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Puppet, Death, and the Devil: Presences of Afterlife in Puppet Theatre

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Mara Theodoritsi*

Literal and Metaphorical Puppets as Supernatural Figures: Echoes of Classical Greek Theatre in Cervantes's Fiction

Abstract

In this article, I seek to contribute to recent trends in Cervantes Studies on the transnational dimension of Cervantes and on Cervantine theatre by discussing, on the one hand, the relationship of the Spanish author to the history of puppet theatre and, on the other, the significance of puppets in the theatrical interlude "The Marvellous Puppet Show" and two episodes in Part Two of *Don Quixote*. I review some of the literature on the inspiration that Cervantes might have drawn from the Sicilian *Opera dei pupi* and the Spanish *teatro de títeres* (including puppet-based hagiographic plays), and I suggest including classical Greek theatre in what has been called the "Mediterranean cultural framework" of *Don Quixote*. My analysis of "The Marvellous Puppet Show" focusses on the portrayal of the townspeople as if they were puppets and of the two swindlers as if they were liminal figures between the realms of the human and the supernatural. In that of "The Assembly of Death", I compare the encounter of Don Quixote and his squire with the theatrical company of Angulo el Malo to a satyr play. With regard to the episode of Master Pedro's puppet show, I note the similarities with classical Greek theatre in the dynamics between performers and audience.

Keywords: Cervantes; puppet theatre; Mediterranean cultural framework; classical Greek theatre; metatheatre

Introduction: The Transnational and the Theatrical in Cervantes

In the last chapter of the recently published *Oxford Handbook of Cervantes*, Bruce R. Burningham refers to the last twenty years as "*the* Golden Age of Cervantes criticism" (2021, 648). Drawing on the MLA International Bibliography database, Burningham notes that more has been published on the Spanish Golden Age author in the first two decades of the twenty-first century than over the whole of the twentieth. In light of this exponential growth, he provides an overview of the major trends in Cervantes scholarship since the turn of the new millennium. Although it is not his intention to be exhaustive for lack of space, Burningham identifies no less than eleven trends, and points to three more that are likely to explode in the coming

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years. His chapter thus provides a clear picture of the breadth and diversity of contemporary Cervantes scholarship.

The present article lies at the intersection of two of these trends. Under the heading "*Transnational and International Cervantes*", Burningham surveys the publications that deal with Cervantes's connection to authors and literatures from around the world. He notes the paradox that "this most 'Spanish' of authors" has become the most "international" of Spanish authors (656). Under "*Cervantes, Performance, and Theatre*", Burningham makes reference to the publications on "performance and its relation to Cervantes's theatre" (662). While Cervantine theatre has historically been overshadowed by his prose fiction (and his prose fiction has in turn been largely eclipsed by *Don Quixote*), the rise of theatre and performance studies in the latter part of the twentieth century fuelled the recent surge of interest in it. In what follows, I seek to contribute to these trends by discussing, on the one hand, the relationship of Cervantes to the history of puppet theatre and, on the other, the significance of (literal *and* metaphorical) puppets in some of his works of fiction.

1. Cervantes as a Pivotal Figure in the (Literary) History of Puppet Theatre

In his study of puppets in European modernist and avant-garde drama, the late comparatist Harold B. Segel hailed *Don Quixote* for featuring "one of the first memorable appearances" of puppets on the literary stage in the chapters that make up the so-called Master Pedro episode in Part Two (1995, 5).[1] Cervantes's *magnum opus* preceded in this regard other works of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature that included puppet imagery, such as Ben Johnson's *Bartholomew Fair*, Chikamatsu Monzaemon's *The Battles of Coxinga*, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Junkdump Fair*. In the context of Cervantes's *œuvre*, however, *Don Quixote* was not the first of his works of fiction to feature puppets. As Segel pointed out, the theatrical interlude "The Marvellous Puppet Show" was written around the same time

[1] Cervantes demonstrated a keen familiarity with the generic, technical, and social aspects of puppetry in *Don Quixote* and elsewhere. Jerez-Gómez notes that the episode of Master Pedro gives a remarkably accurate representation of the motifs, the characters, and the dynamics between performers and audience of Sicilian puppet theatre. Fernández argues furthermore that "the technicalities of the *pupi* no doubt inspired the marionettes portrayed by Cervantes", which Master Pedro "manipulate[s] from above using wires that could control very precise movements" (2021, 84; see also Díaz-Plaja 1977, 144). Cervantes was also a shrewd observer of the social status and lifestyle of puppeteers in sixteenth-century Spain, which served as a springboard for him to venture into the picaresque genre (see Gasta 2015).

as Part One of *Don Quixote*. It took some ten years, nevertheless, for this and other Cervantine interludes to be published in the volume *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses, nunca representados* (*Eight Comedies and Eight Interludes, Never Performed*).

