

### A Chronological Corpus of *Microcuentos Quijotescos* (2000-2012)

#### 1. Un autor caprichoso

"Yo te aseguro, Sancho, que debe de ser algún sabio encantador el autor de nuestra historia; que a los tales no se les encubre nada de lo que quieren escribir."

El profesor Souto, que por aquellos días estaba tomando notas para un artículo sobre Borges y *El Quijote*, pensó que el ingenioso hidalgo tenía razón, como podía comprender perfectamente cualquiera que leyese el libro con un poco de cuidado: había un mago escribiendo su historia, dirigiendo su aventura, escamoteando sucesivamente todas sus certezas, transformándole de continuo la realidad. Un mago convirtiendo los gigantes en molinos, los castillos en posadas, los ejércitos en rebaños y en pellejos de vino el cuerpo del gigante del reino de Micomicón.

El profesor Souto, más allá de cualquier metáfora, descubría la voz de ese mago, que se pretende simple transcriptor de la obra, y reconocía sus manejos, siempre presentes mediante la ironía del punto de vista y el dominio exclusivo de toda información que transmite, sin duda mucho más allá de la traducción del propio original escrito por el historiador arábigo.

En apariencia, podría pensarse que el tal mago era un imaginador desconfiado, pensaba el profesor Souto. Buen conocedor del mundo al que iba a echar a aquellas criaturas desvalidas, procuró desde el primer momento esconder su fragilidad bajo el manto de un risible anacronismo, disfrazando de otra cosa auténticos gigantes, castillos y ejércitos.

Aseguraba haber elegido como diana de su sátira las ocurrencias fabulosas de las novelas de caballería, pero resulta un pretexto tan falto de proporción con el resultado, que sólo puede ser aceptado sin objeciones por la interesada credulidad de los clérigos, los inquisidores, los soldados y demás enemigos de la libre imaginación.

Pero el primer perjudicado es Don Quijote, pensó el profesor Souto, el cuerdo soñador, el héroe justiciero a quien sin descanso ni misericordia el mago le está metamorfoseando el verdadero escenario para obligarle a hacer payasadas.

El profesor Souto levantó los ojos del libro y, a través de las cortinas, contempló el suave resplandor de la ciudad. Imaginemos que yo fuese una criatura escrita y que esta ciudad, la ciudad de mi costumbre, está siendo modificada por la imaginación de un autor, para desconcertarme. Imaginemos que ese resplandor no es el de las torres de la plaza de España, sino la luz de una hoguera en el monte ante la que permanecen dos gigantes sentados bajo las estrellas.

El profesor Souto se levanta, se acerca a las cortinas y está a punto de recorrerlas, pero tras escrutar unos instantes el resplandor y los bultos, se vuelve de espaldas, apaga la luz, sale de la habitación y exclama Hala, que ya es hora de acostarse, como si hablar en voz alta para él sólo fuese una manera de tranquilizar algún pensamiento que lo ha inquietado.

José María Merino, in *Días imaginarios* (2002)

## 2. La cuarta salida

El profesor Souto, gracias a ciertos documentos procedentes del alcañá de Toledo, acaba de descubrir que el último capítulo de la Segunda Parte de *El Quijote*—“De cómo don Quijote cayó malo, y del testamento que hizo y su muerte”—es una interpolación con la que un clérigo, por darle ejemplaridad a la novela, sustituyó buena parte del texto primitivo, y su verdadero final. Pues hubo una cuarta salida del ingenioso hidalgo y caballero, en ella encontró al mago que enredaba sus asuntos, un antiguo soldado manco al que ayudaba un morisco instruido, y consiguió derrotarlos. Así, los molinos volvieron a ser gigantes, las ventas castillos y los rebaños ejércitos, y él, tras incontables hazañas, casó con doña Dulcinea del Toboso y fundó un linaje de caballeros andantes que hasta la fecha han ayudado a salvar al mundo de los embaidores, follones, malandrines e hideputas que siguen pretendiendo imponernos su ominoso despotismo.

José María Merino, in *Quimera* (2003)

## 3. El azar

¿Puede el azar conseguir que un mono tecleando una máquina de escribir durante millones de años componga *Don Quijote de la Mancha*? En eso pensaba el ornitólogo Artemio Alcántara cuando desde su mirador de Doñana observó que la bandada de gansos que surcaba el cielo camino del norte dibujaba claramente cinco letras que formaban la palabra VAMOS. Seis meses después, los gansos, de vuelta a Doñana, dibujaron en el cielo la palabra VENIMOS. ¿Podría ser que ese mismo mono tecleara además las palabras de *Hamlet*?

