

**“Un cierto claro oscuro:” Night and the Performance of Class
in the Palace Episodes of *Don Quijote, II***

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Don Quijote begins with a famously vague description of the protagonist, Alonso Quijano, but with a very precise description of the cause of his insanity. Shortly after the volume commences, we learn that Don Quijote spent night after night trying to understand the meaning of books of chivalry (22). The narration reads: “En resolución, él se enfrascó tanto en su letura, que se la pasaban las noches leyendo de claro en claro, y los días de turbio en turbio: y así del poco dormir y mucho leer, se le secó el cerebro de manera que vino a perder el juicio” (23). While reading books of chivalry is the clear cause of Alonso Quijano’s loss of reason, the role that time of day played –that is, the fact that he read specifically all day *and* all night– should not be overlooked.

Night affords opportunities that day does not, opportunities for the imagination to expand, for carnivalesque moments of social inversion, and for things to seem other than they are. It is little wonder, then, that darkness provides the perfect point of entry for Don Quijote’s madness. From the beginning of the tome, therefore, night is given a special place in the text. Throughout *Don Quijote*, night (and reactions to it) allows for a greater understanding of various characters, including the knight and his squire. This article will focus on the role of night in the palace episodes of Part Two of *Don Quijote*, specifically on how reactions to night convey differing responses to Spain’s nascent modernity. The Duke and Duchess on the one hand, and Sancho Panza on the other, use the night as a space within which the characters can present a critique of social relations. In short, night allows these characters to offer a performance of class.

Critics have long noted that in *Don Quijote’s* second half the eponymous knight ceases to be the author of his own adventures, as he was in Part One.¹ The second volume instead subjects Don Quijote to a series of episodes in which he has very little, if any, control. This is most true in Part Two’s middle chapters, when Don Quijote and Sancho Panza are guests at the palace of the Duke and Duchess, two avid readers of Part One. The nobility are delighted to entertain themselves by authoring elaborate and fictitious chivalric adventures for Don Quijote and Sancho Panza, most of which end badly for the two protagonists.² While one school of thought points to the jokes at the palace as mere fun and slapstick and offers thus further proof that *Don Quijote* is a funny book, I prefer the argument that the time in the palace of the Duke and Duchess

¹ See, for example, El Saffar, *Beyond Fiction*, Chapter Four.

² In fact, the text makes clear that the adventures of these chapters belong to the Duke and the Duchess, not to Don Quijote and Sancho: “No se hizo de rogar Sancho, y entretejióse entre los tres y hizo cuarto en al conversación, con gran gusto de la duquesa y del duque, que *tuvieron a gran ventura* acoger en su castillo tal caballero andante y tal escudero andado” (623).

makes for nothing less than a series of searing and cruel moments for Don Quijote and Sancho.³ The use of night in these chapters further underscores the dynamic of strife between the above four characters. In particular, the Duke and Duchess are prone to take advantage of the night for these adventures in order to more easily abuse their two houseguests and to more readily display their power. Night, for them, is a place where they can pull the narrative back to the pre-modern world, where their class ruled.⁴ Sancho Panza, however, also seizes on the night in these chapters as a possible space to exert dominance. Sancho begins to push against the older feudal-aristocratic order, and uses night as a means to advance his social status from that of a peasant to that of the new *letrado* class of lawyers, judges, and administrators. As such, night becomes a place where the very possibilities and consequences of modern social mobility are laid out. Ultimately, this article will show how Sancho's attitude toward night changes, and illuminate how, as he shies away from the dark, he simultaneously abandons ideas of climbing the social ladder. In this way, Cervantes's use of the dark exposes a principle tension of his period –the intransigence of the nobility to embrace a new world order and the frustrated goals of the peasant class.