Cervantes's career as a playwright began not long after he returned to Spain from Algiers, where he remained imprisoned for five years after he embarked on a voyage from Italy and was taken captive by Barbary pirates. Frederick A. De Armas has observed that sojourns in Italy were "almost de rigueur for Spanish poets and other thinkers during the Golden Age", as well as for "writers of prose fiction" (2006, 3). According to De Armas, "Italy was for Cervantes and others both a familiar and a foreign land" (3). Sicily (which became incorporated into the kingdom of Aragon in the late thirteenth century) and Naples (which was seized twice from the French between the mid-fifteenth and the early sixteenth centuries) were the most familiar Italian territories for Spaniards in the Golden Age. In the case of Cervantes, his sojourn (which famously included his participation in the Battle of Lepanto) lasted for six years. During this time, he travelled extensively through the Italian Peninsula and came into direct contact with "Renaissance art, architecture, and poetry", which he subsequently "mirrored in many of his literary texts" (5).

Italy holds in this regard a prominent place in the history of puppet theatre, particularly the Sicilian *Opera dei pupi* (opera of puppets). The presence of puppets in Sicily was documented already in the fourth century B.C. by the Greek philosopher and historian Xenophon. His Socratic dialogue *Symposium* (4.55) features a conversation between Socrates and a man from the Sicilian town of Syracuse who is hired to entertain the guests at a dinner party with his troupe of musicians, dancers, and acrobats. When the man is asked what he prides himself on the most in his art, he replies that it is the fools who come to see his shows because "they make me my living by coming to watch my marionettes" (Marchant, Todd and Henderson 2013, 621).[2] Xenophon's *Symposium* thus provides anecdotal evidence of the popularity of puppet theatre in the late classical period and its connection with Sicily. The question of the place of birth of *Opera dei pupi* remains, however, "a matter of speculation" to this day (Cavallo 2012).

In the 1920s, the Sicilian writer and scholar Luigi Natoli noted the possibility that the roots of *Opera dei pupi* lay in the Spanish *teatro de títeres* (puppet theatre). As he remarked,

> [A] puppet theatre that portrayed fictional stories and battles between

[2] Similarly, the Greek historian Herodotus made reference in Book Two of *The Persian Wars* to "the use of puppets a cubit long moved by strings" during the Egyptian Festival of Khoiak Godley (335).

> Christians and Saracens already existed in Spain since the sixteenth century… Now, it is not going too far to argue that…this tradition could well have been imported by the Spaniards, in the same way that the Tribunal of the Holy Office, the Jesuits, the penchant for ceremony, the allegorical processions, the *autos de fe*, [and] bullfighting, were imported to us. Three centuries of close ties between the two regions; the dependence or union of Sicily with the Crown of Spain, the continued relations, inevitably produced reciprocal exchanges. (1927, 117; translation mine)

To support his hypothesis about the origins of *Opera dei pupi*, Natoli pointed to *Don Quixote* as evidence that the Sicilian *pupi* might have appeared around the same time as the Cervantine knight-errant (117-18). His argument centred around the figure of *i paladini* —the legendary knights of Charlemagne's court in the eight century who fought against the Saracens. Natoli noted that the type of plate armour that *i paladini* wear in the *Opera dei pupi* is (similarly to Don Quixote's) characteristic of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Yet, the *Opera dei pupi* began to be documented in Sicily only in the eighteenth century. According to Natoli, it is very unlikely in this regard that eighteenth-century puppet makers could reproduce armours that were centuries old. To represent historical or mythological figures, puppet makers usually drew on popular iconography, or else they dressed their puppets in contemporary clothes. Moreover, once a puppet character was added to the repertoire of the *Opera dei pupi*, it remained unchanged.

Looking from a different angle at the relationship of *Don Quixote* to the history of puppet theatre, the historian J.E. Varey notably referred to the Master Pedro episode as one of the best-known literary depictions of the origins of *teatro de títeres*. Varey noted that the earliest records of puppet theatre in Spain date from the thirteenth century. String puppets and glove puppets were introduced by wandering minstrels from Italy and France (and possibly from North Africa) and were initially related to animal entertainment (particularly monkeys) because of the uncanny response that they triggered in the audience.[3] As Varey pointed out, "both monkeys and puppets present us with a grotesque and minute parody of life; both seem to be human but are not" (1954, 172 n. 2; translation mine).

