

VIOLENCE AND FAME IN THE *QUIJOTE*: CORPOREAL MANIFESTATIONS OF THE  
SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

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## ABSTRACT

Colleen McAlister: Violence and Fame in the *Quijote*: Corporeal Manifestations of the  
Administration of Justice  
(Under the direction of Carmen Hsu)

The goal of this paper is to examine manifestations of violence within the *Quijote* and how they relate to concepts of identity, fame and individualism in seventeenth-century Spain. The episodes to be analyzed include that of the prisoners, the confrontation between don Quijote and the Biscayan man, the two encounters with the servant boy Andrés and the penance in Sierra Morena. Violent acts committed by don Quijote will be studied from the perspective of his attempt to abandon the designation of a “hidalgo,” and become a “caballero andante.” This essay will take into consideration the debate between destiny and individual agency that was taking place in Spain in the seventeenth century, and how this relates to don Quijote’s quest to become a knight. It will explore the nature of don Quijote’s proclaimed knightly mission, and whether this was a purely selfless purpose. This essay will also attempt to answer why don Quijote chooses violence specifically as the means by which he attempts to establish himself as a knight.

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In his work entitled *Fábula del hombre*, the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives demonstrates, through the character of the man, his ideas about the great potential and abilities possessed by the individual. For example, the gods that Vives describes gathered at the theater where the man has performed in a play are in awe of the man's ability to adapt and transform himself at will in order to portray various roles (Vives 159-160)<sup>1</sup>. Although the man is made in the image of the god Jupiter and is therefore still somewhat subservient to Jupiter, the other gods marvel at the fact that no other creature created by them has such control over his faculties. The man has "[...] el culto y conocimiento del padre Júpiter y de los otros dioses hermanos, rasgo único que no se encuentra en ningún otro animal excepto en éste [...]" (Vives 160). Humanist ideas about the will and the potential possessed by the individual made their way into other works of literature as well, such as Miguel de Cervantes' *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* (1605, 1615). The protagonist of Cervantes' novel attempts to use his will, the great potential of which was recognized by humanists like Vives, to abandon his inherited circumstances and transform his identity. The aim of this paper is to explore, through questions of individualism, fame and violence, whether don Quijote is successful in these endeavors.

In order to analyze the process of identity transformation in which don Quijote engages, the following pages will first explore his identification at the beginning of the novel as a "hidalgo." This essay will then attempt to flesh out his reasons for choosing to shed this identity

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I use the Juan Francisco Alcina edition of Juan Luis Vives' *Diálogos y otros escritos*, which includes the *Fábula del hombre*.

and become a “caballero andante,” as well as the will that drives him to accomplish this. The paper will explore the difference between his overt, seemingly selfless mission as a knight to do good for others and his subtler, more selfish goal of obtaining personal fame, and how the accomplishment of these goals is tied to the restructuring of his identity. Following this will be an analysis of the means by which don Quijote hopes to reach both of these ends, and the reasons that he chooses violence specifically as his means. Finally, this essay will attempt to answer the question of whether don Quijote is successful in abandoning his identity as a “hidalgo de aldea” and truly becoming a “caballero andante,” or whether he is defeated in this process.

At the beginning of Cervantes’ novel, the protagonist is introduced only by the title of “un hidalgo” (I.1, 69).<sup>2</sup> He is known by a generic designation as a member of this particular social class, more of a “tipo social” and “uno entre muchos” (Fernández Rodríguez-Escalona 21) than an individual person. The hidalgo class was the lowest nobility, whose social standing and importance were in decline in seventeenth-century Spain (Tamames Gómez 142). Hidalgos inherited “derecho a bienes,” or the “right to properties,” from their ancestors, but often by the seventeenth century, these properties were no longer worth any significant amount (Tamames Gómez 141). That is to say, although their title of hidalgo made them a part of the nobility, it in fact did not guarantee a certain level of economic status. In the case of Cervantes’ protagonist, it is not until the reader learns more details about him that they are able to discern his level of poverty. Any respect or wealth that this protagonist’s family may have possessed generations

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I cite from the Murillo (2003) edition of the *Quijote*. From now on, the Roman numeral will refer to the Part (I or II) of the novel, the second number to the Chapter, and the last number to the page number in the Murillo edition.

earlier contrasts with the meager, monotonous existence described in Chapter 1 of Part I, as will be illustrated by the following examples.