In his book *At Day's Close*, A. Roger Ekirch focuses on night as an important index of cultural expression. He notes that night in the preindustrial age offered a very different contrast to daytime experiences (xxvi). Interrupted sleep was the norm, and between first and second sleeps, people engaged in a variety of work and social activities. Night was a time “of liberation and renewal” that “afforded a sanctuary from social existence” (xxvi). Building on Ekirch's theories, Craig Koslofsky has recently argued that early modern history and culture experienced an increasing “nocturnalization,” which Koslofsky defines as “the ongoing expansion of the legitimate social and symbolic uses of the night” (2). He argues that through nocturnalization, “early modern men and women found new paths to the Divine, created baroque opera and theater, formed a new kind of public sphere, and challenged the existence of an ‘Invisible World’ of nocturnal ghosts and witches” (3). While night was something that until this point historically united all humankind, the early modern period began to see a shift and a divergence in the way that peoples experienced the night (Koslofsky 5). Those living in cities and at court began to evolve toward our

³ For more on *Don Quijote* as a comical narrative, see Russell and Close. For more on *Don Quijote* as a novel of cruelty see, for example, Nabokov.

⁴ See Quint, 133. There he argues:

In Part Two, a Don Quijote who seems to have adapted some of the more peaceable and moderate traits of that world's emerging middle class finds himself imprisoned by his old chivalric delusions, fed back to him by the Duke and Duchess The regressive movement of Part Two thus has a historical correlative. Cervantes's novel discovers a new social formation whose values compete with those of an older feudal-aristocratic order. The Duke and the Duchess, representatives of an aristocracy whose power is still entrenched and socially dominant, drag *Don Quijote* back toward the past. Their class may exert a similar drag on Spanish society and culture as a whole. (133)

more modern use of the night, even before the invention of electricity. Nighttime socializing and the rise of the coffee house, for example, encouraged a more expansive use of twilight hours. With these changes, some people went to bed later and no longer experienced the first and second sleeps described by Ekrich. Moreover, the shift to nocturnal socialization created, for the first time in human history, a difference in the way in which urban and rural people experienced night.

This tension between court and country can be seen explicitly in the relationship between the Duke and Duchess and Sancho Panza. While the Duke and Duchess are exploiting modernization of night in order to exert a pre-modern control, Sancho begins to see in the night the modern possibility of acquiring higher social standing. Cervantes draws our attention to the importance of night at the very first meeting between the Duke and Duchess and Don Quijote and Sancho. The knight and his squire come upon the nobles as they are hawking and as the sun is setting: “al poner el sol” (620). Dusk is, of course, a time when shadows grow and images fade, when murky visibility allows for a symbolically murky demarcation of social class. It is also, here, an indication that all will not be as it seems in the ensuing chapters. Henceforth, the Duke and Duchess avail themselves of the night to amaze their new houseguests. For example, just after the Duke, Duchess, Don Quijote, and Sancho complete their wild boar hunt, the first “supernatural” event takes place under the nobility’s guidance: the arrival of Merlin. Note how the time of day is emphasized:

Con estos y otros entretenidos razonamientos, salieron de la tienda al bosque, y en requerir algunas paranzas y presto se les pasó el día y se les vino la noche, y no tan clara ni tan sesga como la sazón del tiempo pedía, que era en la mitad del verano. Pero un cierto claro oscuro que trujo consigo, ayudó mucho a la intención de los duques. Y así como comenzó a anochecer, un poco más adelante del crepúsculo, a deshora pareció que todo el bosque por todas cuatro partes se ardía. Y luego se oyeron por aquí y por allí, y por acá y por acullá, infinitas cornetas y otros instrumentos de guerra, como de muchas tropas de caballería que por el bosque pasaba. La luz del fuego, el son de los bélicos instrumentos, casi cegaron y atronaron los ojos y los oídos de los circunstantes y aun de todos los que en el bosque estaban. (649-50)

While the Duke and Duchess will go to great lengths to set the scene that follows, nature itself cooperates here. It is dusk once again, which gives way to a darker night than normal for high summer. The contrasting light (presumably from torches) and darkness give the scene a certain chiaroscuro that heightens the effects of the spectacle put on by the Duke and Duchess.

As the chapter progresses, a devil appears to announce the arrival of Montesinos. But Don Quijote and Sancho Panza are forced to wait until it is completely dark, until “se cerró la noche, y comenzaron a discurrir muchas luces por el bosque, bien así

como discurren por el cielo las exhalaciones secas de la tierra, que parecen a nuestra vista estrellas que corren” (651). At long last, a frightening cacophony of music erupts (causing Sancho to faint into the Duchess’s skirt) and various carts appear with infinite lights attached (651). The first cart carries multiple demon-like passengers, the others various famous literary enchanters. Finally Merlin arrives, asking Sancho to give himself three thousand and three hundred lashes in order to disenchant Dulcinea. After negotiating certain terms, Sancho agrees.