In addition to the entertainment purposes that *teatro de títeres* served, puppets began to be used in the aftermath of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) for religious purposes to the detriment of flesh-and-blood actors. As Esther Fernández has noted, puppet-like sculptures of Christ became a staple of Holy Week celebrations across Europe in the late medieval and

[3] For an overview of the history of puppet theatre in Spain, see Ortega Cerpa 2012. In addition to various kinds of puppets, Ortega Cerpa mentions the appearance of automata (which were introduced into Spain by Arab engineers) in the twelfth century.

early modern period for the reason that their "lack of consciousness allowed the[se] figures to insinuate and preserve the infinite consciousness of the divine" (2019, 60). When the emphasis that Trent placed on morality made actors seem "unsuitably artificial when materializing the divine or morally in danger when representing spectacular excess", puppets took their place in Spanish playhouses due to their liminal position between, on the one hand, the human and the divine, and, on the other, the human and the supernatural elements of saints' lives, which included "[f]lights, apparitions, transformations, miracles, and martyrdoms" (65). Fernández points apropos of this to the religious iconography that puppet-based hagiographic plays (known by the name of *máquina real*) shared with the portable puppet theatres known as *retablos*, which "functioned as a spiritual dramatic frame demarcating the indoctrinating religiosity being performed on the stage of the playhouse" (66).[4]

To borrow a phrase from the late Günter Böhmer (1971, 7), the "roundabout way" in which the genealogy of *Opera dei pupi* can be traced (from Sicily and Greece in the late classical period to Italy, France, and Spain in the late Middle Ages, to the Kingdom of Naples and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in modern times) ultimately reveals the *transcultural* dimension of puppet theatre in the Mediterranean area.[5] Jesús David Jerez-Gómez (2012) has referred in this regard to the "Mediterranean cultural framework" that permeates the Master Pedro episode in connection with Sicilian puppet theatre and noted how the episode anticipated some of the characteristics of the *Opera dei pupi*. Below I extend the Mediterranean cultural framework to include classical Greek theatre by drawing on satyr plays and New Comedy as a lens to read the Master Pedro episode and another episode in Part Two of *Don Quixote*. First, however, I turn to the interlude where Cervantes began to exploit the figure of the puppet to blur the boundaries between diegetic levels and, by so doing, between the natural and the supernatural realms: "The Marvellous Puppet Show".

[4] Llosa Sanz 2008, 155-7 draws attention to the sacred dimension of secular *retablos* (like the ones depicted in the works by Cervantes discussed here) and the ritual aspect of theatrical performance.

[5] My use of the term *transcultural* is drawn from the work of the theatre scholar Alfonso de Toro, who describes transculturality as "the processes of hybridization, the cultural deterritorializations and reterritorializations, and . . . the site of negotiation between what belongs to others and what belongs to oneself" (2005, 7; translation mine).

2. The Magical Power of Imaginary Puppets: Moving Back and Forth Between Reality and Appearance in "The Marvellous Puppet Show"

In penning one of the first memorable appearances of puppets on the literary stage, Cervantes picked up on the association of puppetry to animal entertainment and religious worship to engage with the longstanding philosophical problem of what constitutes reality, whose roots (to go back to the transcultural dimension of puppetry) can be traced to ancient Greece, where "*to be real* [w]as the fundamental meaning of 'be'" (Graeser 1977, 385).[6] Carolyn Lukens-Olson has observed in this regard that "the distinction between reality and appearance" is a common theme in four of the interludes in Cervantes's *Eight Comedies and Eight Interludes* (2021, 387). In contrast to the other three, however, "The Marvellous Puppet Show" is the only interlude that features puppets — or, rather, where the imaginary performance of a puppet play on a *retablo* is what triggers the dramatic action.

The interlude tells the story of two swindlers named Chanfalla and Chirinos who turn up in a small town in the company of a musician named Rabelín. Chanfalla introduces himself to the town's governor and his entourage as the director of the so-called marvellous puppet show. He explains that the show is known by that name "por las maravillosas cosas que en él se enseñan y muestran" (because of the marvellous things that you can see and learn from it) (Cervantes 2012, 89; 1996, 100).[7] Even more intriguingly, Chanfalla claims that the puppets are actually invisible to those who were born out of wedlock (known as *bastardos*) and to Jewish converts to the Christian faith (known as *conversos*). The governor decides to hire the troupe to perform on the eve of his wedding with the daughter of the town's alderman and pays them in advance.

Over the course of the show, Chanfalla and Chirinos take on role of narrators of what is allegedly taking place on the stage (which they put behind a blanket), while Rabelín provides the musical accompaniment.

[6] Two notable early examples of the discussion of puppets in relation to this question are Aristotle's τῶν θαυμάτων ταὐτόματα (automatic marionettes) in Book One of *Metaphysics* (983a15) and Plato's imaginary θαύματα (objects of wonder) and οἱ θαυματοποιοί (makers of these objects of wonder) in Book Seven of the *Republic* (514b1-6). The mathematician and engineer Heron of Alexandria later provided a description of an automatic puppet theatre that was put in motion by cylinders and wheels in Περί ΄Αυτοματοποιητικής (*On Automaton-Making*), which is considered a foundational work in the field of robotics. That the association of puppets and automata to the problem of appearance and reality reached its apex in grotesque drama (whose roots lie in the festivals of Dionysus) further highlights the importance of ancient Greece in this regard (see Barasch 1988, 560).

