

Romance and Pleasure: Ariostan Discourses from Torquato Tasso and Miguel de Cervantes

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Curriculum of Comparative Literature.

Chapel Hill
2006

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ABSTRACT

Joseph Nienaber: Romance and Pleasure: Ariostan Discourses from Torquato Tasso
and Miguel de Cervantes
(Under the direction of Jessica Wolfe)

This study investigates the relationship of sixteenth-century Italian debates over romances of chivalry to Cervantes's Don Quixote. It argues that Cervantes's novel is a literary installment to the debate and that the novel makes use of imitation and genre-bending to achieve its objective of asserting pleasure as the primary theoretical criterion. Torquato Tasso's discourses are examined in opposition to Cervantes's novel, and similarities between them are explored.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The sixteenth century was a tumultuous period for literary criticism in the wake of the popularity of romances of chivalry and the rediscovery of Aristotle's Poetics. Critics occupied themselves with the problematic relationship of an increasingly rigid, classical standard of composition to more popular tastes; works such as Amadís de Gaula and Ludovico Ariosto's Orlando Furioso vied for an increasingly literate public and critical praise. Since contemporary readings of Aristotle had established unity (for better or for worse) as a critical virtue in poetics, tension between the critical supremacy of antiquity and readers' preference for vernacular traditions could not long remain unresolved. This tension between modernity and antiquity was further complicated by the emergence of the Greek romances, most notably Heliodorus's Aethiopica, which provided an example from antiquity of what had been considered a non-classical genre. It was in this problematic context that Cervantes composed Don Quixote. In this project, I shall explore the post-Orlando Furioso debate between Giovambattista Giraldi Cinthio and Torquato Tasso on romance's generic status, and explore Miguel de Cervantes's answer to this debate. Cervantes's project with the Quixote is similar to Tasso's efforts with Gerusalemme Liberata, but Cervantes is more daring in his composition. I intend to demonstrate how Tasso and Cervantes are similar in their self-consciously

critical approach to composing fiction, and that Cervantes composes Don Quixote as a work liberated from classical obligations.

Giovambattista Giraldi Cinthio and Torquato Tasso argue positions that are often representative of numerous critics in the sixteenth century, and around the same time Miguel de Cervantes spent much time in Italy and was undoubtedly exposed to such critical debates. Additionally, Ludovico Ariosto was very important to Spanish literature, for he was as popular in Spain as in Italy (Hart 16). Through the lens of Giovambattista Giraldi Cinthio, Torquato Tasso, and Miguel de Cervantes, one may witness a shift in literary perspective that gradually divorces prose fiction from antiquity as classicism's grip on the arts otherwise tightens and the Renaissance draws to a close; contemporaneous to Cervantes, academies rise and learning is codified, and the openness of the Renaissance that he adored in Italian art devolves into deference for models. William J. Bouwsma explains:

The result of following the ancients has often been described as "Neoclassicism"; the most admired modern artists were those who were thought to have absorbed most perfectly the rules governing the art of the ancients and thus came closest to the imitation of God's art in nature. ... rules for the arts were extracted and systematized, pointing to such formal virtues as unity and coherence, balance and symmetry, precision and economy of means, qualities increasingly required of all the arts. (Bouwsma 247)

Although antiquity is in reality not a closed corpus of texts that displays consistent poetics or modes of imitation, one would infer otherwise from many contemporary critics' interpretations of Aristotle and invocation of the classical poets: the "discovery" of Heliodorus's Aethiopica affirms that antiquity is not a closed system of homogenous texts, but actually an ever-evolving body that displays great diversity in poetics and poses challenges to those who invoke "the ancients." The conflicted

trend toward classicism is evident in Tasso's epic, Gerusalemme Liberata, which conveys a formal deference to antiquity and the preoccupation with unity; it also displays a clear affection for romance's structure, pleasure, and episodic narrative. Tasso incorporates much that is typical in romance – courtly love, marvels, *entrelacement* of episodes – and renders these elements indistinguishable at times from Homeric or Vergilian conventions. The medieval knights and the Christian armies' commander (Godfrey of Bouillon) often display a relationship mirroring Arthur to his knights or Agamemnon to his Achaeans. All episodes tie neatly into the central action of Jerusalem's liberation from the Saracens. The best knights of the poem, Rinaldo and Tancredi, are not superhuman, and their prowess in battle recalls Homer's heroes sooner than Lancelot. And all marvels (justified poetically because it emanates from God) are subject to post-Tridentine Catholic theology. Tasso's poem depicts the tensions between modernity and antiquity and also demonstrates success at fusion.

Tasso's poetic work is important in the progression from Orlando Furioso to Don Quixote because it represents a critical and poetic effort at integrating vernacular tradition into a form more amenable to classical forms. With the publication of Don Quixote (part I) in 1605, however, Cervantes effectively rejects the co-opting of vernacular forms by classicism. Tasso's poetical response to Ariosto was one of enthusiasm mixed with conservatism, but Cervantes mocks both the excesses of medieval romance and critical attempts to fuse romance with classically acceptable fiction: poetry with clear allusions to classical tropes, based on legend, and theoretically in line with classical writing. His novel divorces prose fiction from

classical forces that would bind it, and to achieve this end he mocks not the literature of antiquity but the critics who would anachronistically bow to it. In a rather provocative move, he emphasizes a reader's pleasure over the critics' blessings – this is significant because Tasso, who openly appreciates pleasure in a text more than many of this period's poetical critics, considers literary pleasure to be problematic nonetheless.

Cervantes provides a final installment to the Ariostan debates with the publication of the first part of Don Quixote in 1605 and the second installment in 1615. Like Tasso, Cervantes establishes a new poetics based on genres he finds pleasurable, but unlike Tasso, Cervantes asserts pleasure as the essence of imaginative writing, and this pleasure takes precedence over unity and other criteria of adherence to classical poetics. Tasso, in his debate with Giraldi, represents important strands of these arguments over modern poetics and classical precedent, and Cervantes draws many subjects for discussion from positions they represent in their respective discourses. Don Quixote has the final word

CHAPTER II

GIRALDI AND TASSO DEBATE

Giovambattista Giraldi Cinthio (Giraldi) issues a defense of Ariosto's adaptation of romance in Discorse Intorno al Comporre dei Romanzi. With the publication of this treatise in 1549, he intends to commence a wider discussion of Ariosto and romance, and he desires that the discussion grow beyond mere attacks in order to explore a new poetics for the genre of romance. He hopes that new writers of romance may emerge from such discussion who can carry the genre to new heights (Giraldi 30). Torquato Tasso writes three responses to Giraldi entitled Discorsi dell'Arte Poetica. Tasso originally composed the three discourses between 1567 and 1570 for presentation to the Academy at Ferrara, but a collected version was later published in 1587 without his consent (Brand 70). He later abandons many of the arguments and precepts laid out in these discourses as his aesthetic perspectives shift, and he modifies his positions in his revised poetics, Discorsi del Poema Eroico. The early discourses remain important, however, because they reflect the ideological framework for his best-received work, the Gerusalemme Liberata, in which he attempts to fuse romance and epic in a new, vernacular Christian text.