One aspect that speaks of the decline in socioeconomic status of the protagonist's family is how he spends his time. The narrator describes, "[...] este sobredicho hidalgo, los ratos que estaba ocioso – que eran los más del año – se daba a leer libros de caballerías con tanta afición y gusto, que olvidó casi de todo punto el ejercicio de la caza, y aun la administración de su casa" (I.1, 71). This quote reveals significant information about the identity of the protagonist, such as the fact that he has ample leisure time. As stated by Tamames Gómez, leisure time was a mark of the hidalgo class (142), and so the protagonist conforms to this aspect. However, the above quote also reveals that he has completely abandoned his interest in hunting, a traditional pastime of the hidalgo class during their leisure time (Fernández Rodríguez-Escalona 20). While he does engage in leisure time, his neglect of hunting and of the administration of his house reveals that his title as part of the nobility is in fact empty.

The diet of the protagonist also helps the reader to understand his identity at the beginning of the novel. As explained by Carolyn A. Nadeau, an individual's diet in seventeenth-century Spain was an indicator of their social class (59). This protagonist's diet is "poor" in the sense that he eats very simple foods, and also for its lack of variety: "Una olla de algo más vaca que carnero, salpicón las más noches, duelos y quebrantos los sábados, lantejas los viernes, algún palomino de añadidura [...]" (I.1, 69). He eats the same meals every week, some even on a fixed day. According to Rodríguez Marín, *salpicón* was a humble dish, often made of leftover meat from the midday meal (21). He also states that for *cervantistas*, it has been difficult to identify what exactly were *duelos y quebrantos*, but that the name could possibly have come from the breaking of bones to consume the remains of animals that had not been slaughtered for the

purpose of eating, but had died of other causes (23). Perhaps these animals were less desirable for eating than other, more prized ones, and so therefore went to those lower down on the “food chain,” so to speak. Nadeau also explains that simple foods such as those eaten by the protagonist were a mark of poverty (65). These meager living circumstances and the repetitive nature of the protagonist’s existence, along with the amount of free time he possesses, serve to identify him as a hidalgo. Because all of the features used to describe him could fit any member of the hidalgo class, it is as if he does not exist as a unique individual at the beginning of the novel. The protagonist’s lack of a name also contributes to this idea.

In the first chapter of the novel the narrator cannot, and in fact does not want to, remember the protagonist’s name. The lack of a name—one of the basic defining qualities for an individual—gives anonymity to this character. As Fernández Rodríguez-Escalona cleverly puts it, this character is a “don nadie” (22). The fact that he has no name also indicates the protagonist’s insignificance, as though he has done nothing in his life to earn an individual characterization. The protagonist aims to establish significance for himself by taking on a name—don Quijote de la Mancha—and by becoming a knight like his heroes in the books of chivalry. This taking of a name is important to consider when analyzing the protagonist’s attempt to shed his current anonymity and transform his identity. According to Fernández Rodríguez-Escalona, the protagonist is unsatisfied with his current state, and so rejects his old circumstances in favor of new ones (23). In this way, he enacts individual will by refusing the situation in which his birth and society have placed him, and believes that he has the power to transform it into one that suits him better. It is ironic, of course, because in the books of chivalry, knightly status and titles were bestowed onto an individual by the king—not taken up as an act of will by that individual. It

seems that right from the beginning, the reader can question the protagonist's ability to use will alone to fulfill his dreams of becoming a knight.

These examples illustrate the identity—or the non-identity—of the protagonist at the beginning of the novel: someone whose reputation is based on his family name but who has become impoverished and insignificant within society, almost to the point of anonymity. It seems as though Cervantes' protagonist is destined to continue on a track predetermined by the decline in his social standing. Society has laid out a role for this protagonist to play, but he rebels against this role.<sup>3</sup> During the Renaissance in Spain, however, new ideas about the concept of destiny were beginning to emerge. As explained by Domingo Ynduráin, the nature of an individual's existence was no longer determined by inherited circumstances, but instead by their personal values and actions (93). That is to say, a belief in the possibility of individual agency and will was coming into favor with the currents of humanism, as opposed to an existence determined by social standing and responding to a prearranged destiny. It is in this emerging set of beliefs that sets the stage for Cervantes' protagonist to attempt to reject his initial identity as a “hidalgo” in favor of a new one as a “caballero andante.”