[7] All the translations of "El retablo de las maravillas" are from Cervantes 1996.

Afraid of the consequences of saying that they cannot see the puppets, the members of the audience become improvised actors by reacting in a knee-jerk and increasingly absurd fashion to the descriptions of the stage action. Only the governor admits by way of a dramatic aside that he does not see the puppets, but he decides to keep it to himself because he assumes that everyone else is acting *bona fide*.

Towards the end the show, a military quartermaster comes in unexpectedly and notifies the governor that a group of cavalry soldiers is about to arrive in town and that they will need to be accommodated. The town's mayor reacts by arguing that the quartermaster is just another puppet and accuses Chanfalla of purposely trying to deceive them. The governor, who believes that the mayor does indeed see the puppets, intervenes to say that "verdaderamente estos hombres de armas no deben de ser de burlas" (I don't believe these cavalrymen can be a hoax) (100; 107). The argument between the mayor and the governor leaves the quartermaster perplexed, whereupon the mayor urges Chanfalla to resume the show so that the quartermaster may see the puppets with his own eyes.

The quartermaster grows even more perplexed at the spectacle that follows when the mayor's nephew pretends to be dancing with one of the show's characters while the others cheer him on. The quartermaster ends up being accused of secretly being a *converso*, and a sword fight erupts between him and the governor's entourage. Chirinos then takes down the blanket behind which the stage supposedly lay and says that "el diablo ha sido la trompeta y la venida de los hombres de armas" (the arrival of the cavalry was the work of the devil) (101; 108), while Chanfalla concludes that the extraordinary event that they have witnessed has proven the show's efficacy.

The removal of the blanket at the end of "The Marvellous Puppet Show" suggests that the trick that has been played on the townspeople can be extended more generally to the audience and the readers. Cervantes seems to point in this direction from the very title of the interlude. The alleged marvels of the show lure not only the townspeople into the hands of Chanfalla and Chirinos but also theatregoers in the first place to witness something that is doubly deceptive: a theatrical play performed by puppets. Yet, what the audience encounters is not quite the marvellous play described in the title but a *meta*play where the townspeople's improvised performance is but an extension of their performance as respectable members of Spanish society (Abel 2003; Alter 1975).

The peculiar significance of puppets stems in this regard from their transformation into tokens of the divine and the supernatural in the context of the Tridentine Counter-Reformation. As Fernández remarks, "Cervantes was conversant with the innovative intellectual and scientific horizons that were emerging at the time" — namely, Renaissance humanism, Copernican

heliocentrism, and organized skepticism (2021, 79).[8] Fernández recounts the shift that took place in the early days of the Protestant Reformation from an "animist and supernatural" to a "rational conception" of artificial animation that resulted in the "demonization of fraudulent performance objects", such as mechanized crucifixes and theatrical costumes, props, and masks (82). Cervantes displayed a kindred skepticism towards the divine and the supernatural properties of puppets in "The Marvellous Puppet Show". Nevertheless, he did so by disposing of the actual puppets and portraying the townspeople as if *they* were puppets in the hands of Counter-Reformation orthodoxy.

As Leonie Pawlita has noted, "the audience [of Chanfalla and Chirinos's play] accepts the rules of the performance because these rules also determine social life in general" (2019, 349). In order not to be accused of being *bastardos* or *confesos*, the townspeople thus find themselves having to straddle the borderline between the real world depicted in Cervantes's play and the legendary world of Chanfalla and Chirinos's play-within-the-play. The fear of exclusion and persecution, along with the embrace of dogmatism upon which their recognition as legitimate members is conditioned, makes them vulnerable to manipulation by those who can profit from their predicament.

The combination of fear and hypocritical dogmatism that Chanfalla and Chirinos instill in the townspeople by laying the rules of the puppet show is reminiscent of the magical powers wielded by the liminal figures that mediate between the realms of the human and the supernatural. Álvaro Llosa Sanz has likened in this regard the pair of swindlers to "mediums or mediators" who capitalize on the symbolic order internalized by the townspeople to throw fantastical images "like spirits or demons casting out forces — affects or passions — from the soul of the magician to that of the victim" (2008, 160; translation mine). Llosa Sanz argues that Chanfalla and Chirinos's role as what the Renaissance philosopher Giordano Bruno called "hunters of souls" is ultimately proven when "the [spiritual] bonds and the faith established by the logic of the puppet play and its meaning" result in "the transposition to reality of all the demons [that have been] previously conjured" upon the arrival of the quartermaster and in the deadly confrontation that follows (164-5). From this perspective, the remarks that the two swindlers make after they remove the blanket can be read as an acknowledgement of their role as intermediaries of the supernatural by releasing the inner demons of the townspeople.