The main contentions between Giraldi and Tasso are Ariosto's unapologetic adoption of romance's tendency toward digression, its variety of plot, and his apparent rejection of the principle of unity in poetic composition. Giraldi and Tasso

disagree sharply over the subjects of variety and unity, especially with respect to Castelvetro's unities: action, time, and place. Giraldi asserts that variety is acceptable for a romance and not a classical epic, and in so doing establishes his fundamental argument of generic divergence. Tasso, who believes romance is not generically distinct from classical epic, counters by invoking an Aristotelian espousal of unity that binds them together. In this exchange concerning variety in plot, Giraldi and Tasso discuss both episodic construction of a story, its relation to the reader's pleasure, and whether the literature of the vernacular ought to follow conventions different from classical languages (Latin and Greek). Giraldi begins his discourse on romance by demarcating it from epic. For Giraldi, epic in the manner of Vergil or Homer necessitates a single action of a single man (Giraldi 42). Thus he does not question the validity of unity employed by classical epic poets, and he argues that one ought to compose a Homeric or Vergilian epic based on classical standards. For Giraldi, the rules of Aristotle remain intact and pertain to single-action epics: the Iliad concerns Achilles and his wrath, and all other sub-stories become offshoots of that one, central action; the Odyssey concerns Odysseus and his journey home from the war at Troy; and the Aeneid concerns Aeneas's escape from Troy and journey to Italy to found both Rome and the Julian line.

Giraldi does not dispute that classical epic employs a single action for its foundation, but he skirts the issue of how the romance does not also require a single-action, single-man composition: in fact, he avoids the issue altogether. Giraldi deflects this difficult question and instead simply states that romance is, by its essence, not a composition of a single action or person.

Nostri ne hanno imitate molte non solo di uno ma di molti, perché sopra otto o dieci persone fondano tutta la fabrica del loro componimento. Ma danno il nome all'opera loro da quella persona o da quella azione che è di più considerazione in tutta l'opera et dalla quale pare che dependano tutte le altre o sia almeno cagione de legarle insieme.

Ours [i.e. romances] have imitated many actions not of one man only but of many, since they build the whole fabric of their work upon eight or ten persons, but they give to the work the name of that person or that action which is dominant in the whole and on which all others depend, or at least to that which reasonably binds them together. (Giraldi 11-2)

In a significant rejection of contemporary practice, Giraldi rejects the accepted hegemony of Aristotle in poetics. He does not dispute Aristotle's precepts per se, but limits them as irrelevant to all but classical genres; invoking Aristotle, the ostensible authority on epic, is impertinent when discussing romance. In a blow to classicists and Castelvetro's aesthetics, Aristotle is thus de-universalized and becomes something rather particular in his applicability to art. Although Giraldi certainly does not argue for a complete relativism in poetics, he is clearly uncomfortable with Aristotelian strictures in poetic composition. The times and art are different from those of Homer and Vergil, and critics cannot pretend otherwise.

Tasso disputes Giraldi's distinction between unity in romance and unity in epic. Within a wider generic discussion of plot, he first establishes that epic is distinct from tragedy because their objects of imitation differ (Tasso 359). Beyond this distinction, however, epic partakes of many of the traits assigned to it by Aristotle. As the "essential form of the poem," unity must govern the work's composition, or the work risks becoming something monstrous: Tasso likens a plot with variety and multiplicity to an incomplete, hybrid beast (Tasso 374). Calling upon "the shield of the authority of Aristotle and the majesty of ancient Greek and Latin poets," he

defends the epic as a genre of unity in both senses: epic's plot is unified, and the genre of epic cannot be split into sub-genres (Tasso 372). He likens his stance against variety both within the work and within generic categories to an intellectual dual between the truth and Giraldis's sophistry; defenders of unity must guard themselves with the shield of Aristotle against the "armi che da la ragione" (arms that reason supplies [empty rhetoric]) (ibid.).

Tasso decries Giraldis's invocation of changing times to justify new criteria such as variety; the readers have changed, but art has not. Although Tasso readily admits that poets who compose more pleasurable works will be read far more and for far longer than those whose works produce less delight, he nevertheless maintains that poets must not reject Aristotle's rules for composition simply because readers' or princes' tastes might demand otherwise (Tasso 373). Ariosto's supporters present variety as the vehicle for attracting and maintaining readership, something without which a poet quickly becomes irrelevant. Tasso acknowledges that Giovanni Giorgio Trissino, whose L'Italia Liberata conforms to Aristotelian precepts, is no longer widely read; he also acknowledges both that Ariosto, who abandoned Aristotle's rules for the epic, is widely read and known in many languages, and that Ariosto attained a level of poetic excellence few, modern or ancient, can match. Although he praises Ariosto's "felicity," assiduous care," and "precise sense of the good and beautiful," Tasso states that Ariosto's works will never become praiseworthy because they should not ultimately be imitated (ibid.). Readership is not the highest prize a poet can achieve; mere capacity for delighting readers does not justify a work as praiseworthy. There are therefore two kinds of readers: the "ignoranti" (ignorant) and

the “giudiziosi” (intelligent) (Tasso 353). A worthy epic must appeal to intelligent, and therefore discerning, readers, for delighting the ignorant is a much easier task. It is noteworthy that Tasso’s system of distinguishing readers is not class-based (or certainly not in a modern sense), for he admits that Ariosto’s supporters enjoy the readership of “ladies and lords and the courts” (Tasso 372). He instead demarcates those who are more discerning from those who are less so. Vulgarity for Tasso thereby becomes more about being in-the-know, for vulgar readers are those who cannot discern between “gli accidenti” and “la sostanza” of things (Tasso 385). Being widely read and enjoyed is therefore not a *carte blanche* for disregarding classical injunctions.

Giraldi argues for a different distinction between types of readers. Unlike Tasso, who employs the pronoun “we” when addressing his fellow discerning readers who recognize *la sostanza* in works, Giraldi employs another, collective “we” of national identity. The Greeks and Romans wrote epics of single action, but *we* are not Greek or Roman. Romance is not a classical genre like epic, but something that is still evolving and will ultimately attain the perfection found in Homer and Vergil. Romance, “laudably from our own language,” gives “to the excellent writers of it the same authority which [Homer and Vergil] gave to their works” (Giraldi 42-3). Classical epic has been perfected and exists under the rules of Aristotle, but romance’s evolution is neither classical nor complete. He implies that there is still much to do in a poetics of romance, for he states that no one has yet written one; much has been said about epic, but romance is newer, incomplete, and must be

addressed as such (Giraldi 30). Italy must participate in its own literary form's destiny and must not succumb to classical – and therefore foreign – determination.

Tasso objects to this reasoning, again basing his assertions on Aristotle. Speaking of incidentals and essentials, he distinguishes between romance's and epic's apparent differences and inherent similarities. Tasso admits that romances can tell different tales from the epics of antiquity, and he does not object to claims that customs can vary between a romance and a classical epic. These, he would assert, are merely incidentals: they are superficial differences that give a new form to an old substance. Generic distinction comes, he tells us, from essential differences in poetry espoused by Aristotle: difference in the things imitated, the manner of imitation, and the means of imitation. He also states that there are no genres or the present or future unknown to Aristotle (Tasso 379). Since romance and epic imitate the same things, in the same manner, and with the same means, there can be no distinction between them (Tasso 377). Ariosto does not therefore write in a genre different from that of Homer and Vergil; Ariosto merely mistakes the properties of the genre in which he composes. For Tasso, Aristotle's standards are not subject to changing historical contexts, but dehistoricized, eternal facts of composition true for all and for all time. Aristotle's observations reveal nature.