In order to trace the success or failure of the protagonist's attempt to reformulate his identity, it will be useful to explore the reasons why he embarks on this quest. The narrator discusses his “knightly mission” as early as Chapter 1 of Part I. He aims to “[...] hacerse

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<sup>3</sup> This idea can be connected to the concept of *theatrum mundi*: the world as a stage or a theater in which each individual is assigned a role, and is expected to play that role well. Various scholars discuss this concept, such as Bernheimer (1954), Salvia (1981) and Christian (1987). Seventeenth-century Spanish dramatist Pedro Calderón de la Barca exemplifies this concept in his works such as *El gran teatro del mundo* and *La vida es sueño*, where individuals dedicate themselves to enacting the role assigned to them as best they can. Also in Juan Luis Vives' *Fábula del hombre*, the god Jupiter tells the actors that they must play the roles assigned to them, and not divert from these roles (156). The character of don Quijote upturns this concept, because not only does he reject the role assigned to him, but he also takes on another role and tries to play that chosen role well instead.

caballero andante, y irse por todo el mundo con sus armas y caballo a buscar las aventuras [...] deshaciendo todo género de agravio, y poniéndose en ocasiones y peligros donde, acabándolos, cobrase eterno nombre y fama” (I.1, 75). From the beginning, this knightly mission is tied to the protagonist’s sense of self. It is a quest that he takes personally, and that he believes will help him to change his identity and establish himself as a significant member of society (“cobrase eterno nombre”). It is this spirit of individuality and the newfound belief in one’s own power to change their destiny that came about during the seventeenth century in Spain that fuels the protagonist to take up this quest. How does don Quijote, the name by which he is now known at this point in the novel, believe that the completion of these knightly adventures will allow him to shed his previous identity as an unknown hidalgo and transform himself into a knight? What aspects of his knightly mission will facilitate this transformation for him? The features of this knightly purpose will now be discussed in more detail.

This knightly purpose has two sides. One is that he wishes to do good deeds and help others, as restated in Chapter 2 of Part I: “[...] los agravios que pensaba deshacer, tuertos que enderezar, sinrazones que enmendar, y abusos que mejorar, y deudas que satisfacer” (I.2, 79). Don Quijote’s intentions are to right wrongs and prevent injustices from occurring. As Bell explains, a person’s intentions were key in determining their worth in seventeenth-century Spanish society: “El hombre de carácter puede conquistar aún espiritualmente, ya que puede estimarse a sí mismo y a los demás no sólo por lo que *son*, sino por lo que *pretenden ser* las tendencias y aspiraciones de toda su vida” (320) (my emphasis). It is possible that there is sincerity behind this mission, but we must keep in mind that Ynduráin also states that the idea of nobility was changing at the time from being based on titles and family names, to being based on individual action (93). As previously mentioned, an individual in seventeenth-century Spanish

society could gain (or regain) a good reputation or nobility for their family name by means of personal acts of virtue. In other words, there was a selfish purpose to be achieved behind the completion of good deeds. When considered from this perspective, don Quijote's seemingly selfless knightly mission takes on another dimension. Noble status as attained through an individual's actions also brought them individual fame and renown (Ynduráin 100). By righting wrongs and preventing injustices ("los agravios que pensaba deshacer, tuertos que enderezar") it would be possible for don Quijote to improve his personal reputation and regain some of the weight that his family name used to carry. He would no longer be just "un hidalgo de aldea," but, in his mind, succeed in transforming himself into a "caballero andante." Behind his repeatedly stated knightly intentions, there exists another element that is essential to consider in the process of identity formation in which don Quijote is involved throughout the novel.

He is also looking to gain esteem or *fama* through enacting his knightly mission. Don Quijote wants to shed his anonymity in a big way—not just by becoming "somebody," but a "famous somebody." Apart from his ardent reading of the books of chivalry, this could explain why he chooses to pursue adopting the identity of a knight: the possibility of fame. As explained by Edward C. Riley, an unknown hero is not truly a hero (30). That is, someone only becomes a "hero" if one's "heroic deeds" are well known. The idea of individual agency—that each man was his own "god," who determined his worth and sense of self through his actions, to paraphrase Bell<sup>4</sup>, meant that it was not only one's actions, but perhaps more importantly how these actions