[8] López Piñero 1979 is the standard reference on the impact that the Counter-Reformation, as well as economic and demographic factors, had on the development of science and technology in Spain. For an overview of recent publications in Cervantes Studies that deal with science and technology, see Burningham 2021, 654-5.

3. Don Quixote in the Company of (Supernatural) Actors: Transgressing Diegetic Levels in "The Assembly of Death"

The magical power of Chanfalla and Chirinos's puppet show is reversed in Part Two of *Don Quixote* when the knight-errant refrains from fighting a troupe of actors. Jill Syverson-Stork has observed that in Part Two, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza become "the puppets of characters who try to control them", as "the two heroes [are] purposefully and sometimes cruelly deceived by others" (1986, 61). In Part One, it is Don Quixote himself, by contrast, who "falls victim to the illusions he himself creates" (ibid.). The episode known as "The Assembly of Death" plays a pivotal role in this transition by featuring a group of dramatic stock characters that hints at the role that puppet theatre plays in Part Two of the novel.

Titled "De la extraña aventura que le sucedió al valeroso don Quijote con el carro o carreta de Las Cortes de la Muerte" (Regarding the strange adventure that befell the valiant Don Quixote with the cart or wagon of The Assembly of Death), henceforth "The Assembly of Death", the chapter finds the knight-errant and his squire headed to a jousting tournament after trying to pay a visit to lady Dulcinea in her hometown of El Toboso.[9] Don Quixote is feeling "el más desdichado de los hombres" (the most unfortunate of men) because Sancho has fooled him into believing that the evil enchanters put a spell on him so that, instead of the fair and fragrant Dulcinea, he saw an ugly peasant girl who stank of raw garlic (2004, 623; 2003, 520).

As they go on their way to the city of Saragossa, Don Quixote and Sancho are startled by a carriage that appears to be driven by "un feo demonio" (a hideous demon) and filled with "los más diversos y extraños personajes y figuras que pudieron imaginarse" (the most diverse and peculiar personages and figures that one could imagine) (625; 523).[10] The strange creatures turn out to be actors from the theatrical company of Angulo el Malo who are travelling from town to town to perform a Passion play titled *The Assembly of Death*. The coachman explains to Don Quixote that "por estar tan cerca y excusar el trabajo de desnudarnos y volvernos a vestir, nos vamos vestidos con los mismos vestidos que representamos" (because it is so close, and to

[9] All the translations of "The Assembly of Death" and the Master Pedro episode are from Cervantes 2003.

[10] The personages and figures mentioned by the narrator are "la misma Muerte, con rostro humano; . . . un ángel con unas grandes y pintadas alas; . . . un emperador con una corona, al parecer de oro, en la cabeza; . . . el dios que llaman Cupido . . . [y] un caballero armado de punta en blanco" (the most diverse and peculiar personages and figures that one could imagine . . . [:] Death himself, with a human face; . . . an angel with large painted wings; . . . an emperor wearing a crown, apparently of gold, on his head; . . . the god called Cupid . . . [and] a knight in full armor) (625; 523).

save ourselves the trouble of taking off our costumes and putting them on again, we are dressed in the same clothes we perform in) (626; 523). The coachman then introduces the characters played by the actors who are sitting in the cart: "aquel mancebo va de muerte; el otro, de Ángel; aquella mujer, que es la del autor, va de Reina; el otro, de Soldado; aquel, de Emperador, y yo, de Demonio" (that young man plays Death; the other one, the Angel; that woman, who is married to the manager, plays the Queen; this one is the Soldier; that one, the Emperor; I play the Demon) (626; 523).

Wary of his own senses after finding out about the enchantment of Dulcinea, Don Quixote quickly rules out the possibility of actors being the personages and figures he initially thought and bids them farewell. Yet, his mind starts to play tricks on him again when the troupe's jester attempts to steal Sancho's donkey and his squire refers to the jester as "el diablo" (the devil) (628; 524). Expecting to unfold a new adventure, Don Quixote confronts the troupe of actors as if they were the characters in *The Assembly of Death*. It is only when Sancho draws his attention to the fact that "entre todos los que allí están, aunque parecen reyes, príncipes y emperadores, no hay ningún caballero andante" (among all those people, even though they seem to be kings, princes, and emperors, there's not one knight errant) that Don Quixote agrees to "dej[ar] estas fantasmas y volv[er] a buscar mejores y más calificadas aventuras" (leave these phantoms and again seek better and more appropriate adventures) (630; 526).