His second objection to Giraldi's argument is that post-classical, vernacular languages do not necessitate formal or generic difference in composition from classical. Giraldi's assertion that romance is of "our language" and not classical in form is dissected and refuted by Tasso, who disputes Giraldi's convenient interpretation of vernacular languages' properties. He concedes that particular

languages (both classical and vernacular) might have linguistic or connotative strengths in their very nature and that particular languages might be better for composing particular subjects. For example, he upholds Latin as befitting martial subjects while the Tuscan language may better express love: Latin has many consonants, which can evoke the sounds of armies, and Tuscan has pleasanter vowels and harmonies, which are better suited to love (Tasso 380). But he distinguishes between words and actions when he denounces the claim – not Giraldi’s, but another’s – that some languages are better suited to multiplicity as “completely unreasonable” (ibid.). Tasso dissociates language from culture; although a language might have peculiar, synchronic properties, poetry may not. Poetry has diachronic properties and is impartial to particulars of geography, nation, or epoch.

The second aspect of their dispute is over verisimilitude, a controversial subject in sixteenth-century literary theory. With respect to preferable bases for a romance, both Giraldi and Tasso agree that the best source for a good story is in the past. The past offers illustrious actions which are suitable for composing an epic or romance. Tasso privileges “chronicles of history” (Tasso 351), while Giraldi prefers fables from history (Giraldi 39). Tasso chooses chronicles because the historical basis of the story lends itself better to verisimilitude: if the depicted events are known to have truly happened in history, they are then more credible to an audience. Giraldi selects the fable (legend) because its historicity makes it a believable subject, and the distance between the events and their imitation (composition) gives the author ample room to embellish the tale without risking egregious and overt emendation of the past. Tasso’s and Giraldi’s respective positions on history are determined, in part, by their

relations to verisimilitude. Verisimilitude exists for Giraldi in order that the reader remains undisturbed and engaged in pleasure; Tasso's version of verisimilitude envisions more subordination to Christian doctrine, so the verisimilar takes on a didactic aspect.

Tasso begins his discussions of the romance by making a primary distinction between poets and orators. Orators begin with an occasion for their compositions, such as a speech on a timely topic or addresses for political action; the orator is therefore given a topic for his work and cannot select it with a poet's freedom. The poet, however, has myriad choices for his compositions, and he therefore must select his materials with more care than the orator. Since poets must choose their subjects, Tasso regards subjects from history as the most desirable because they serve as a good foundation for demonstrating truth (Tasso 350). Giraldi, too, believes that subjects taken from history are desirable in composing romance, but he does not emphasize, to the extent that Tasso does, the preeminence of verisimilitude in their selection. Their desirability comes not from their veracity but rather from their potential for development. In comparing the romance's composition to a body, he sets the fable as the skeletal frame of the organism (Giraldi 48). The skeleton must be strong, and illustrious actions of the past provide a solid framework on which the poem's invention may be set:

Terrà adunque quello istesso luoco il soggetto, del quale abbiamo già ditto, nel corpo del poem ache tengono l'ossa nell'uomo. Peroché, come l'ossa sostengono tutte le altre parti che compongono l'uomo, così il soggetto è il fondamento di tutta l'opera, il quale levato, è necesario ch'ogni cosa ruini.

The subject [...] will hold the same place in the body of the poem as do bones for the man. As the bones sustain all the other parts that compose the man, so the subject is the foundation of the whole work; if this is removed, everything

must fall in ruins... (ibid.)

Onto the skeleton of fable are grafted sinews, flesh, and skin. The bones of history exist to support the other aspects of the poetic work; just as admirers of famous architecture seldom note the quality of foundation, cement, and steel, the beautiful buildings supported by such materials could not stand long without them.

While Tasso asserts that history is a means and verisimilitude an end, Giraldi defines both fable and verisimilitude as means to the end of delight. His notion of fable can be best explained by his endorsement of Plutarch, who privileges the melding of history and legend for composition (Giraldi 43). The sinews of Giraldi's poetic body are the narrative elements that tie together the disjointed events of history and legend, the flesh is the embellishment of episodes with which the poet can fill in the spaces over and between the bones, and the skin is the poetic overlay of language that causes delight on the surface of the composition (Giraldi 47-9). History's events exist, in Giraldi's poetics, as a service to composing romance, for he states that verisimilitude should aid a romance in order that the readers do not reject the material by losing faith in it:

[D]ee avere grandissimo riguardo il poeta che le azzioni ch'egli si piglia per soggetto et per fondamento della fabrica della opera sua portion son essoloro, et nella disposizione et nelle alter parti, tanto del verisimile che non rimanga priva di fede; et che una parte così dall'altra dipenda che, o necessariamente, l'una venga dietro l'altra.

[T]he poet ought to be most careful that the actions he chooses for his subject and for the foundation of the structure of his work convey in themselves and in the disposition and in the other parts so much verisimilitude that faith is not strained and that one part depends upon another so that necessarily or verisimilarly one comes after the other. (Giraldi 88)

The subject may therefore be embellished as much as the poet wishes, for

verisimilitude is not connected to actual truth per se but only to the illusion of truth. So long as the reader does not reject the story as false and continues to engage the material, the poet has license to embellish as he wishes. This is a pragmatic approach that emphasizes the relationship between the reader and his pleasure in the subject: the verisimilar supports the pleasurable, not vice versa.

For Tasso, the semblance of truth and the actuality of truth are more difficult to distinguish, and there is no simple demarcation in his discourses. While positing marvels and wonder as conducive to delighting readers, he strongly asserts that falsity in the composition produces a lack of verisimilitude that in turn induces the intelligent reader to become incredulous. He maintains that wonder must be reconciled with history in romance. His solution to the problem of how to reconcile the history and marvel lies in adherence to doctrine: the marvelous can be verisimilar if God is its source (Tasso 355). Christian marvels provide both the wonder – without which the romance lacks delight – and the verisimilitude that a romance requires (Tasso 353). Employing Aristotelian categories, Tasso interprets the traditional realm of romance's marvels as having mistaken God's work for secondary, or dependent, incarnations; he implies that the marvels of romance are actually the manifestation of God's presence in the world (Tasso 355). He therefore collapses the distinction between the marvelous and the miraculous. Since he desires that the poet combine wonder with verisimilitude, a Christian rendering of romance can alleviate the seemingly irreconcilable prerequisites for delight and credibility. Tales taken from history must suitably reject things deemed false by contemporary readers. Pagan gods in tales from Homer and Vergil must be removed, despite Tasso's inestimable esteem

for their works. Tasso advocates selecting tales from chronicles of “a religion held true by us” (Tasso 357). This affords the potential for good composition as well as adds veracity. He admonishes poets not, however, to amend any stories that are foundational to Christianity:

Ma queste istorie o sono in guisa sacre e venerabili, ch’essendo sovr’esse fondate la stabilimento della nostra Fede, sia empietà l’alterarle; o non sono di maniera sacrosante ch’articolo di Fede sia ciò che in esse se contiene, sì che si conceda, senza colpa d’audacia o di poca religione...