Cervantes emphasizes many important characteristics throughout this episode: the nebulous time of dusk, the use of sound to help with evening’s disorientation of the senses, and finally, the Duke and Duchess’s strategic placement of torches. All of the above not only show a cunning use of night to daze and mystify, the description also demonstrates an understanding of night as an accomplice to spectacle. Such theatricality of night and light places the Duke and Duchess squarely within the vogue of the seventeenth century.⁵ As Koslofsky reminds us, the fissures of European Christendom caused early modern rulers to perform their authority in a variety of ways. While European sovereigns had been identifying themselves with sources of light from before the early modern era, “in the baroque age princes deliberately used the chiaroscuro of light in the night to intensify these images, which began to supplement (though not supplant) traditional Christian symbols of power and authority” (93). Koslofsky recalls how Louis XIV of France was known as the Sun King because of his appearance as the sun in a ballet, tellingly entitled “Ballet de la Nuit.” Performed at night with clever lighting effects, the performance was open to nobility and commoner alike (Koslofsky 93). Thus, the power of Louis XIV was made plain to all, and the rather abstract idea of princely authority was concretely displayed as stage spectacle for every commoner to comprehend (Koslofsky 93).

While the Duke and Duchess do not themselves appear in the forest spectacle of Merlin cited above (they enjoy the show as spectators), they use the night play as more than a means to entertain. Their theater exists to deceive their guests and to assert their noble rank. Indeed, *they* are the authors of *Don Quijote* now, or so they think, for Sancho is less compliant than the Duke and Duchess expected. He does not immediately agree to the three thousand and three hundred lashes, and at first, outright refuses them:

“!Voto a tal” dijo a esta sazón Sancho, “No digo yo tres mil azotes, pero así me daré yo tres, como tres puñaladas. !Válate el Diablo por modo de desencantar! ¡Yo no sé qué tienen que ver mis posas con los encantos! Par Dios que si el señor Merlín no ha hallado otra manera como desencantar a la señora Dulcinea del Toboso, encantada se podrá ir a la sepultura.” (654)

This response, of course, enrages Don Quijote, but it also forces the actor playing

⁵ For a reading of this scene as a recreation of the contemporary court masque tradition, see Close.

Merlin to negotiate the terms a bit. Sancho remains intransigent, however, even when threatened by the Duke that he will not be made a governor unless he concedes to the lashing. Ultimately, after the exhortations of both real and fictitious persons present, Sancho replies:

[S]oy contento de darme los tres mil y trecientos azotes, con condición que me los tengo de dar cada y cuando que yo quisiere, sin que se me ponga tasa en los días ni en el tiempo. . . . Ha de ser también condición que no he de estar obligado a sacarme sangre con la disciplina, y que si algunos azotes fueren de mosqueo, se me han de tomar en cuenta. (658)⁶

Order is restored, therefore, when Sancho does finally agree to debase himself in order to disenchant Dulcinea. He has asserted some will, but ultimately succumbs to theirs. Such ignominy serves to underline his lowly class position with respect to the Duke and Duchess.

The chapter concludes with a description of the forest as a pastoral *locus amoenus*, one that is a far cry from its bellicose beginning as a scene of boar hunting, and certainly a contrast to the disorder and warlike sounds that accompanied the demons, the enchanters, and their carts. Cervantes writes:

Y ya, en esto, se venía a más andar el alba alegre y risueña. Las florecillas de los campos se descollaban y erguían, y los líquidos cristales de los arroyuelos, murmurando por entre blancas y pardas guijas, iban a dar tributo a los ríos que los esperaban. (658)

The natural world is restored as seen in this description of an idealized setting not at night (when class mobility is seemingly up for grabs), but at dawn, when harmony is restored and class structure is less negotiable.⁷ The description offers a rebuke to those who would use darkness for their own benefits –be it at the higher or lower end of the class spectrum.