One of the leitmotifs that have been identified in *Don Quixote* is the relationship between the author and his characters. Jorge Luis Borges, who had "a lifelong obsession" with Cervantes (González Echevarría 2020, 141), referred to this relationship as an extension of the feedback loop between "dreams and reality" that permeates the novel (128). As the Argentinian writer noted,

> [I]n the second part of the book, we find, much to our surprise, that the characters have read the first part and they have also read the imitation of the book written by a rival [Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda]. And they abound in literary judgments and they take the side of Cervantes. So, it is as if Cervantes was peeping in and out of his own book all the time and, of course, he must have greatly enjoyed this game. (129-30)[11]

[11] More recently, the founder of the Spanish puppet theatre company "Puppeteers of Binéfar", Paco Paricio, has also referred to the metaliterary intrusions of Cervantes in Part Two of *Don Quixote* as a veiled response to Fernández de Avellaneda:

> When Don Miguel decided to write the second part, it's as if he said to Avellaneda (or whoever it was that was hiding behind that name): now I, Cervantes, the author of the first part, the creator of the character of Quixote, will write the real second part, and where you put a theatrical play at a roadside

Scholars have characterized Cervantes's intrusions in *Don Quixote* as a form of authorial control. Yet, instead of merely conflating the voice of the characters with that of their author, they have noted the panoply of voices found in the novel, starting from the prologue, where the author writes that "yo, aunque parezco padre, soy padrastro de don Quijote" (though I seem to be the father, I am the stepfather of Don Quixote) (1; 3). Fernández has remarked that "*Don Quijote* scholarship has long accepted the allegorical role of the novelist as a master puppeteer because of his skillful manipulation of multiple intertwining narratives" (2021, 83). The "apparition" of the actors in "The Assembly of Death" foreshadows in this regard the role that puppet theatre plays in Part Two. Not only are the actors explicitly connected to the world of theatre (and, by association, to *theatrum mundi*), but the roles they play correspond to various types of theatrical masks — both in the sense of dramatic device and of *persona*.[12]

The "turba alegre y regocijada" (happy and cheerful throng) encountered by Don Quixote and Sancho is reminiscent here of the satyrs of the ancient Greek cult of Bacchus, who always appeared together (629; 525). Satyrs were noted in Attic theatre for their grotesque features and indecent behaviour. At the same time, they were known for their love of music and dance. Some of the characters played by the actors in Angulo el Malo's company appear similarly associated with a combination of grotesque and sublime qualities. As the narrator recounts after Don Quixote's exchange with the coachman,

> uno de la compañía . . . venía vestido de bojiganga, con muchos cascabeles, y en la punta de un palo traía tres vejigas de vaca hinchadas . . . comenzó a esgrimir el palo y a sacudir el suelo con las vejigas y a dar grandes saltos, sonando los cascabeles; cuya mala visión así alborotó a Rocinante. (627)
> (a member of the company . . . was dressed as a fool, wearing a good number of bells, and at the end of a stick he was carrying there were three inflated cow bladders . . . began to fence with the stick and hit the ground with the bladders and leap high into the air, shaking his bells; this terrible sight). (524)

> inn, I will put something more popular, more metaphorical, which will allow me [to write] a better adventure for the knight, I will put a puppet play. And not only that, for the said Alonso Quijano will participate in the plot. It's not actor's theatre as you think, it's puppet theatre. (Rumbau 2020; translation mine)

[12] The characters of Demon and Death are of special significance among the cast. As the coachman says to Don Quixote, he always plays "en esta compañía los primeros papeles" (in this company . . . the leading roles), and the Devil is "una de las principales figuras del auto" (one of the principal figures in the play) (626; 523). The centrality of the character of Death is reflected in turn in the title of the Passion play that they perform. Death is, moreover, "la primera figura que se ofreció a los ojos de don Quijote" (the first figure that appeared to Don Quixote's eyes was that of Death himself) (625; 523).

The classical scholar Richard Seaford has underscored in this regard the demonic nature of satyrs, who had "numinous powers of their own, and . . . represented in effect a *thiasos* [that is, a theatrical company] of Bacchic celebrants" (quoted in Griffith 2015, 34). Dionysiac *thiasoi* entered the stage unexpectedly to introduce a comical element through amusement, trickery, and deceit. They represented "an antidote to death and its demons" by acting as a counterweight to the tragic plot of satyr drama (Stevanović 2009, 269).