But either such histories are so sacred and venerable that it is impiety to change them (the establishment of our Faith being based on them), or they are not so holy as to contain an article of faith within them and thus do allow some things to be added, some removed, and others changed without the sin of impudence or irreligion. (ibid)

Tasso again fuses a sense of literary verisimilitude with decorum and didacticism.

For Giraldi, decorum is of the utmost importance when composing romance with historical verisimilitude. He cites Vergil as the exemplar of decorous poetry, for Vergil adopted Homer’s form without his particulars. Staying too close to the form’s source – Homer’s and Vergil’s epics – renders a modern work alien and dull (Giraldi 30). History must be used for sources of illustrious actions and for familiarity, but too much familiarity is best avoided. He contextualizes custom as something historical, for “not all that Homer wrote is fitting for all times, for all ages, for every condition of person” (Giraldi 32). One age may improve upon the last, and Giraldi hints at the fluctuation of customs. One might ask whether even religion is permanent in Giraldi’s system; beliefs, customs, and history are all subject to the contingencies of history.

Tasso thus creates a poetics that demonstrates and instructs in the Christian faith, and the very nature of Christian-themed tales combined with a poem’s wonders is affirming of the Church. Tasso shifts his argument from an overt attempt at not

alienating his readers' reason to an implicit indoctrination of faith. Instruction's relationship to pleasure in poetry is complex in Tasso's discourses and the Gerusalemme Liberata, and it is unclear how comfortable he is with pleasure (for its own sake). An aspect of his poetics that recalls Horace is poetry's dual purposes of teaching and delighting, and the invocation to Gerusalemme Liberata conveys this idea:

... the world delights in lovely things,
For men have hearts sweet poetry will win,
And when the truth is seasoned in soft rhyme
It lures and leads the most reluctant in,
As we brush with honey the brim of a cup, to fool
A feverish child to take his medicine:
He drinks the bitter juice and cannot tell –
But it is a mistake that makes him well. (Gerusalemme Liberata I. 3)

Fiction is a lie that leads one to truth, and the pleasures of the fiction are what draw readers to the demonstration of that truth. Fiction, doctrine, and instruction are difficult to distinguish in Tasso's poetics because they work in conjunction with one another. Although he clearly admires Ariosto's capacity to please his readers, he uneasily advocates pleasure for its own sake.

One finds in Giraldi's and Tasso's respective discourses two approaches to romance criticism. Giraldi appears the pleasure-driven theorist for he consistently emphasizes delight and pleasure as the ends of poetry. His bold rejection of classical authority over romance seems deceptively simple, but he embarks on a programmatic poetics as sophisticated as Tasso's. Giraldi asserts a proto-nationalistic enterprise that places romance firmly within the Italian tradition and wrenches it from the grip of classical hegemony. Within this system, no outside power may bear influence over the vernacular genre of romance. The vernacular aspect of romance is held higher

than a pan-cultural and diachronic poetics. His defense of decorum distinguishes regional and temporal practices and not a universal code of mimesis subject to a changing readership. Imitation in poetry is therefore contextualized by time and place. The customs of Vergil's Romanized Trojans do not extend to the present day, and the vernacular languages ought to develop their own literatures:

[J]udicious authors gifted in composing ought not so to limit their freedom within the bounds set by those who wrote before them that they dare not set foot outside the tracks of others. [...] such restraint would prevent poetry from going beyond certain bounds which one writer has marked off and from moving a foot from the way the first fathers made it walk. (Giraldi 39)

Giraldi writes elsewhere, “I am easily persuaded that this mode of composing romances has for us taken the place of the heroic poems of the Greeks and the Latins” (Giraldi 36). Even the poetic theorists of antiquity must be viewed synchronically, and, when used diachronically for non-classical writing, some temporal contextualization would not be inappropriate. Aristotle’s application does not extend beyond those topics which he addressed directly, and he has no critical sovereignty over the emerging vernacular literatures. Giraldi hints that, as writing often follows criticism, so too might romance's future development grow from his own poetics (Giraldi 30).

Tasso implies a more unified and transnational poetics than does Giraldi. Indeed, Tasso's discussion of the poet's role in composing signifies nothing less than a cosmological importance of the poet, for the poet must understand God and communicate divine truth. Although Tasso occasionally disagrees with his precepts, Aristotle is generally in touch with eternal truths, and his ordering of poetry is similar to God's ordering of the universe:

Con quella medesima acutezza l'ingegno con la quale tutte le cose, ch'in questa gran machine Dio e la natura rinchiuso, sotto dieci capi disose, e con la quale, tanti e sì vari sillogismi ad alcune poche forme riducendo, breve e perfetta arte ne compose: sì che quella arte incognita a gli antichi filosofi, se non quanto naturalmente ciascun ne partecipa, da lui solo e 'l primo principio e l'ultima perfezione riconosce.

[With] intellectual acumen, he [Aristotle] arranged under ten headings everything that God and nature enclose in this great cosmos; and likewise, by reducing so many different syllogisms to a few small forms, he composed them into a complete brief art. That art, unknown to ancient philosophers unless they practiced it instinctively, recognized its first principles and final perfection through him alone. (Tasso 379)

Unity is more than a poetic concern in Tasso. At one point, Tasso describes the multiplicity in romance as monstrous, and he cites this passage in Dante to invoke the image of disunity in poetry as a hybrid beast:

Ellera abbarbicata mai non fue
Ad arbor sì, come 'orribil fera
Per l'altrui membra avviticchiò le sue.

Ivy never clung so close to a tree as the horrible beast fastened his limbs to those of the other. (qtd. in Tasso 374)

Kates argues that Tasso does not wish to uphold contemporary justifications for what he perceives to be a disjointed genre; he wants to impose perfection upon the very notion of the heroic genre (Kates 54). Nothing can be both broken and remain perfect, and Tasso seeks to join the two aspects of heroic poetry by ignoring their historical evolutions. Criticisms of romance will cease once that it has been perfected and made whole. Tasso later purifies his own epic, Gerusalemme Liberata, of the taint of love found in other romances as he retools it into the Gerusalemme Conquistata: as Günsberg notes, earthly love and anger become allegorized for higher, more acceptable forms – earthly love, for example, is no longer the carnal, reprehensible love of the popular romances, but rather is now representative of a participation in

civil functions (Günsberg 40).

This discussion on romance does not end with Giraldi and Tasso, but it becomes less pertinent as the popularity of romance wanes towards the end of the sixteenth century. Problems of fiction, genre, and verisimilitude are left unresolved. Giraldi, by proposing a brief poetics of romance, established that prose fiction might not have to follow classical models, but Tasso's subsequent purification of his own poem – the Gerusalemme Conquistata – seems the more typical of the neoclassical period that immediately follows.

