The pilgrims who are making their way in the Persiles from the northern kingdoms of Thule and Frislandia to Rome find themselves for the first time on solid ground when they land near Lisbon at the beginning of Book III. In Books I and II their journey had been dominated by islands and seascapes, and their way seemed largely determined by forces beyond their control. When they land in Portugal at the time of the vernal equinox, they enter, both spatially and temporally, the phase of their pilgrimage dominated by solar principles, having been up to then subject primarily to the influence of the moon—that is, of the dark, the cold, and the uncertain.

The fact that the pilgrims reach the Catholic south at the time of the vernal equinox does not mean, however, that they have arrived at the land of perfection, nor, for that matter, that they have escaped entirely the fear and uncertainty that dominated the first half of their journey. They did find guiding light at crucial junctures in their icy northern travels, and behind the glare of the southern European sun that accompanies them through Books III and IV stand deep shadows. Not long after having arrived in Spain, for instance, early in Book III, the pilgrims encounter the abusive authority of the Holy Brotherhood, and find themselves caught in a net of false accusation, greed, and corruption. Throughout their southern, vernal journey they will find expressions of power, greed and possessiveness that generate violence and produce a general atmosphere of anxiety not essentially different from that experienced in Books I and II.

The point is that the main characters in the Persiles like those of all stories, inhabit a divided world. It is a world divided: according to the seasons—hot and cold; to the elements—water, dry land; to geography—north and south; to religion—pagan / Christian; Protestant / Catholic; and to sex—male and female. Cervantes so disposes his work as to reflect those divisions, giving to the first two books a cast that emphasizes north, water, cold, pagan / protestant; and to the second two books a privilege to south, dry land, heat, Catholicism. Neither half of the book, however, succeeds in eliminating elements of the other, nor in establishing a true resting point for the pilgrims Periandro and Auristela.

By ending the work at the point of furthest remove from the origin of the journeying couple—at the moment when they marry, reveal their true names and achieve conditions propitious for their return—Cervantes suggests for his work a full circle, in time and in space, only half of which can be captured in the narrative. The fullness, the completion, the joining of beginning and end, north and south, hot and cold, can only be represented in silence. For words are designed as instruments of expression in the divided world, and fiction is their natural element.

What distinguishes Periandro and Auristela from their companions in the Persiles, and from their counterparts in earlier works by Cervantes, is their relative lack of commitment to the fictional world through which they travel. Unlike Don Quixote or Elicio, the main characters of Cervantes' earlier long works, Periandro and Auristela are fully conscious of having each a double identity. They have put on, over their true selves as Persiles and Sigismunda, the masks of Periandro and Auristela for a specific purpose. Their aim throughout their journey is to be free to take on once again their original names. They project, in other words, through the fog of their trials, the point of return when they will be one with themselves—and with each other.

Through Persiles and Sigismunda we can see, suddenly, that fiction in Cervantes' last work is something other than simply escape. Through the fiction that is the Persiles, we earn the chance to “hear silence,” to borrow once again from Northrop Frye. As Periandro and Auristela, Persiles and Sigismunda create the conditions for their eventual oneness. Without the mediation of the fictional realm, they would have been simply actors—unconscious actors—in a fiction they would have called “reality.” By experiencing, and re-experiencing their so-called reality in a consciously fictional realm they learn to survive in the labyrinth, and eventually to break out of the illusions that perpetuate it.

The labyrinth of fiction originates in what René Girard has aptly called triangular desire. Persiles and Sigismunda, like so many couples in Cervantes' work, like so many couples in the whole history of Western letters, are catapulted into fiction by the presence of an “Other.” Unlike earlier rival-plagued heroes, however, Persiles fixes his attention less on the obstacle—his older brother Magsimino, who wants Sigismunda for himself—than on the goal. Persiles' journey to Rome with Sigismunda, inspired by his mother, represents a...
The knights whom he meets in Montesinos' Cave —Montesinos and Durandarte— are anxious, confused, decrepit, and aware that they and discover the origin and true source of the seven lagoons commonly called the Lakes of Ruidera” (p. 586).