Seaford likewise notes that satyr plays "often involved . . . encounters with a precious and transformational new invention or person, and their eventual restoration to the company of Dionysos himself" (quoted in Griffith 2015, 34). Don Quixote and Sancho could be seen in this regard as another theatrical company that crosses paths with that of Angulo el Malo. Don Quixote himself displays his Dionysian side and his eagerness to join Angulo el Malo's company when he says to the coachman "mirad si mandáis algo en que pueda seros de provecho, que lo haré con buen ánimo y buen talante, porque desde mochacho fui aficionado a la carátula, y en mi mocedad se me iban los ojos tras la farándula" (consider if there is any way in which I can be of service to you, and I shall do it gladly and willingly, because ever since I was a boy I have enjoyed the theater, and in my youth I was a great lover of plays) (627; 524).

The insertion of magical and demonic characters is a common theatrical technique that serves to interrupt the dramatic action and create suspense. It can also be associated with the transposition of characters between different narrative levels, which (similarly to the feedback loop between reality and appearance in "The Marvellous Puppet Show") constitutes a paradigmatic diabolical act. From a narrative perspective, this transposition involves a kind of metalepsis on the level not only of discourse, but also of space and time that in *Don Quixote* results in the *mise en abyme* produced by the ghostly actors, seen as demonic masks. The line of separation between the narrative levels becomes in this way blurred, leaving the audience and readers confused.[13]

[13] This confusion likewise applies to the actual number of "phantoms" sitting in the carriage, which is never clarified. As the narrator remarks, there were "otras personas de diferentes trajes y rostros" (others with various outfits and countenances) (626; 523) in addition to the characters presented by the coachman. The carriage thus makes the impression of being enchanted. This may seem to break the spell of the story and openly reveal Cervantes's authorial control. Nevertheless, it also serves to highlight the element of fantasy in the narration.

4. Staging an Old (True) Story: the Illusion of Reality in the Master Pedro Episode

In comparison to "The Marvellous Puppet Show" and "The Assembly of Death", the Master Pedro episode is the only one of the three texts that features real puppets. Told in chapters twenty-five to twenty-seven of Part Two, the beginning of the episode finds Don Quixote and Sancho having arrived at an inn at the same time as the mysterious puppeteer Master Pedro, who "traía cubierto el ojo izquierdo y casi medio carrillo con un parche de tafetán verde" (had his left eye and almost half his cheek covered with a patch of green taffeta) (2004, 744; 2003, 623). By the nature of his profession (as well as the mystery of his identity), the character of Master Pedro resembles a character from a Greek New Comedy play.[14] The innkeeper welcomes him and says excitedly: "llegue el mono y el retablo, que gente hay esta noche en la venta que pagará el verle y las habilidades del mono" (Bring the monkey and the puppet stage in, because tonight there are people in the inn who will pay to see the show and the monkey's talents) (745; 623). The innkeeper explains to Don Quixote that the monkey that accompanies Master Pedro has "la más rara habilidad que se vio entre monos ni se imaginó entre hombres . . . de modo que nos hacer creer que tiene el diablo en el cuerpo" (the rarest talent ever seen among monkeys or imagined among men . . . [which] makes us think that he has the devil in his body) (745; 624). It appears that the monkey has the power of divining (mostly) anything he is asked about the past or the present, which he whispers into Master Pedro's ear for him to speak it out.[15]

After watching the monkey allegedly divine what Sancho's wife was doing at that moment, Don Quixote seems to agree with the innkeeper: "hallo por mi cuenta que sin duda este maese Pedro su amo debe de tener hecho pacto tácito o espreso con el demonio . . . de que infunda esa habilidad en el mono, con que gane de comer, y después que esté rico le dará su alma" (in my opinion this Master Pedro, his owner, must have made a pact, either implicit or explicit, with the devil . . . to grant his talent to the monkey so that Master Pedro could earn his living, and when he is rich the devil will

[14] One of most common character types in Greek New Comedy was the trickster, and one the most common plot elements was mistaken identity. One might also think of Master Pedro along the lines of an Italian *furbo* or a Greek *panourgos*.

[15] The same alleged talent appears in a later chapter titled "Que trata de la aventura de la cabeza encantada, con otras niñerías que no pueden dejar de contarse" (Which relates the adventure of the enchanted head, as well as other foolishness that must be recounted), where Don Antonio Moreno takes Don Quixote into a room where there is a bust that, according to Moreno, "tiene propiedad y virtud de responder a cuantas cosas al oído le preguntaren" (has the property and virtue of responding to any question spoken into its ear) (1023; 866).

take his soul) (748; 626). In addition to the divining monkey, Master Pedro's puppet show is performed (similarly to "The Marvellous Puppet Show") with the help of a narrator, who tells a grotesque-humoristic version of what the Cervantes scholar Diana De Armas Wilson describes as "an old Carolingian liberation narrative with human simulacra" (2007, 250): the rescue of Charlemagne's daughter Melisendra from the Moorish king Marsilio by his nephew Don Gaiferos. Cervantes manages in this way to infuse the episode with theatricality by having Master Pedro (who plays both the puppet master and the puppet) perform a popular legend with which the audience is already familiar.