CHAPTER III

CERVANTES'S RESPONSE

Critical discourses on medieval romance were not as widely disseminated when Cervantes published the first part of Don Quixote in 1605: romance was neither as popular nor as critically discussed as it had been in the sixteenth century. This state of romance's decline in popularity is surprising when one notes that Cervantes takes as strong a theoretical stand as Tasso, whose Gerusalemme Liberata was a bold attempt at combining imaginative writing with critical insight. This is also puzzling with respect to the novel's ostensible aim to attack romances of chivalry, for romance's popularity in Spain had tapered off considerably since its apogee in the mid-sixteenth century: Henry Thomas demonstrates that romances were published at a rate of nearly one-sixth of the "veritable avalanche of chivalric production" which immediately followed the publication of Amadís de Gaula in 1508 (qtd. in Brownlee 261). Considering the discrepancy between romance's former popularity and the narrator's firm stance against romance in his prologue – "una invectiva contra los libros de caballerías, de quién nunca se acordó Aristóteles" – one is immediately unsure of Cervantes's critical position. This wariness is well-placed, for the novel would offer as many possible Cervanteses as one would wish to find; a singular and clear critical approach to fiction in the novel is lacking, and Cervantes presents many sides to the arguments previously explored in this essay. Don Quixote relates the

sixteenth-century debate of the romances of chivalry in a heteroglossic dialogue whose many voices often recall key figures of Italian and Spanish theory of romance and fiction in general. The novel digests the largely concluded debates over epic and romance and produces a fresh response: variety (over unity) is pleasurable and therefore worthwhile, even if one must dispense with increasingly enforced classical rules for composition. Cervantes asserts this answer by making his novel an overt amalgam of many genres – some of which contribute to the central story of the crazed *hidalgo* and his squire – while he employs overt reference to classical texts in a manner both critically savvy and mocking. It is easy to forget that this is a funny book on an often-crude level, and it is especially true when one notes what aspects of the novel are generally discussed today at the expense of elements that Cervantes's contemporary readership would have appreciated: specifically, the humor and lucid discussions of cultural, legal, and theoretical issues of the day. Cervantes's humor and incisive critical sense are not, however, in conflict, for they often coexist in symbiotic function. Humor is simply the most accessible pleasure his novel offers, and it stands in fitting – but not exclusive – contrast to the erudite qualities that the novel is largely praised for today. Variety in all its forms is the critical gem of this text, and that variety signifies multiplicity in genres and stances on contemporary issues that arise in the text. To the generic end of this variety, Cervantes blends pastoral, epic, comic, and romantic elements into a not-always-seamless whole that must have tortured many of his neo-classical successors.

Beginning ostensibly as a parody of romance, Don Quixote's narrator grants us a quick introduction to the *hidalgo*'s madness: Don Quixote reads incessantly in

his free time, which we are told is all of his time, reading romances that are saturated with circuitous reasoning, and his poor, dried-up brain eventually suffers for it (Cervantes I, 1). His seemingly leisurely engagement of the romances of chivalry turns out to be harmful, not only for the idleness it induces, but for the lack of verisimilitude in the romances.

Con estas razones perdía el pobre caballero el juicio, y develábase por entenderlas y desentrañarles el sentido, que no se lo sacara ni las entendiera el mismo Aristóteles, si resucitara para solo ello.

These writings drove the poor knight out of his wits; and he passed sleepless nights trying to understand them and disentangle their meaning, Aristotle himself would never have unraveled them or understood them, even if he had been resurrected for that sole purpose. (ibid.)

In this passage, the narrator's assessment reflects earlier sixteenth-century concerns with verisimilitude that had been leveled against romance largely in Aristotle's name. It also recalls the moralistic concerns of J. Amyot, who warned his readers not to become too entangled in the lies and tales of romance, and who believed excessive reading of romances was simply a waste of one's time (qtd. in Forcione 19). Indeed, Don Quixote spends much of his time reading romances, and Cervantes makes this clear when he tells exactly how much is spent reading:

En resolución, él se enfrascó tanto en su lectura, que se le pasaban las noches leyendo de claro en claro, y los días de turbio en turbio.

In short, he so buried himself in his books that he spent the nights reading from twilight till daybreak and the days from dawn till dark. (Cervantes I, 1)

Don Quixote's mind is the idle product of too much reading. Cervantes here presents a complicated critique of romance, and it is notable that he does so with satiric

sincerity: romance, in these opening chapters, is often the clear butt of the joke as he invokes moral arguments against idle reading for pleasure.

Cervantes incorporates a dialogic multiplicity into his novel, for his characters exhibit a multitude of voices and opinions, which comment on subjects quite pertinent to Cervantes and his contemporaries. Mikhail Bakhtin calls this heteroglossic writing, where the author therefore steps back from the didactic stage and lets a proliferation of voices take over, with no clear preference for one or any moral to the text. Equally important is that no clear spokesman for the author assumes control of the text, including the narrator (“Discourse in the Novel”). The inquisition of Don Quixote’s library – to punish the books that distorted the *hidalgo’s* mind – also refers to the literary debates of the sixteenth century and a multitude of other critical voices: inquisitors, moral censors, aesthetic theorists, and readers for pleasure. Although the narrator himself contributes some of the criticism— in one instance he directly blames Don Quixote’s books for the madness — it is largely the characters that represent the theoretical stir over romance (Cervantes I, 6). Although it would certainly have been a curiosity to contemporary readers that the four critics – the priest, barber, housekeeper, and young girl – are unimpressive theorists, I disagree with Marina Brownlee’s assertion that “these intellectually undistinguished... literary censors should alert us to the unconventional nature of the episode” (Brownlee 263). Although this is clearly a funny episode and the characters’ comments are indeed strange at points, I would first argue Brownlee’s earlier assertion that “parody need not signal disapproval” and then point to Cervantes’s myriad characters of a decidedly non-literary background who often give distinguished commentary on

romance and reading in general: the priest, the Canon, the innkeeper, et al. Unlike Tasso, however, Cervantes does not posit a simple distinction between those who discern between incidentals and essentials, for Cervantes's fictional inquisitors often contradict themselves, at times offering insightful commentary and sometimes sounding quite pedantic: e.g. the priest and Canon. Theorizing on fiction and genre is not simply for the élite, for Cervantes would demonstrate that these are issues much larger than academies.

The housekeeper believes that “algún encantador” resides in the “libros de caballería”; although the priest chuckles at the housekeeper's apparent simplicity, she expresses a critical sentiment not far removed from Dante in his portrayal of Lancelot du Lac, the romance that so incited passions in Francesca and Paolo that they committed sins of lust and would later reside in Hell for those sins the romance provoked and facilitated. Francesca calls the book their Galehaut, the liaison who encouraged and facilitated Guinevere's initial sin with Lancelot (Dante V, 124-138). Don Quixote's niece does not fear that the books themselves may be evil, yet is fearful of their moral and mimetic influence on readers and does not wish to save a single volume from burning (Cervantes I, 6). This is less superstition than fear of the influence reading can have on its readers: her interpretation of reading is not dissimilar to Juan Luis Vives's, the Spanish moral and pedagogical humanist who argues that one should read nothing that does not directly contribute to knowledge of God or potential for salvation (Vives 5.30). Vives even argues that reading and contemplating the material of romance (love and arms) is worse than actually engaging it: “And if she does not hold them with her own hands, she participates...

with heart and mind, which is surely worse” (ibid.). One notes that this line of thinking stretches back to Socrates’s distrust of fiction and its potential for pernicious influence.