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<sup>4</sup> The exact phrase that Bell uses to describe the shift from man's definition based on his relationship with God in the Middle Ages to the idea of the individual that formed their own identity during the Renaissance is "El hombre, pequeño Dios." (167). Many other scholars, such as Manuel García Puertas, also liken the individual of the Renaissance to a "god," and not only in the context used in this paper. This comparison is often used in connection with the trend of increased artistic creation that occurred during the Renaissance – man as "creator." García Puertas specifically quotes *The City of the Sun* by Tommaso Campanella in calling man a

were received by others, that defined their identity and place in society. In this sense, identity formation was not exclusively individual, but collective as well. Don Quijote is fully aware of this, as demonstrated by his numerous references to the fame that he wishes to gain, as well as to the book of chivalry that he assumes will be written about him. For example, in Chapter 18 of Part I, he states: “[...] éste es el día, digo, en que se ha de mostrar, tanto como en otro alguno, el valor de mi brazo, y en el que tengo de hacer obras que queden escritas en el libro de la Fama por todos los venideros siglos” (I.18, 218). This is in response to the herds of sheep that he and Sancho observe, which don Quijote believes to be two armies approaching each other. Don Quijote believes that this impending battle presents an opportunity for him to show his prowess as a knight in a physical manner, an act that will be recognized in future books of chivalry. Edward H. Friedman proposes that recognition is don Quijote’s principal concern in this particular situation (12). In order to own his identity as a knight, he transforms these situations and likens them to episodes from the books of chivalry, such as an epic battle between two armies. He takes action and plunges into the “armies,” with Rocinante, ready to fight for fame and glory. He is so enticed by the prospect of earning fame, by transforming from the “nobody” that he is at the beginning of the novel, into “somebody,” that he alters situations such as this. Gaining fame is an essential part in the process of transforming his identity. But by what means does he aim to perform these heroic acts, earn fame, and change his identity into that of a knight? This is the next question to be explored.

In Chapter 19 of Part I, don Quijote meets a character named Alonso López and identifies himself by proclaiming, “Y quiero que sepa vuestra reverencia que yo soy un caballero de la

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“segundo Dios” (2), to describe the increased intellectual and cultural endeavors taken on during the Renaissance, as well as the efforts by Spain to conquer the Americas – all a reflection of the increased confidence in the abilities of the individual.

Mancha, llamado don Quijote, y es mi oficio y ejercicio andar por el mundo enderezando tuertos y desfaciendo agravios” (I.19, 233). López, who has just been injured by don Quijote, questions this statement about his knightly mission by replying, “No sé cómo pueda ser eso de enderezar tuertos – dijo el bachiller – pues a mí de derecho me habéis vuelto tuerto, dejándome una pierna quebrada, la cual no se verá derecha en todos los días de su vida; y el agravio que en mí habéis deshecho ha sido dejarme agraviado de manera que me quedaré agraviado para siempre” (I.19, 233). This humorous exchange exemplifies a mismatch that exists between don Quijote’s perception of his mission, and how the enacting of this mission is received by the world around him. This mismatch is critical because as displayed in the above example, his actions often cause more harm than they do good. The means by which he attempts to carry out his knightly purpose and solidify his identity as a knight are through violent acts that he perceives as heroic.

Acts of violence fit within his stated knightly aims, as well as his personal aim to garner fame. His heroes in the books of chivalry fought all types of enemies, from fantastic beasts to other knights. Don Quijote sees this and believes that in order for him to become a knight and to earn the fame that he desires, he will need to perform similar acts. His identity as a knight is fragile at the beginning of the novel, because even though he has all the trappings—a name, armor, weapons, a horse, a squire, even a lady to serve—he lacks the situations in which to prove himself. He must act like a knight in order to become one, and therefore seeks out situations to do so.

One such instance in which don Quijote creates a situation to prove his worth as a knight is the episode in which he and Sancho encounter a group of prisoners being transported by guards. When Sancho tells him that these men are being incarcerated for their crimes, don Quijote refuses to believe this. This study operates under the hypothesis of Larubia-Prado that

don Quijote is not insane and is conscious of his actions and decisions (337). In this case, he consciously recognizes a situation that he can reinterpret for his own ends. Despite Sancho's insistence that everyone is subject to the laws of the king and that these men have violated those laws, don Quijote wants to liberate them from what he considers to be wrongful imprisonment. Bradburn-Ruster hypothesizes that as a man of the Renaissance, don Quijote views this as a crime against the free will of these individuals (5). The protagonist sees an opportunity here for what he believes to be a "heroic" act in freeing the prisoners, and so provokes a physical altercation with the guards transporting them: "Y diciendo y haciendo, arremetió con él tan presto, que, sin que tuviese lugar de ponerse en defensa, dio con él en el suelo, malherido de una lanzada [...] Las demás guardas [...] pusieron mano a sus espadas los de a caballo, y los de a pie a sus dardos, y arremetieron a don Quijote [...]" (I.22, 274). Don Quijote goes to extreme lengths to prove his valor as a knight, as demonstrated by the grave injury that he caused the guard who received the *lanzada*. As a result of don Quijote's actions, the prisoners are liberated from their chains and the guards are left injured.