The next nocturnal adventure to take place in the palace concerns the magical horse, Clavileño. In another escapade of their invention, the Duke and Duchess ask Don Quijote and Sancho to mount Clavileño (an equine construction of wood) and to “fly” him into the heavens in order to help disenchant the bearded ladies. As in the Merlin episode above, the use of night and light is repeated here. Clavileño arrives in the garden at night, (“llegó en esto la noche”), and a blindfolded Sancho and Don

⁶ Sancho’s will and agency above is foreshadowed by an important and related incident, his “enchantment” of Dulcinea in Chapter Nine of Part Two. Interestingly, the idea for her enchantment came to Sancho at night.

⁷ Close understands the *locus amoenus* of as part of the celebratory atmosphere of the entire scene –thus supporting his thesis that the *burlas* come out of the court masque tradition and are to be laughed at (77).

Quijote “ride” the horse in what is surely an amusing spectacle for the observing court (679). The Duke and Duchess’s servants help with the theatrics –one moment fanning the knight and his squire, and another moment bringing lit torches close to their faces so that they feel the heat of the spheres:

En esto, con unas estopas ligeras de encenderse y apagarse, desde lejos, pendientes de una caña, les calentaban los rostros. Sancho, que sintió el calor, dijo: “Que me maten si no estamos ya en el lugar del fuego, o bien cerca, porque una gran parte de mi barba se me ha chamuscado, y estoy, señor, por descubrirme y ver en qué parte estamos.” (683)

The audience reacts to this and to further conversation between knight and squire as they “fly,” and the stage is set for the climax of light and darkness in the form of fireworks:

Y queriendo dar remate a la estraña y bien fabricada aventura, por la cola de Clavileño le pegaron fuego con unas estopas, y al punto, por estar el caballo lleno de cohetes tronadores, voló por los aires con estraño ruido, y dio con don Quijote y con Sancho Panza en el suelo, medio chamuscados. (684)

Sancho’s role in the episode is as important as it was in the Merlin episode above. His initial refusal to disenchant Dulcinea corresponds to his original refusal to mount Clavileño. And though Sancho finally acquiesces to what is asked of him (676-78), he ultimately uses the adventure as a means to assert his own position:

Preguntó la duquesa a Sancho que cómo le había ido en aquel largo viaje. A lo cual Sancho respondió: “Yo, señora, sentí que íbamos, según mi señor me dijo, volando por la region del fuego, y quise descubrirme un poco los ojos. Pero mi amo, a quien pedí licencia para descubrirme, no la consintió. Mas yo, que tengo no sé qué brinzas de curioso y de desear saber lo que se me estorba y impide, bonitamente, y sin que nadie lo viese, por junto a las narices aparté tanto cuanto el pañizuelo que me tapaba los ojos, y por allí miré hacia la tierra, y parecióme que toda ella no era mayor que un grano de mostaza, y los hombres que andaban sobre ella poco mayores que avellanas, por que se vea cuán altos debíamos de ir entonces.” (685)

The Duchess tries to edit a bit of Sancho’s “observations,” calling particular attention to his lack of scale –the world was a grain of mustard, but men were like almonds on top of it?– but Sancho is unmoved. He replies that if they were flying Clavileño by enchantment, then he saw things by enchantment, no matter the lack of logic (685).

Sancho then goes on to say that, during the flight atop Clavileño, he even got off of the horse in order to play with some goats in the air (685).

While everyone has a good laugh at these fabrications, Sancho ultimately is able to wield a kind of power with his stories.⁸ Don Quijote, for instance, approaches Sancho whispering that he will believe Sancho's Clavileño adventure if Sancho believes his adventure, nineteen chapters earlier, in the cave of Montesinos. More important, the Duke and Duchess demonstrate insecurity around Sancho's stories. They purposefully stop asking Sancho questions about his escapade: "No quisieron preguntarle más de su viaje, porque les pareció que llevaba Sancho hilo de pasearse por todos los cielos, y dar nuevas de cuanto allá pasaba, sin haberse movido del jardín" (686). In other words, the Duke and Duchess, while entertained by Sancho, realize that he will continue to make up more and more stories about his flight on the wooden horse. Thus, Sancho would not only have the last word, but would also become the author of what the Duke and Duchess wanted to retain as *their* adventure, not *his*.⁹