The dénouement of the episode displays a patent metatheatricality that follows in the footsteps of classical Greek theatre. It could be argued that the play represents an *embolima* of sorts and reflects the double function of the Greek chorus. While Master Pedro proceeds with the ritualistic performance in the present, he and the audience become immersed into other chronotopes and are placed in the position of addressee of a story filled with "curvas . . . transversales . . . y . . . contrapuntos" (curves . . . transverse lines . . . and . . . counterpoints) (752-3; 630). There are moments where the puppeteer even puts himself in the place of the audience. After Don Quixote urges the narrator to tell the story of Don Gaiferos and Melisendra more straightforwardly, Master Pedro jumps in and says to the narrator: "muchacho, no te metas en dibujos, sino haz lo que ese señor te manda, que será lo más acertado" (boy, tend to your business and do what the gentleman says, that's the right thing to do) (753; 630). When Don Quixote later complains about the show's lack of historical accuracy, Master Pedro even addresses the knight-errant directly by saying: "no mire vuesa merced en niñerías, señor don Quijote, ni quiera llevar las cosas tan por el cabo, que no se le halle" (your grace should not concern yourself with trifles, Señor Don Quixote, or try to carry things so far that you never reach the end of them) (754; 632). The audience (and readers) are hence invited to participate as co-writers and co-narrators in a collective metalepsis (in its literal sense of *participation*) that results in methexis.

The distancing of the narration from the narrator leads to the suspension of narrative discourse and opens the floor to walk-on parts. Don Quixote becomes carried away by both the narration and the "inaccurate" staging of the legend. Confused between the fictional reality and the outward reality, he ends up taking the puppets for the characters that they represent (similarly to Angulo el Malo's company) and jumps on the stage to save the life of Melisendra's puppet. The knight-errant, who has by then become another of Master Pedro's puppets, ends up committing a "diabolical" act by knocking the puppet theatre to the floor and beheading some of the

puppets.[16] Readers are thus treated to a theatrical play within the novel that takes place simultaneously with the adventures of Don Quixote, on the one hand, and the performance of the puppet play that the knight-errant chooses to "direct" on the stage, on the other.

The ferocity of this scene serves to illustrate the pact of violence that characterizes metatheatrical plays according to Martin Puchner (in Abel 2003). The destruction of Master Pedro's theatre could also be seen from the lens of the Bacchic *sparagmos* and similarly be likened to the "revenge plot" in Euripides's tragedy *The Bacchae*, which "works on the basis of a *mise en abyme* and degenerates into a cruel and perverted anti-theater" (Bierl 2018, 226).

Conclusion

In his overview of publications on "Transnational and International Cervantes", Burningham makes reference to the groundbreaking monograph *Transnational Cervantes*, where William Childers argues for the need to "dissociate…[Cervantes's] work from European post-Enlightenment modernity and connect…early modern Spain with other temporalities and geographies" (quoted in Burningham 2021, 656). There is a strong tendency in this regard to think of the transnational and international dimension of Cervantes in terms of the influence he has exerted on authors and literatures from around the world (not without reason, to be sure). Yet, the connection of his *œuvre* to other temporalities does not always need to take early modernity as its starting point.

The "memorable appearances" (Segel 1995, 5) of puppets (literal or otherwise) in Cervantes's fiction shows how closely linked he was not only to the culture and politics of his time (as in the cases of *máquina real* and *retablo*) but, more broadly, to the history of puppet theatre (as in the Sicilian *Opera dei pupi* and the Spanish *teatro de títeres*). As well as the connection to earlier temporalities, one must not lose sight of the Cervantine connection to other geographies. Greek theatrical culture is a case in point in this regard,

[16] It should be noted that the dénouement of Master Pedro's puppet show is more akin to a traditional Italian *intermezzo* than to a Spanish *entremés*. As the seventeenth-century actor and playwright Andrea Perrucci noted, "the Spanish [*entremeses*] end in dancing and singing; the Italian [*intermezzi* end] in whacks on the shoulder with a cardboard stick, or a wooden dagger" (2008, 374). The stick in Italian *intermezzi* is a phallic symbol that was commonly featured in Renaissance *Commedia dell'Arte* — specifically, it was associated with the nose of the character Pulcinella, which was "of Greek origin and, in the last instance, ancient-Neapolitan (Magnogreek)" (Scafoglio and Lombardi Satriani 1992, 365; translation mine). The significance of the stick goes back to the satyrs and centaurs.

as this article has shown.

Ultimately, exploring the connection of Cervantes with other temporalities and geographies should result in a better understanding of the paradoxical status of Cervantes noted by Burningham as both the most Spanish of authors and the most international of Spanish authors.

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