After don Quijote frees the prisoners, he reveals his motivation for this act of violence. He asks the prisoners to find his lady Dulcinea del Toboso, and to regale her with the tale of their liberation at the hands of such a brave and honorable knight. He says: "[...] es mi voluntad, que, cargados de esa cadena que quité de vuestros cuellos, luego os pongáis en camino y vais a la ciudad del Toboso, y allí os presentéis ante la señora Dulcinea del Toboso, y [...] le contéis, punto por punto, todos los que ha tenido esta famosa aventura hasta ponerlos en la deseada libertad" (I.22, 275). There are two specific words in this selection that are worth noting: *voluntad*, or "will" and *famosa*, or "famous."

It is significant that don Quijote uses the word *voluntad* to describe his desire for the prisoners to tell Dulcinea about this act. Just previous to setting the prisoners free, he made a statement that no one man can force the will of another: “[...] esta gente, aunque los llevan, van de por fuerza, y no de su voluntad” (I.22, 265). If he is adamant about the idea that it is a crime to force the prisoners against their will to serve the king, how is it that he considers it justified to force his will upon them to inform Dulcinea of his actions? Why does he become enraged when the prisoners attempt to enact their free will by refusing his request? Does the concept of individual will only exist for him when it is convenient? The perceptive reader starts to see cracks forming in don Quijote’s identity as a knight here. It was standard reciprocal practice in the books of chivalry for those who had been rescued from danger by a knight to go to that knight’s lady and inform her of the deed, so as to win her heart. The fact that don Quijote feels obliged to inform the prisoners of this task shows that he recognizes that they are not aware of such a reciprocal exchange. Perhaps, deep down, don Quijote realizes that he is not a knight and this is not the world of the books of chivalry.

The use of the word *famosa* is interesting here as well. This incident has not yet become well known, unless the guards have already informed the police of the matter, and yet don Quijote describes it as “famous.” He already assumes that this act has brought his desired result of recognition. It serves to emphasize the fact that fame is a principal aim in don Quijote’s quest, and is important to consider for the process of restructuring his identity.

Don Quijote is disillusioned by the fact that the prisoners have not rewarded his “heroic” act with recognition, and that this act means nothing towards gaining the reputation of a brave knight that he desires. From his perspective, this act was justified by noble motivations. In reality, however, this violence has only facilitated the possibility for more crimes to occur by

setting a band of criminals free. Don Quijote's illusions of bettering his reputation and solidifying his identity as a knight by freeing the prisoners are shattered.

Another episode in which don Quijote attempts to perform heroic acts in order to gain fame and transform himself into a knight is the confrontation with the Biscayan man. During their adventures, don Quijote and Sancho Panza encounter a group of friars and a lady with her attendants. Don Quijote interprets the situation to mean that the friars are actually enchanters who have kidnapped the lady, and that it is his duty to rescue her (I.8, 133). The lady is not in distress; in fact she is traveling to Seville with her assistants, and the group of friars happens to be traveling ahead of them on the road. Don Quijote attempts to engage the friars in a fight, and they flee the situation. This violent scene puts the lady and her attendants in danger. One of them, a Biscayan man, fights back by cutting don Quijote's ear, and he begins to bleed. The violent act incited by don Quijote causes more injury, because he in turn attacks the Biscayan man, who "[...] comenzó a echar sangre por las narices y por la boca, y por los oídos [...]" (I.9, 145). This is more evidence to the fact that don Quijote is not afraid to cause grave injuries, in which blood comes out of the nose, mouth and ears of the victim, in order to prove himself. It is the first time, however, that don Quijote himself receives injuries, and it is not a coincidence that immediately preceding this episode he speaks with Sancho about knights and their injuries.

Don Quijote states that injuries are marks of honor for knights, and that true knights never complain about physical pain (I.8, 131). Considering these statements, one could claim that don Quijote seeks to get injured, to prove his knighthood and to gain the reputation of one who does not shy away from a battle with an enemy. This episode illustrates another element of don Quijote's quest to reformulate his identity. It is very important for don Quijote to have marks that show his prowess as a knight. In this case, the marks are physical. In the case of fame, it is

more of a symbolic mark of a knight's ability. Both, however, are mutually recognized and understood by the knight himself and the public. External demonstrations of any kind that "prove" his ability as a knight are essential for don Quijote, and this goes a long way to explain why he often chooses acts of violence in order to attempt to transform himself into a knight. However, these external demonstrations are not always effective, as exemplified by the episodes with Andrés.