[The imitative poet] stirs up and nourishes and makes strong this bad part of the spirit, and destroys the rational part... We shall say that the imitative poet sets up a badly governed state in the soul of each individual. [Socrates continues] for the poet makes images and is remote from the truth. But we have not said the worst of poetry. Its capacity for corrupting good citizens, with a very few exceptions, is an exceedingly dangerous quality. (Plato X, 605 A)

Plato’s views on poetry are complicated and often seem to contradict one another, and a fuller discussion of them does not fit within the scope of this essay. Perhaps, however, selecting a single passage from Plato’s inherent complexity theories on fiction is not inappropriate for this study, for Bernard Weinberg argues that a highly selective approach to reading and critiquing is very much at home in the treatises of sixteenth-century Italy (Weinberg 64).

The priest and barber, however, tend to be more aesthetic in evaluating and exhibit more savvy in their criticism of the library’s texts. As they peruse the volumes, the priest and barber agree to keep some based on artistic merit or exceptional quality, but most remain doomed to the purgatorial flames: e.g. they spare Amadís de Gaula for its primacy in the vernacular Spanish romances of chivalry, but they do not spare the tale of his son, Esplandián, from the inquisitional conflagration simply for his filial association to greatness. In this passage where Amadís is spared but not Esplandián, one may infer that Cervantes is offering a more nuanced critique of romance than his narrator originally espoused in the Prologue. Romance-as-genre is not represented as the perpetrator of aesthetic or moral wrongdoing in a monolithic

manner, for some works are praiseworthy while others are clearly not. This is an important shift from Giraldi and Tasso, who both looked to classical authors to support – in either positive or negative fashion – their views of romance in toto; Cervantes, in contrast, begins with the genre in question, and then places the burden of proof not on classical theorists (namely Aristotle, but on Horace, too) but rather on the individual reader/ critic, who must evaluate the relative worth of works within the particular genre. Ariosto himself is the “Christian poet” (Cervantes I, 6)

Others are burnt simply for being fictitious, or full of lies. Orlando Furioso, curiously enough, is spared because the priest derives so much pleasure from reading it, an opinion that recalls pleasure’s privileged status in Giraldi and Tasso. There is an element of Platonic moral theory in the fiery purgation. The niece exclaims that non-chivalric tales must be burnt as romances must; if her uncle has chosen to imitate knights errant after reading romances, why would he not then imitate pastoral poetry?

Porque no sería mucho que, habiendo sanado mi señor tío de la enfermedad caballeresca, leyendo éstos se le antojase de hacerse pastor y andarse por los bosques y prados cantando y tañendo, y, lo que sería peor, hacerse poeta, que, según dicen, es enfermedad incurable y pegadiza.

For once my uncle is cured on his disease of chivalry, he might very likely read those books and take it into his head to turn shepherd and roam about the woods and fields, singing and piping and, even worse, turn poet, for that disease is incurable and catching, so they say. (Cervantes I, 6)

The priest corroborates and invokes the Republic’s sometimes-negative preoccupation with imitation in poetry: if individuals imitate what they read and see, then poetry — if allowed at all — should depict and thereby encourage only good models for imitation, and this means that morally questionable passages in otherwise good works must be excised (Cervantes I, 6). But pleasure wins out in the end when

the priest, by far the most eloquent inquisitor in his literary assessments, tires of reading and going through Don Quixote's many books – he concludes his efforts at critiquing by condemning those texts he has not yet perused to the fire because he is not “inclined to tire himself by reading any more books of chivalry” (Cervantes I, 6).

The dialogue between the Canon of Toledo and Don Quixote is a more extensive exploration of Cervantes's critical views. The priest and the Canon discuss romances of chivalry before the Canon proceeds to talk with Don Quixote, “enchanted” in the cart. The Canon and Don Quixote discuss many of the topics related in the library's inquisition: whether romances are lies and illogical, and if one ought to avoid them. The Canon is somewhat ambivalent, however, and his inability to denounce romances entirely, or accept them, recalls Tasso's complicated perspective of the genre. The Canon claims that they are potentially dangerous, but he also admits that he derives great pleasure from reading them. He is very familiar with them, and he has once even tried writing one himself (Cervantes I, 48). His opinion is similar to Tasso's admission that Orlando Furioso's pleasure is at odds with his inability to accept all of its poetical flaws.

In another thinly veiled discourse on poetics, Cervantes investigates the plausibility of changing conventions within a genre over time. Sancho, who does not believe that Don Quixote is truly enchanted in the ox-cart, tries unsuccessfully to convince his patron knight that the barber and priest are really the people driving the cart. He uses an Aristotelian syllogism to prove logically that Don Quixote cannot be enchanted: those who are truly enchanted need not make “aguas mayores o menores”, and if Don Quixote were really enchanted, then he would not need to make “aguas

mayores o menores” (Cervantes I, 48) Don Quixote readily admits that he badly needs to make “greater or lesser waters” either, but he remains steadfastly convinced of his enchantment. In his solution to Sancho’s rather savvy use of literary conventions in his argument, he proposes that literary conventions are not static and can therefore be amended to benefit a new context. Although those who are enchanted in romances of chivalry do not engage in urinary function, there is no reason to assume that enchantments are static and cannot change. Don Quixote argues that literary convention is incomplete and implies that it is never really complete: that it must be reevaluated, and that such reevaluation is continual and never finished.

Podría ser que con el tiempo se hubiesen mudado de unos en otros, que agora se use que los encantados hagan todo lo que yo hago, aunque antes no lo hacían. De manera, que contra el uso de los tiempos no hay que argüir ni de qué hacer consecuencias.

Time may have changed the fashion from one kind to another. It may be usual now for people under a spell to do all that I do, although they did not before; so that there is no arguing or drawing conclusions against the customs of the times. (Cervantes I, 49)

One finds intimations of Tasso’s declaration that men of his time take more pleasure in Orlando Furioso than in Vergil or Homer. One also sees Giraldi reveling in this idea: times change, and conventions must change with them. An important distinction between Cervantes and Tasso in this passage is that Tasso was not so bold as to follow through completely on his observation of contemporary readers’ pleasure in variety. That conventions may be plastic is a disconcerting thought, and Tasso’s exercises around this idea are evident in his theoretical and poetic efforts.

Joining the conversation with the Canon and priest, Don Quixote comes to the defense of romances of chivalry. Romances had received criticism for inspiring

inappropriate behavior, and many theorists had denounced the immoral behavior of the knights. Don Quixote says that the “libros de caballería” have served as a good model of behavior for him. He is a better man than before, now brave and courteous.¹ Cervantes surely noted that most transgressors in romances received just desserts. Lancelot never truly obtains Guinevere, and their affair destroys Arthur’s court, kingdom, and life. Tristan dies alone, having been deceived by his wife. Iseult arrives too late to save Tristan, and she dies next to his lifeless body. Don Quixote extols the good behavior demonstrated by knights errant. Lancelot’s sins are plainly destructive, but his virtues are exemplary. He is loyal, courageous, and courteous, and serves as a model behavior. Romances are therefore not the sinful dredge that critics often aver, and Don Quixote seeks to rectify their reception.² They can serve the didactic purposes of positive imitation often invoked in defenses of poetry.