Juan Pedro Aparicio, in *Quimera* (2005)

## 4. De cómo el *Quijote* fue quemado en Morano

“La base esencial de una mente saludable radica en el principio de concreción con el que se percibe el mundo”. Este tipo de frases grandilocuentes acostumbraba a decir el párroco Pietro Asnoglionne en sus charlas formativas de los sábados en la sala municipal, su auditorio, formado en su mayor parte por feligreses de la pequeña aldea de Morano, quedaba en suspenso, como levitando. Su discurso retórico, acompañado de estudiadas entonaciones y ensayados silencios, actuaba como una especie de hipnosis.

Un día les dijo que iba a hablarles de la famosa novela *El Ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* de Miguel de Cervantes, pero

fatalmente guiado por su férreo principio de concreción máxima, no pasó del inicio. Las cosas sucedieron así: Pietro Asnoglionne abrió el libro con solemnidad y comenzó a leer: “En un lugar de la Mancha...”. En este punto cerró el libro con fuerza y, mirando a los presentes, preguntó: “¿Qué creen ustedes qué quiso decir Cervantes con eso de ‘En un lugar de la Mancha’?”.

Pietro Asnoglionne adoptó en este instante un aire rígido, se puso en pie y, blandiendo la novela en la mano derecha, levantó la voz para decir indignado: “Claramente el autor especifica muy poco, una novela con un punto de arranque tan volátil no puede ofrecer sino vaguedades, quimeras, confusión de lenguaje, descontrol de ideas y anarquía. Para la salvación de nuestras almas, este tipo de libros no puede tener otro destino que la hoguera”.

Corría el año 2004, el *Quijote* fue quemado en la plaza mayor de Morano.

Julia Otxoa, in *Un extraño envío* (2006)

## 5. Historia de Don Quijote

En un lugar de La Mancha vivió un ingenioso hidalgo y caballero que estuvo a punto de derrotar a la Realidad.

José María Merino, in *La glorieta de los fugitivos* (2007)

## 6. IV Centenario

Desde que leyó que al Quijote le sobraban cuatrocientas páginas, las que van desde en un lugar de la Mancha hasta se murió cuerdo, anda un poco malamente. Ahora le ha dado por arrancar páginas. Del Quijote y de otros libros. Dice que no ha leído en su vida una crítica más certera.

Pilar Galán, in *Relatos relámpago* (2007)

## 7. Capítulo VI, Primera Parte

Mientras su gruesa mujer y sus llorosas hijas se afanaban por quemar en el brasero, en medio de la calle, todas aquellas sobadas y releídas novelas del oeste, mientras los vástagos de Marcial Lafuente Estefanía y de Zane Grey se retorcián agonizantes entre las llamas, golpeados y deshechos en cenizas por la acción encarnizada de la badila, arriba, en su dormitorio, Teófilo Durán, de pie en calzoncillos largos frente al enorme espejo oval del pesado armario ropero, observaba en tensión, desconfiado y amenazante, su exacto reflejo y exclamaba frunciendo el ceño, “Ha

llegado su hora, sheriff Flanagan”, empuñando con seguridad el crucifijo de madera, dispuesto a meterle a aquel sucio traidor una bala certera entre los ojos.

Juan Ramón Santos, in *Relatos relámpago* (2007)

### 8. Exégesis

Si Sancho se quijotiza,  
don Quijote se sanchiza  
y Rocinante se enrucia  
si Rucio rocinantea,  
¿se enteresa Dulcinea  
o simplemente se aldonza?

Juan Ramón Santos, in *Relatos relámpago* (2007)

### 9. Silencio al pasar las hojas

Don Quijote de la Mancha levantó la mirada al cielo y deteniendo a Rocinante por las riendas se volvió hacia su fiel escudero:

—Sancho—le susurró nervioso—, creo que nos siguen.