One of the first violent encounters that don Quijote has is in the episode with Andrés, the servant boy who is beaten by his master in Chapter 4 of Part I for losing a sheep from his flock. The protagonist recognizes an opportunity to exercise his knightly abilities, stating that "[...] tan presto me pone ocasiones delante donde yo pueda cumplir con lo que debo a mi profesión [...] sin duda, son de algún menesteroso o menesterosa, que ha de menester mi favor y ayuda" (I.4, 95). In this way, he justifies his actions under his knightly mission to right wrongs and help those in need, which also serves the purposes of earning him fame and proving to others that he is a knight. Don Quijote demands that the master stop whipping Andrés by threatening him with a physical attack, and the master promises to stop. After Don Quixote leaves, however, he continues whipping Andrés even more severely.

In Chapter 31 of Part I, don Quijote is informed of this by Andrés, who says of his master, "En efecto, él me paró tal, que hasta ahora he estado curándome en un hospital del mal que el mal villano entonces me hizo. De todo lo cual tiene vuestra merced la culpa; porque si se fuera su camino adelante y no viniera donde no le llamaban, [...] mi amo se contentara con darme una o dos docenas de azotes [...]" (I.31, 390). This is significant, because not only has don Quijote's attempt to use violence as a demonstration of his worthiness as a knight backfired, but it has directly caused injury to an innocent victim. His intervention and threat of violence has

not righted a wrong, but instead caused one to occur. This episode is unique in that it is one of the only instances in which the undeniably disastrous results of don Quijote's actions are presented to him. His reaction to this news is critical to consider in terms of the violent acts that he commits as part of his attempt to restructure his identity.

Although don Quijote admits that he was wrong to leave the scene before Andrés' master paid him what he was owed, don Quijote does not claim responsibility for the increased severity of the beating. In fact, he is outraged when Andrés says, "Por amor de Dios, señor caballero andante, que si otra vez me encontrare, aunque vea que me hacen pedazos, no me socorra ni ayude, sino déjeme con mi desgracia; que no será tanta, que no sea mayor la que me vendrá de su ayuda de vuestra merced, a quien Dios maldiga, y a todos cuantos caballeros andantes han nacido en el mundo" (I.31, 391). Andrés' insistence in that this "caballero andante" never help him again, because instead of resolving the problem he only exacerbated it, is unthinkable to don Quijote. After all, his heroes of the books of chivalry were always helpful in their actions—certainly Amadis never created such a tragic situation for a person that he was attempting to aid. Andrés' speech is a direct threat to don Quijote's identity as a knight. The narrator says that he wants to go and punish Andrés for such a statement. This identity that he has attempted to create for himself is so fragile that any attack on it produces rage in don Quijote, because he is insecure about his standing as a knight. He has constructed this identity on the basis of acts in which he attempts to prove himself, but which often do not turn out the way that he foresees. The reputation that don Quijote tries to build on the basis of these actions has no merit. As previously referenced from Riley, an unknown hero is not truly a hero. In the case of Andrés, a "hero" who causes pain to a victim rather than saving them is not truly a hero either.

This strong reaction may also speak to a sense of disillusionment that is beginning to arise within the protagonist about his identity and effectiveness as a knight. The episode with Andrés is unique because Cervantes starts to foment pessimism and disenchantment in the reader, and perhaps within don Quijote himself, about his ability to transform into a knight. However, this episode is also one of many that show don Quijote that perhaps violence is not the most effective means to his desired ends.

At one point in Part I of the novel, don Quijote realizes that his efforts to gain fame and affirm his status as a knight are not working. The prisoners that he freed did not report back to Dulcinea with his acts of heroism. Ginés de Pasamonte speaks for all of them when he says to don Quijote: “Lo que vuestra merced nos manda, señor y libertador nuestro, es imposible de toda imposibilidad cumplirlo [...]” (I.22, 275). The prisoners, of course, do not want to venture out to see Dulcinea for fear of getting caught by the Santa Hermandad. Don Quijote asks the ladies that were accompanied by the Biscayan man to do the same, but it is not carried out: “Las temerosas y desconsoladas señoras, sin entrar en cuenta de lo que don Quijote pedía, y sin preguntar quién Dulcinea fuese [...]” (I.9, 146). They only tell don Quijote that they will do it so that he will not injure their attendant further. Don Quijote is not getting the results that he wants from these actions, and so he reconsiders the means by which he can affirm his identity as a knight. He remembers an episode from one of the books of chivalry about Amadis, in which his hero engaged in a “penance,” in an isolated location, and by doing so, “[...] mostró su prudencia, valor, valentía, sufrimiento, firmeza y amor [...]” (I.25, 304). Don Quijote believes that taking this type of action may be a more effective way to imitate his hero and affirm his own knightly status, and even goes as far as to say that these actions brought Amadis more fame than his “heroic” acts. Don Quijote says, “Y podrá ser que viniese a contentarme con sola la imitación de