In addition to exploring moral criticism, Cervantes progresses to the more interesting aspect of his lightly concealed argument: the aesthetic. To this end, Don Quixote sets up a tale for the Canon describing a knight and a lake. Every element of the tale is present for the sake of pleasure. This simple episode then relates to the work as a whole, tying all disparate elements and seemingly out-of-place genres together into a vision of literary multiplicity that exists for pleasuring the reader: epic, romance, pastoral, etc. Don Quixote himself is in this amalgam of genres because he, too, is out-of-place: a knight in a realistic novel.

¹ This is a puzzling admission because we learn at the end of the novel that Don Quixote is actually Alonso the Good, a name which suggests that he might have developed in good ways as a result of reading romances but which also suggests that romance had something useful to work with in his character.

² It is worth noting that Don Quixote praises knights found in books of romance, but in what is likely an opinion from Cervantes himself he distinguishes the real-life profession of arms and places it above scholarly life in Book I, 37-8.

Don Quixote's tale for the Canon is of a knight's impossibly non-verisimilar adventure. The knight first sees a burning lake full of fabulous monsters, he then directly jumps into it and emerges in an idyllic meadow, he sees a castle, enters, and so forth. The knight's adventures of this ilk offer pleasure through their surprising and unpredictable nature. One is not sure of where the knight is, where he is going, or where he was just a moment ago, but the reader is never disengaged from the story by its meandering way. The impossibilities of the story — a coat worth as much as a city, a voice from the lake, etc — do not repel the reader either, but conversely draw the reader in even further. They need not relate to the outside world in any verisimilar manner, either, and their lack of logical inclusion reinforces their pleasurable purpose. Verisimilitude would wipe the luster off such a tale. Beautiful descriptions add more to Don Quixote's tale, as the language itself is worth as much as (if not more than) the story it conveys. Moreover, we are constantly reminded of Don Quixote's intention, which I believe to be Cervantes' as well, in the telling of this: promotion of pleasure. Barbara Fuchs is correct when she argues that Don Quixote makes no effort to distinguish himself from the knight whose story he narrates, and in so doing he betrays a predilection for the very pleasure he wishes to convey.

Engrossed in his own pleasure, and fully identifying with the rewarded knight, he fails to recognize this landscape with maidens as the threatening Bower of Bliss that so exercises Tasso and Spenser. Instead he relishes the relentless idealization of romance. Despite, or perhaps because of, those faults emphasized by Vives and other humanistic moralists, such as exaggeration, lack of verisimilitude, and sensuality, Don Quijote's romance provides him with great satisfaction. (Fuchs 89)

Don Quixote intersperses his narration with commentary on the act of creation itself in narrating. Not only is he fearless of the implications of artifice that perturb Tasso,

but he revels in art's ability to improve upon reality: "el arte, imitando a la naturaleza, parece que allí la vence"; in imitating nature, art may seem to surpass it (Cervantes I, 50). One does not find Tasso's preoccupation with artifice and untruth here, and even Giraldis might become apprehensive with such assertions. Fiction is not bound to rules of antiquity, nor is it bound to actual nature. This assertion complicates the relation of imitation to reality, and verisimilitude itself becomes unimportant: why stop with mere likeness when one may improve upon the original? Furthermore, the reader's engagement with such fabulous material is nowhere demonstrated to affect the reader's perception of outside reality, with the glaring exception of Don Quixote himself, whose application of the fantasies of romance resembles a Straw Man of the moral theorists' depictions of unwary readers.

Every narrative element of this novel contributes to the admixture of adventures, verisimilar elements, and genres. Just as Don Quixote narrated his knight's tale to the Canon, one can imagine Cervantes, when Dorotea and Cardenio have both told their tales of misfortune, asking the reader, "and what could be more pleasurable than to have Don Fernando reappear with Lucinda?" This is only one of the many non-verisimilar episodes in Don Quixote, but none could say that it is not satisfying. Impossibilities are ubiquitous in this novel. Sancho gains his yearned-for governorship, that the Duke's and Duchess' staged scenarios for Sancho and Don Quixote actually work, and the book chronicling Don Quixote's adventures is written, goes to print, and is widely read within a few weeks of their return home after Part I. These are only a few of the many impossibilities that pervade Don Quixote.

Multiplicity in Don Quixote follows an inverted model of Tasso's Gerusalemme Liberata. There is a central story around which all others revolve. There are scores of characters in Don Quixote, and there is no shortage of subplots to satisfy one's appetite for variety. The story of Marcela and Grisóstomo is a temporary diversion, but it fits in nicely with a wandering knight's adventures; while crossing La Mancha on horseback, a knight errant is bound to see many things, even if they are nothing like the material found in romance. Just as Goffredo is the central figure in Gerusalemme Liberata, and other stories revolve around the siege of Jerusalem which he is conducting, Don Quixote is the single element that binds all the stories in this novel into a whole unit. Cervantes would not have a reader forget, even during Sancho's tenure as governor, that Don Quixote is the primary figure of the novel. Whereas Don Quixote is a loose confederation of stories that begin but do not necessarily contribute to the central figure's story, Gerusalemme Liberata is a top-down, tightly woven network of tales that begin with Goffredo's anointing as leader of the Christian armies and ultimately contribute to the realization of his anointment's purpose: the liberation of Jerusalem, and the allegorical liberation of the soul. Cervantes and Tasso offer inversions of one another's methods, for Tasso's poem resembles Bakhtin's model for the epical and Cervantes's resembles the novelistic (dialogical).

Cervantes achieves multiplicity in another manner: multiplicity of genre that incorporates fables from classical and vernacular sources. There are enough generic allusions to merit a book, so I will mention only a few. Clavileño, the wooden horse that flies both at incredible speeds and with an incredibly smooth gait, recalls the

Trojan Horse: large, wooden, and not what it seems. It also recalls the hippogryph from Orlando Furioso. The Cueva de Montesinos recalls both Dante and Vergil. Don Quixote's extended stay while en route to Zaragoza recalls Aeneas in Carthage, and Altisidora's "death" after he leaves only reinforces this reference. Marcela and Grisóstomo are a pastoral episode. Don Quixote's ignoble journey home at the end of Part I recalls Lancelot's ignoble ride in a cart in Chrétien de Troyes's The Knight of the Cart. When Don Quixote and Sancho are received by the Duke and Duchess, one is reminded of Aeneas arriving at Carthage; the story has preceded the heroes, and the heroes are compared to a narrative version of themselves.