Arturo Caprara, in *Micromundos* (2008)

### 10. Héroes

Durante un raro acceso de lucidez, el héroe de la comarca asume que cada cual tiene una misión en esta vida: la suya es salvar al prójimo. El héroe sabe que su urgente deber es combatir a los malvados donde quiera que estén, y sale a la calle dispuesto a todo. Mira a un lado y a otro. Avanza, retrocede. Pero no divisa a nadie en apuros. La calle resplandece de serenidad. Las avenidas respiran verdor y los pájaros dibujan en el cielo. Esto es intolerable, piensa el héroe.

Furioso, justiciero, el héroe consigue colarse en la prisión de la comarca, burlar la vigilancia y liberar a una docena de malhechores que, sin salir de su asombro, se dispersan velozmente y se ocultan en los rincones más oscuros. El héroe no cabe en sí de euforia. Regresa a casa. Se sienta a esperar. Medita. Incluso alcanza a escribir tres o cuatro aforismos morales. No pasa mucho tiempo hasta que unos desgarradores gritos de socorro llegan a sus oídos. Entonces se incorpora de un brinco e, indignado, el héroe aborda la calle.

Andrés Neuman, in *Alumbramiento* (2009)

### 11. La adolescencia triste del buen señor Quijano

Mirar por la ventana. Un día y otro día. Ver declinar el sol, amedrentar la lluvia, bostezar al compás de la naturaleza, comer sin mucha gana, acariciar los libros. Un día y otro día, mirar por la ventana.

Pesadillas repletas de molinos de viento cuando sube la fiebre.

Qué habrá detrás de tanto trigal adormecido, más allá de la línea del horizonte llano y más lejos aún, en el aire, en los sueños.

No atreverse a mirar a los ojos de Aldonza, cuando pasa mecida por tanto aburrimiento.

Y decirse, de pronto: “Algún día, lo juro, conseguiré ser otro”.

Care Santos, in *Por favor, sea breve II* (2009)

### 12. Un Don Quijote andaluz del Siglo XXI

En un lugar de Andalucía, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme, vive un hidalgo con navaja de bolsillo, adarga de papel, vespino antiguo y bodeguero perezoso. Frisa la edad de nuestro hidalgo con los veinte años de edad, es de complexión endeble, metido en carnes, rollizo de rostro, gran trasnochador y amigo de los video-juegos.

Es, pues, de saber que este sobredicho hidalgo los ratos ocioso [*sic*] (que son los más del año) se da a jugar a video-juegos de caballería tanto que ha olvidado el resto de pasatiempos y su vida se ha convertido en la vida de un caballero maleante.

Nuestro hidalgo se enfrenta en su día a día a multitud de obstáculos, lucha contra gallos eléctricos que osan despertarlo de sus batallas imaginarias. En su hacienda se aloja el peor de los gigantes, un gigante que le obliga a sanear su aposento diariamente y del que se tiene que escabullir para poder salir en busca de aventuras. También se enfrenta a sabios que intentan inculcarle conocimientos innecesarios para su vida de caballero, con el propósito de que su cerebro se encuentre saturado y no pueda llegar a ser el mejor caballero de todos los tiempos. Por último, se enfrenta a otros caballeros que intentan hacerle la vida imposible sin ningún otro fin que el de la mera burla ante su persona.

A todas estas batallas diarias hay que añadirles las batallas improvisadas que también son algo rutinarias. Todo esto no lo conseguiría sin su fiel escudero “el canijo” [*sic*] que lo acompaña en sus andaduras por tierras andaluzas.

En el corazón de nuestro hidalgo se encuentra Dulcinea de Al-Andalus, dama por la que sigue adelante tras sus derrotas y a la que dedica sus victorias.

Miguel Ángel Marín Varela, in *Tercer Certamen Universitario “Campus-Microrrelatos”* (2011)

### **13. Comentario al *Quijote* de un desocupado lector**

Para Alberto Blecua

Al principio, cuando apenas había leído unos cuantos capítulos de la primera parte, el atento lector estaba convencido de que ese ser escuálido y botarate, además de justiciero, capaz de empresas tan disparatadas como tiernas, lograba trascender sus fracasos gracias al espíritu fabuloso con que emprendía cada una de sus acciones.

Sólo tras haber concluido la lectura del libro, pudo perfilar algo más la idea que le rondaba: en realidad, al caballero le había bastado *ser* para seducirnos desde el fracaso. Vino, vio y fue vencido, como si de un vulgar emperador se tratara. Y triunfó, cabría añadir, convirtiendo su caída en mito.

Gemma Pellicer, in *La danza de las horas* (2012)