Montesinos has an association with water. Don Quixote tells his host Don Diego that he will seek out the cave in order to “investigate can be found. The water episodes in Part II mark events of deep moment in Don Quixote's journey. Even his famous visit to the Cave of Quixote sets out in Part I at dawn on a sweltering day in July and wanders in arid terrain throughout his adventures. In Part II, on the other hand, he sallies forth at night, and despite his continued inland journeying, he seeks out, again and again, the places where water

achievement of the Persiles is that: that it has given a place to fiction within a larger context, just as north and south, hot and cold, water and land, man and woman, all have distinct though essential places in the organizing and self-reenacting of the cosmos. The vision that permits the harmonizing of the opposites is one that presupposes an overriding unity.

Periandro and Auristela are unique among Cervantes' creatures of fiction in that they participate in the unifying vision that will ultimately allow for their marriage. The story begins with a glimpse of that vision. When Book I of the Persiles opens, Periandro and Auristela have been separated for nearly two years. They find one another at last on an island inhabited by barbarians. Auristela, in order to prevent sexual assault by those into whose hands she has fallen, is dressed as a man. Periandro, because of his plan to rescue Auristela, is dressed as a woman. When they first embrace, therefore, near the beginning of the story of their travels, they are each dressed in clothes appropriate to the other. That initial contrasexual embrace is both a reunion and the pre-condition of their ultimate affirmed at the end of the work is not, however, to be confused either with transvestism or asexuality, both of which are characteristic of the pastoral. Androgyny is an affirmation of the wholeness of self that exactly parallels the wholeness the work projects—a wholeness which underlies and supports the succession of partialities that are expressed in time and space, in the divided world.

Golden Age literature is filled with female, and also male characters who dress in clothing appropriate to the opposite sex. Very often, as in Montemayor's Diana, the dress change is for seductive or deliberately confusing reasons and results in many a frustrated love situation. Transvestism so employed is generally only a variation on the triangular love motif that always structures love relations in pastoral romance. A recent and still unpublished paper, “Where Have All the ‘Old Knights' Gone?: L'Astrée”, by Louise K. Horowitz, describes the role of transvestism at length in D'Urfé's L'Astrée, a work heavily influenced by Montemayor's Diana. She concludes that the frequent use of transvestism there serves the purpose of titillating the audience and promoting an alienated, narcissistic world view.

Auristela and Periandro do not stop being woman and man, any more than it stops being cold in the winter and hot in the summer. Each one simply recognizes his and her participation in the whole of which each is a partial manifestation. Because each is able to identify with the absent other side of his (her) self, the two can travel as a pair through the two predominant terrains of the work —the watery, unconscious, dark, feminine first half as well as the dry, conscious, sunlit masculine second half— and remain intact.

To privilege one set of elements over another is to identify with the divided world, to be an unconscious participant in fiction, to belong to the world of conflict, with all that that brings with it in the way of illusion and violence. I would like here, having discussed the androgynous view underlying the Persiles, to look back into the two parts of Don Quixote to consider how some of the polarities function within the work, and to evaluate those elements in the light of Don Quixote's own quest.

In Don Quixote one finds the light / dark / dry land / water polarities that are so evident in the Persiles, but in reverse order. Don Quixote sets out in Part I at dawn on a refreshing day in July and wanders in arid terrain throughout his adventures. In Part II, on the other hand, he sallies forth at night, and despite his continued inland journeying, he seeks out, again and again, the places where water can be found. The water episodes in Part II mark events of deep moment in Don Quixote's journey. Even his famous visit to the Cave of Montesinos has an association with water. Don Quixote tells his host Don Diego that he will seek out the cave in order to "investigate and discover the origin and true source of the seven lagoons commonly called the Lakes of Ruidera” (p. 586). The search brings Don Quixote into contact with a dream vision that exposes the frailty of his faith in the chivalric heroes around whom he has built his image. The knights whom he meets in Montesinos' Cave —Montesinos and Durandarte— are anxious, confused, decrepid, and aware that they are held fast in an enchantor's spell. Suspended between desire and fulfillment, the "heroes" of Don Quixote's dream are caught endlessly reenacting a myth of romance and chivalry that they know has somehow failed.