The two episodes analyzed above demonstrate Sancho's experiments with the social possibilities that night affords. It is no surprise, therefore, that his hubris expands while governor of an *ínsula*. The Duke and Duchess assume that Sancho will fail spectacularly at governance, since he is, after all, an illiterate peasant. But the joke is on them as Sancho proves himself to be a very wise and able leader. Sancho not only justly judges disputes in court during the day, he also decides that he must walk the streets at night to keep his *ínsula* safe. He tells his secretary:

Y vuelvo a decir que se tenga cuenta con mi sustento y con el de mi rucio, que es lo que en este negocio importa y hace más al caso, y en siendo hora, vamos a rondar. Que es mi intención limpiar esta ínsula de todo género de inmundicia, y de gente vagabunda, holgazana, y mal entretenida. Porque quiero que sepáis, amigos, que la gente baldía y perezosa es en la república lo mesmo que los zánganos en las colmenas, que se comen la miel que las trabajadoras abejas hacen. Pienso favorecer a los labradores, guardar sus preeminencias a los hidalgos, premiar los virtuosos, y sobre todo, tener respeto a la religión y a la honra de los religiosos." . . . Llegó la noche y cenó el gobernador con licencia del señor doctor Recio. Aderezáronse de ronda. . . . (727)

⁸ For more on the importance of this episode in the life of Sancho Panza see Peña Fernández, 220.

⁹ See El Saffar, *Distance and Control*, 93. She contends that the jokes and theatrics that the Duke and Duchess are trying to mount usually turn out other than they had planned and ultimately reach beyond their control. She likens the participation of the Duke and Duchess to that of Sansón Carrasco. She argues that, like Sansón, the Duke and Duchess: "are trapped from two directions: they are controlled to some extent from within their play by the very characters whom they intend to manipulate, and from without by an author of whom they are unaware, by whose will and whose hand all that they do is contrived" (93).

Upon Sancho's suggestion that they patrol the streets at night, his *mayordomo* comments that he is surprised and impressed that an ignorant peasant like Sancho could be so wise (727). Sancho and his men not only stroll the realm in the dark, but they also come upon and sort out a variety of disputes unfolding on the evening's streets. Sancho's ability to maneuver in the night shows how he has been able to seize on night's capacious possibilities. What's more, as previous scholars have observed, Cervantes poses Sancho's good governance as a contrast to the Duke and Duchess's abuse of authority.¹⁰ While Sancho, a rural peasant, protects his citizens from the night in his rounds, the Duke and Duchess use night and nocturnal activities in their court to exploit others' vulnerabilities in the dark.

Such exploitation continues in the castle while Sancho is away. Alone, Don Quijote suffers many nighttime misadventures, authored by the Duke and Duchess. But while Sancho has made use of the night to assert modern possibilities of social mobility, Don Quijote maintains a pre-modern relationship to night. First, depressed at Sancho's absence, Don Quijote refuses attendees as he retires to bed. But as soon as he undresses, he overhears a staged conversation between Altisidora and her maids, followed by Altisidora's love song to him. The next night, Don Quijote replies to Altisidora with his own song about his steadfastness to Dulcinea. At this point the Duke and Duchess empty a bag of cats into his room, which seem to Don Quijote like a kingdom of devils (711). The candles in his room go out, and in the dark the cats cannot find a way to escape and end up clawing the poor knight's face. Don Quijote emerges so wounded from this encounter that he not only has to stay in his room for many days in order to recover, but even the Duke and Duchess feel some remorse about the painful outcome (712).

As Don Quijote is convalescing in his room he receives yet another night visitor, but this time in earnest. Doña Rodríguez, the head maid at the castle, seeks Don Quijote's help in restoring honor to her daughter. The request is especially telling since, far from an orchestrated joke, Doña Rodríguez explains that she has already asked for the Duke's help and that he has not fulfilled his obligations to her (724). Fully believing, it seems, that it is within Don Quijote's knightly powers to help her daughter, she begs him for assistance. Doña Rodríguez then compares her daughter's superior beauty to that of Altisidora and even to the Duchess herself. As she confides in Don Quijote that the Duchess has drained to let out bad humors, the door to the room flies open, the candle goes out, and Don Quijote and Doña Rodríguez are left in total darkness, "como boca de lobo" (725). At that point both Don Quijote and Doña Rodríguez are pinched and slapped, and Don Quijote is once again left alone in his room, wounded, in darkness.