Cervantes does not blend these elements together but rather leaves them whole. That one is moving in and out of genres is apparent, and this motion provides pleasure. In one instance, elements of romance and epic come together, and Don Quixote must choose between the two. While in the mountains in Part I, he decides to go mad over devotion to Dulcinea. His problem is whether to follow the model of Amadís or Orlando, and he chooses Orlando. These acts of self-conscious imitation are examples of compound imitations that Daniel Javitch discusses in his article, "The Grafting of Virgilian Epic in Orlando Furioso." In discussing Ariosto's complex use of Virgilian allusion and episode, Javitch elaborates on how Ariosto incorporates a multi-layered allusion that invokes both classical and vernacular sources simultaneously ("Renaissance Transactions" 59). This is significant because Ariosto does not pay homage to classical sources but, in a self-conscious manner, puts them to use and betters his text rather than making simple references ("Renaissance Transactions" 62). In any one of the above examples in Cervantes, this very same act

is clear. The wooden horse, *Clavileño*, simultaneously recalls Ariosto's hippogryph and the Trojan Horse from Vergil, and the reader is presumably expected to recognize these allusions: one aspect of this imitation of Ariosto and Vergil, moreover, is that the reader's expectations that arise from such allusions are deliberately disappointed by the reality of the false hippogryph, and this disappointment is at once an easy attempt at humor as well as a parody of the author's classical imitation.

The problem of historical verisimilitude is pertinent here, too, for romance is generically bound to take place in the distant past, as discussed in Giraldi, with only enough of detail to provide a structure for the embellishments the poet should wish to graft onto it. As Javitch argues, Ariosto makes good use of both classical and vernacular sources to make his own poetry better by making it more complex. Cervantes achieves this same duality and employs it to pleasurable and critical effect. His story of the withered knight occurs not in the distant past, but in the decidedly unremarkable present in a village of no exceptional quality: the story is so unexceptional, the narrator does not even care to remember the knight's Christian name (Cervantes I, 1). Spanish romance in particular makes use of false lineage to amplify its own verisimilitude, and this depiction of Don Quixote's banal reality stands in stark contrast to it. As Brownlee points out about *Zifar*, the first Spanish romance:

The *Zifar* presents itself as a translation from Arabic to Latin to Romance [vernacular] in order to endow the book with an impressive textual genealogy, thereby legitimating the writing of Spain's first prose romance. (Brownlee 257)

The narrator in this novel, in contrast, dwells on problems of translating the text, its rather un-mythic dwelling in Toledo, and how he purchased the text for half a *real*

(Cervantes I, 10). One is very aware that there is no text that exists outside of the telling of it, and this awareness points unambiguously to the story-teller, whose identity is always ambiguous. Cervantes places himself next to Ariosto in this respect, too, whose narrator reminds readers that the story exists with the author, and the various characters' fates rest only with him in jumps from story to story as well as between cantos (Javitch 110-2). Cervantes has fun with the notions of history explored in Tasso and Giraldis. The history does not provide a framework for the embellishment; the framework and embellishment are synonymous.

Don Quixote's very existence invokes multiplicity. He is a knight errant in 17th century Spain, and his anachronism gives many people of his time pleasure. The priest and barber are concerned with Don Quixote's madness, but they soon get caught up in it and join. Don Quixote's condition is one of multiplicity, and he inspires it wherever he goes. Sansón Carrasco twice dresses as a knight to bring Don Quixote home, the priest and barber pretend to enchant Don Quixote, and the Duke and Duchess are often portrayed as madder than the *caballero* himself. Don Antonio rebukes Sansón Carrasco for his destruction of Don Quixote:

¡Oh señor...Dios os perdone el agravio que habéis hecho a todo el mundo en querer volver cuerdo al más gracioso loco que hay en él! ¿No veis, señor, que no podrá llegar al provecho que cause la cordura de don Quijote a lo que llega al gusto que da con sus desvarios?

“Oh, sir,” said Don Antonio, “may God pardon you the injury you have done the whole world in your attempt to restore the most amusing of all madmen to his senses. Don't you see, sir, that no benefit to be derived from Don Quixote's recovery could outweigh the pleasure afforded by his extravagances?” (Cervantes II, 65)

The critical debates preceding Don Quixote concerned the moral and aesthetic critiques of romances. Moral arguments against them often originated with Plato, and

aesthetic arguments against them often originated with Aristotle's Poetics. Tasso drew outlined a compromise and demonstrated it in Gerusalemme Liberata. Cervantes relates these arguments in Don Quixote and offers his solution to them. He argues against readings of Aristotle that advocate strict unity over multiplicity, and he asserts pleasure as the prime mover in fiction. His book instructs as well, and with it Cervantes achieves a Renaissance ideal originating in Horace.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

When considering these three poetic theorists – Giraldis, Tasso, and Cervantes – all together, it is difficult to derive a single notion of fiction, imitation, or poetry's relation to classical literature, and each theorist poses a complicated poetics. What is worth noting, however, is that the discourses of these theorists three began in a context of relative freedom in poetic construction, for Orlando Furioso's greatest critical problem was its composition in context where classical models was increasingly regarded as appropriate for the vernacular: romance, a vernacular literary form, signified a lower order than classical poetry. Giraldis's impressive arguments against the generic kinship of romance and epic and Tasso's equally impressive rebuttal and espousal of unity in the single genre of epic and romance are both defeated by history; as history has demonstrated, the sweeping forces of order subsumed literature, and Castelvetro's interpretation – or misinterpretation, according to Weinberg – came to rule over drama and render epic anachronistic. Bouwsma demonstrates that in the period between 1550 and 1640, the impulse to order was powerful and permeated all intellectual and creative disciplines. The growing concern with order and classification was often achieved, he argues, in direct and imperfect imitation of antiquity, and this concern affected all aspects of art and learning: distinguishing art from science, and organizing academies to oversee development.

In addition, institutions were developed to enforce order in the arts, among them learned societies, usually initiated by cultivated laymen, who modeled their academies on what they imagined about the Platonic Academy in ancient Athens. These sprang up for the promotion and regulation of literature, science and the arts, and were eventually converted into more or less official agencies of oversight and control. (Bouwsma 251)

Just as the academies came to assert classically modeled authority over learning, classical conventions in art were victorious, too. Romance especially suffered because it lost the incomplete state that characterizes living genres, and Cervantes both delivers the death when he easily encapsulates the genre's conventions (thus rendering it complete) and also delivers new life as he creates the new genre from critical consideration of romance: romance, therefore, fell victim to its own ordering and arrangement, and in becoming complete, died.

Bakhtin argues that the novel originates in incompleteness, and as a genre it can never become static. The epic, in contrast to the novel, is complete and formalized. Its rules are evident, and one may fully explicate its parameters.

Only already completed genres, with fully formed and well-defined generic contours, can enter into such a literature as a hierarchically organized, organic whole. They can mutually delimit and mutually complement each other, while yet preserving their own generic natures. ("Epic and Novel" 4)

With his discourse on romance, Giraldi performs the dual act of delimiting the parameters of romance and liberating romance for further investigation and poetic invention. Tasso openly appreciates the pleasurable aspects of romance but cannot fully accept pleasure for its own sake; the pleasure must justify itself by masking poetry's pedagogical component. Romance is not a distinct genre, but abides by generic categories recognized by Aristotle. Cervantes completes the discussion by blurring the division between romance and other genres entirely – he incorporates

variety of genre, person, and action. Pleasure for its own sake is upheld, but he often combines it with critical sensibility. He does not merely complete the discourses of Giraldi and Tasso so much as answer their main points and then move the discussion to an entirely new genre.

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