Amadís, que sin hacer locuras de daño, sino de lloros y sentimientos, alcanzó tanta fama como el que más” (I.25, 305). The prospect of fame continues to entice him here, and enacting an emotional penance (“lloros y sentimientos”) seems to be an easier way to obtain it than through acts of violence (“locuras de daño”). He talks to Sancho about the possibility of performing his own penance in the Sierra Morena, “Ansí, que me es más fácil imitarle en esto que no en hender gigantes, descabezar serpientes, matar endriagos, desbaratar ejércitos, fracasar armadas y deshacer encantamentos” (I.25, 304). It is not that with this, don Quijote is abandoning violent acts as a means to prove himself a knight. He is merely supplementing the formation of his identity with other aspects that he knows from the books of chivalry. This quote is very interesting to consider when analyzing the process of identity formation in which don Quijote engages, for multiple reasons that will be discussed here.

Firstly, this selection of dialogue shows that don Quijote is constructing his identity in an arbitrary manner. He even goes so far as to decide which knight he favors to imitate in his penance, choosing between Amadis and another knight, Roland. Larubia-Prado states, “[...] we understand that Don Quijote allows himself to make his own rules when it comes to imitating certain aspects of knightly behavior while ignoring others. Therefore, he rejects [...] being destructive in his penance, unlike previous knights like Roland” (340). Larubia-Prado’s analysis shows that don Quijote is picking and choosing which knightly features suit him, and which do not. Just as he chooses the situations that he comes across in his quest that are most likely to gain him fame, so too does he construct his penance in the manner that will be most beneficial—and as he says here, easiest—for him.

Secondly, this quote by don Quijote about his penance is significant because it explains a lot about his violent acts. In being afforded insight into don Quijote’s explanation of how he

will enact this penance, we come to realize that he is considering all angles in order to make it possible to affirm his identity as a knight. Much like his acts of violence that also aim towards this purpose, this penance is a performance. Don Quijote is putting on a show for others to observe—or at least know about—in order to gain the reputation of a knight. The violence and this penance are all an act—all part of his designs to reinforce his desired identity and have others recognize it. This idea of don Quijote enacting a performance is explored by Larubia-Prado in the context of the love triangles that don Quijote resolves between Cardenio, Luscinda, Fernando and Dorotea (348) but I believe that this notion of performance can be expanded to the violent acts committed by don Quijote as well. I shall explore this notion of violence as performance further here.

We have already established that don Quijote commits what he believes to be heroic acts in order to gain fame and reformulate his personal identity into that of a knight. More often than not, these perceived heroic deeds are nothing more than unprovoked acts of violence. He creates these situations to suit his own purposes, giving himself opportunities to prove his worth as a knight. The actions that he takes in these imagined situations are for the benefit of others—so that others can see how brave he is, and spread news of his valiant deeds across the land. This certainly relates to the concepts of fame and reputation in seventeenth-century Spain, in which one's level of esteem was based mostly on how others viewed them.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, external demonstrations of virtue, bravery and mettle were essential to establishing a good reputation, and these would have to be observed by others in order for them to “count” towards an individual's reputation. This is why don Quijote chooses such means as physical violence to try to prove his worth and gain a good reputation. His acts of physical violence are external manifestations of the

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<sup>5</sup> Various authors discuss this idea in their work, such as Riley, Friedman, Bell and Ynduráin.

internal struggle to construct the identity that wants to create for himself. Both the violent acts mentioned and the penance in Sierra Morena are conscious performances by don Quijote in order to build up his desired identity. It could be that he commits these acts not only to prove himself a knight to others, but also to convince himself, because deep down he is still insecure about his identity. As the novel progresses – and especially in Part II – don Quijote begins to increasingly doubt himself and this identity that he has tried to adopt.