Far from a contested space of social mobility, Don Quijote's experiences of night while he is separated from Sancho are definitively pre-modern. In the night, he is

¹⁰ See Redondo, 67-70. He argues that Sancho's reign evokes the upside down world of Mardis Gras and thus provides an even greater critique of the Duke and his class. In other words, the only way that real justice can be administered is in an atmosphere of topsy-turvy.

courted and sought out (both in jest and in earnest) as a knight of chivalry, and thus his nocturnal experiences evoke medieval times. While his misadventures stand as a reminder of what the night once was (lacking the modern nocturnalization of the early modern period), his experience of it is no more felicitous than his attempt to resurrect any aspect of the pre-modern age. Undeniably, Don Quijote's night experiences contribute to his desire to flee the palace of the Duke and Duchess: "ya don Quijote sano de sus aruños, le pareció que la vida que en aquel castillo tenía era contra toda la orden de caballería que profesaba, y así determinó de pedir licencia a los duques para partirse a Zaragoza, cuyas fiestas llegaban cerca, adonde pensaba ganar el arnés que en las tales fiestas se conquista" (748). The Duke and Duchess have successfully dragged Don Quijote back to a time when their authority was unshakable and he yearns to be free of them.

Like Don Quijote who decides to leave the castle due, in large part, to nocturnal misadventures, Sancho ultimately falls prey to night's power and decides to leave his *ínsula*. On the seventh night of his governorship, Sancho awakes to a great tumult. Enemies have invaded, and Sancho and his men rush to defend themselves. Sancho, however, is pinned between two shields on the floor as people trample on top of him:

Quedó como galápago encerrado y cubierto con sus conchas . . . y no por verle caído aquella gente burladora le tuvieron compasión alguna. Antes, apagando las antorchas tornaron a reforzar las voces y a retirar el !Arma! con tan gran priesa, pasando por encima del pobre Sancho. (755)

Though Sancho "won" the fictitious battle, he is trampled and abused in the darkness. Those in on the joke feel some remorse that they may have gone too far, just as those in the castle felt after Don Quijote's encounter with the cats (756). Unable to capitalize on his earlier moments of nocturnalization as a lasting means of social mobility, Sancho decides to leave the governorship altogether, and goes to collect his donkey. Before he departs, however, he asks what time it is: "Preguntó qué hora era. Respondieronle que ya amanecía" (756). Dawn sanctions both his departure from the *ínsula* and from the social ladder. Similar to the scene in the forest, dawn here signals an absence of social manipulation or mobility. Sancho has tellingly given up on night adventures and, simultaneously, on his own advancement. He departs declaring, "Desnudo nací, desnudo me hallo" (757).

As if to underscore Sancho's fear and surrender to the power of night, our squire suffers a mishap as he returns to the Duke's castle. He and his donkey stray slightly from the road and fall in a deep pit with no means to escape. His previous rise to power as governor is now mirrored in reverse in this literal and metaphorical fall of fortune.¹¹ It is important to note that the fall is made possible, and all the more menacing, because of the time of day: "le tomó la noche algo oscura y cerrada. . . . Y

¹¹ See Casaldueiro, 343.

quiso su corta y desventurada suerte, que, buscando lugar donde mejor acomodarse, cayeron él y el rucio en una honda y escurísima sima” (764). No longer a moment of opportunity, night is as wretched as the pit itself. But, just as he remarks out loud that he once was powerful and now has nothing,¹² day breaks:

Finalmente, habiendo pasado toda aquella noche en miserables quejas y lamentaciones, vino el día, con cuya claridad y resplandor vio Sancho que era imposible de toda imposibilidad salir de aquel pozo. . . . En esto, descubrió a un lado de la sima un agujero, capaz de caber por él una persona, si se agobiaba y encogía. . . . Y púdolo ver porque por lo que se podía llamar techo entraba un rayo de sol que lo descubría todo. (766)

While Don Quijote ultimately comes upon the pit and is able to rescue Sancho, the hope that daybreak here represents is undeniable. Sancho, content to be a peasant and a squire, is saved by Don Quijote and is again a part of day’s retinue. No longer desirous of power nor even of social mobility, he returns to a pre-modern relationship with night and thus a rejection of nocturnalization. And while he and his master are out again on the road, Sancho embraces night as merely a time for deep sleep: “Cumplió don Quijote con la naturaleza, durmiendo el primer sueño, sin dar lugar al segundo, bien al revés Sancho, que nunca tuvo segundo, porque le duraba el sueño desde la noche hasta la mañana, en que se mostraba su buena complexión y pocos cuidados” (835).