Does don Quijote accomplish what he set out to do? Has he been able to shed his old identity as “un hidalgo,” commit heroic acts, gain fame and a good reputation, and become a true “caballero andante”? By the end of the novel, he has been defeated by another “knight” and forced to return home. Manuel García Puertas claims that each challenge faced by don Quijote to his identity throughout the novel has contributed more and more to his defeat (38). While reading about his final moments, the reader realizes that his situation has not changed from the beginning of the novel, but that now he accepts his impoverished state as a hidalgo. As Fernández Rodríguez-Escalona puts it, “Y de la imposibilidad de integración del yo de don Quijote en el mundo nace la última etapa, reducida al capítulo final, en la que Alonso Quijano se acepta como hidalgo del capítulo inicial [...]” (23). He has returned from his quest to become a knight completely disillusioned. Another significant change is that now he despises the books of chivalry (II.74, 591). This represents a dramatic reversal. Instead of having high regard for the heroes about whom he read in these books, he wants nothing to do with them. He even goes as far as to say that he regrets that one was written about him: “[...] perdone la ocasión que sin yo pensarlo le di de haber escrito tantos y tan grandes disparates como en ella escribe; porque parto desta vida con escrúpulo de haberle dado motivo para escribirlos” (II.74, 591). He now rejects completely the identity of a knight that he tried so hard to adopt.

He does not earn a good reputation or regain the nobility of his family from the “heroic” acts of violence that he commits. They end up earning a warrant for his arrest by the Santa Hermandad, who confront him in Chapter 45 of Part I. In an ironic twist characteristic of the work of Cervantes, don Quijote is not rewarded with fame for his actions, but instead gains infamy, as exemplified by his arrest by the Santa Hermandad and also by characters such as the Duke and Duchess’ reactions to him in Part II. According to Riley, the biggest difference between fame and what he calls “mala fama,” in the books of chivalry was the element of virtue (29). An individual’s actions had to be virtuous in order for them to gain fame and be considered knightly. The “mala fama” or infamy gained by don Quijote as a result of his misdeeds disqualifies him from becoming a knight, and this suggests Cervantes’ conviction that attempting to create one’s own identity is a foolish venture.

As demonstrated by don Quijote’s failure to shed his inherited identity, and the lack of wealth and regard that came with this, Cervantes shows that it was impossible for an individual in seventeenth-century Spain to escape his circumstances and start anew. This sort of narrative, in which an individual begins in a certain station in life and attempts to better themselves, reminds us of certain examples of the picaresque narrative. Friedman makes the connection between Cervantes’ novel and Quevedo’s *El buscón* as well, qualifying them both as narratives of “Renaissance self-fashioning” (13). Both Cervantes’ don Quijote and the Quevedo’s Pablos believe that they possess the will to be able to reconstruct their situations in life. This comes from the renewed confidence in the power of the individual that surfaced during the Renaissance in Spain. The character of don Quijote possesses this will, but Cervantes places it in the mind of an aged, feeble man whose intention to rise above his circumstances and control his own path in life is clearly delusional. Lugo Acevedo studies in detail don Quijote’s famous phrase “Yo sé

quién soy,” an attempt by the protagonist to assert confidence and potential to create his own place in the world, free from the constraints of circumstances into which he was born or any notion of a preconceived destiny (179). But his assertion is tinged with irony, as the last thing the would-be knight knows is his true identity.

Don Quijote’s idealism and individual aspirations are strong but misguided. Cervantes seems to be attempting to make a statement about the impossibility of aspiring to goals based on fictional ideals. I believe it is more likely, however, that following the idealism and belief in the abilities of the individual, disenchantment started to set in. Many scholars of the Renaissance and Baroque in Spain speak to this shift, such as García Puertas, who characterizes the picaresque narrative as attempting to display the harsh reality of Baroque-era Spain (21). Bell also explains this change in attitude: “Pero los designios del hombre, para los españoles del siglo XVII, no eran ni apariencia demasiado débiles ni ruines, sino más bien demasiado atrevidos e inmensos; acabaron perdiéndose [...]” (323). This quote fits don Quijote’s search for identity perfectly. It is not that he did not possess the abilities, but that his aspirations to earn fame, to change from a “nobody” to a “somebody,” to become a knight like the ones about whom he had read in books of chivalry, were insurmountable. Cervantes’ novel exemplifies the tension between the will of an individual and the power of society to defeat them (García Puertas 24). The optimistic outlook of Spain at the time of the Renaissance, with increased cultural and intellectual endeavors and the integration of colonies into its empire was too ambitious, and ultimately resulted in many failures and the pessimistic tone of the Baroque era. Optimism about the will and potential of the individual presented by humanist thinkers such as Juan Luis Vives in his *Fábula del hombre* is present in the character of don Quijote, but is not realized. However, readers can still respect don Quijote for his efforts to overcome his humble station in life, for his audacity to dream.

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