By way of conclusion, it would be useful to revisit the final theatrical moment between the Duke and Duchess and Sancho Panza. Don Quijote has been vanquished by Sansón Carrasco (dressed as the Knight of the White Moon) and must retire his arms for one year and return home. As he and Sancho are on their way, men on horseback appear and force the knight and his squire to go once again to the castle of the Duke and Duchess. Arriving as night falls, a mock auto-da-fé has been prepared and, wearing a penitent’s garb, Sancho must suffer pinches, slaps, and pinpricks in order to bring the maid Altisidora back to life. There are many parallels, of course, to the scene wherein Merlin tells Sancho he must give himself three thousand and three hundred lashes to disenchant Dulcinea. But there is also a significant difference in both demands: in order to disenchant Dulcinea, Sancho is invited to give the lashes to himself. Merlin explains that “los azotes que ha de recibir el buen Sancho, han de ser por su voluntad y no por fuerza, y en el tiempo que él quisiere” (655). In contrast, in the resurrection of Altisidora, not only is Sancho subjected to the pinches and slaps publicly, in that very moment, his punishment is made all the more humiliating because it is administered by duennas. Sancho replies to the new punishment:

¹² Sancho cries: “¿Quién dijera que el que ayer se vio entronizado gobernador de una ínsula, mandando a sus sirvientes y a sus vasallos, hoy se había de ver sepultado en una sima, sin haber persona alguna que le remedie, ni criado, ni vasallo que acuda a su socorro?” (765).

Bien podré yo dejarme manosear de todo el mundo. Pero consentir que me toquen dueñas, ¡eso no! Gaténme el rostro, como hicieron a mi amo en este mismo castillo; traspásenme el cuerpo con puntas de dagas buidas; atenácenme los brazos con tenazas de fuego, que yo lo llevaré en paciencia, o serviré a estos señores. Pero que me toquen dueñas no lo consentiré, si me llevase el diablo. (841)

For Sancho, any type of physical torture is preferable to mistreatment by duennas. In the end, however, Sancho does suffer slaps and pinches at the hands of these women. And though he refuses the pinpricks, his debasement at the hands of others has already been made complete. As he and Don Quijote retire to bed that evening, he remarks that he does not ache because he was abused, but because he was abused by duennas (843).

The message in this final deception of Sancho and Don Quijote by the Duke and Duchess is clear: night no longer affords Sancho a space to perform any other class than his own. He and his master have been conquered, and any delusions –of chivalry or of social advancement– are null and void.¹³ Moreover, after Altisidora’s resurrection, Cide Hamete offers an aside criticizing the madness of the Duke and Duchess: “tiene para sí ser tan locos los burladores como los burlados” (844). Neither the nobility, nor any other class, is invited to pull the text into the past or into the future. The performance of class at night is merely a simulacrum, and such a performance is by its very nature false. The focus on spectacle and theatrics implies an artificial interaction between peoples, when the authentic is replaced with its mere representation.¹⁴ By means of his invocation of night in these chapters, Cervantes rather bleakly forces his characters to remain in their problematic present.

Thus Cervantes is criticizing not merely the Duke and Duchess, but a society that would live vicariously through their literary theatrics. All four characters studied here are happier pretending to be in a novel of chivalry than actually fulfilling their real social responsibilities. Although each character has moments of freedom and agency, Cervantes appears to offer a critique of the very elements that contribute to such a spectacle. In particular, Cervantes seems to condemn an appropriation of night as a way of performing class and as a means of permitting social inversion.

¹³ For more on how Don Quijote’s chivalric career parallels Sancho’s career as governor, see J. J. Allen.

¹⁴ See Debord, 2.

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