In Chapter 27, following the episode with Master Peter and the braying townspeople, the narrator tells us that Don Quixote “decided first to view the banks of the River Ebro and all that district, and then go on to the city of Saragossa, for there was enough time for all this before the jousts” (p. 647). When he and Sancho reach the river in Chapter 29, the narrator explains: “Don Quixote and Sancho came to the river Ebro, the sight of which was a great delight to Don Quixote, as he contemplated and gazed upon the charms of its shores, the clearness of its water, the smoothness of its stream, and the abundance of its liquid crystal. In fact this cheering sight recalled a thousand amorous thoughts to his mind. Especially he dwelt on his vision in the Cave of Montesinos . . .” (p. 656).

When Don Quixote takes a boat and drifts out with the frightened Sancho onto the Ebro, he comes just a little closer to conscious awareness of his failure in the role he has chosen to play. Montesinos had greeted him in the cave as the knight prophesied by Merlin who would revive the ancient art of chivalry and release him and Durandarte from their enchantment. In the Ebro episode, Don Quixote again feels called upon to “succour some knight or other person of rank in distress” (p. 656). But as with the cave dream, Don Quixote's vision of valor on the Ebro is dissipated in the glare of the everyday. He nearly drowns and has to pay the fishermen whose boat he took for its destruction in the mill.

The unsuccessful attempt to aid a knight in distress in Chapter 29 marks the end of Don Quixote's long series of madnesses, which began early in Part I. The episode brings to a head the frustration that has been accumulating just beneath the surface of Don Quixote's melancholic equanimity. It is at this point that he makes his famous comment: “God help us, but this whole world is tricks and devices, one against the other. I can do no more” (p. 661).

In Chapter 61, having reached Barcelona, Don Quixote again finds himself face to face with water. It is early morning and the narrator says: “Dawn gave way to the sun, whose face, broader than a shield gradually rose from below the horizon. Then Don Quixote and Sancho gazed in all directions, and saw the sea, which they had never seen before. It appeared to them very broad and spacious, and a good deal bigger than the Lagoons of Ruidera, which they had seen in La Mancha” (p. 866). On the shores of the Mediterranean Don Quixote meets his enemy and deliverer Sansón Carrasco. While once Sansón had appeared as the Knight of the Mirrors to challenge Don Quixote, here, at water's edge, he appears in the much more ominous disguise of the Knight of the White Moon. At his hands Don Quixote is forced to renounce knight errantry for a year.

Don Quixote plays an active part in seeking out water, whenever it appears in Part II. The water seems to offer relief, some external representation of the rising tide of uncertainty that he is experiencing beneath his armor. The regions of Soria and Zaragoza through which he travels on his way to Barcelona mirror topographically Don Quixote's present state of being, for despite those regions' vast vistas of dry, stony land, the geography books tell us that they carry beneath them a considerable richness of subterranean waters. Don Quixote is a long way from being able to give himself over to the whole of the ocean, but the series of episodes alluded to here attest to a growing presence within him of forces that will work to undermine his image as knight errant. At each encounter the size of the body of water increases, Don Quixote's involvement with it is greater, and the disturbances to his conscious position are magnified.

Contemplation of the water as it figures in Cervantes' work shows that it comes to have a significance that reaches far beyond the autobiographical. We know that Cervantes seems haunted by his own experience of capture and shipwreck, as Avalle-Arce has shown in an excellent study on the subject. But the sea, like the windmills of La Mancha and the Lagoons of Ruidera, goes through a transformation as it is incorporated into Cervantes' works of art, and comes to take a place of its own within the symbolic structure of his literary universe.

What needs to be pointed out here is that, novelistically as well as symbolically, water is associated in Cervantes' work with the presence and influence of women. It can appear as ocean, bringing in links with birth and death and the unconscious, or it can appear as mountain streams, associating it with refreshment, beauty, and purity, but it always carries with it an aspect of the archetypal feminine.


The juxtaposition of water with woman can be found in the very earliest of Cervantes' works. Teolinda, the first woman to tell her story in La Galatea, comes into our presence from the banks of the Tagus. But more significantly, the only characters in that book whose love ends in marriage —Timbro and Nisida— are miraculously liberated from the devastations of the love triangle after undergoing storms at sea and capture by the Turks.

Ricardo and Leonisa in El Amante liberal also work their way out of the triangle (Ricardo's jealousy of Cornello is what starts the turmoil that is represented once again through storms at sea and captivity by the Turks) through traveling together in the sea and overcoming there their captors. The Captain in the "Captive's Tale" of Don Quixote I also travels with his lady by water. After escaping from Algiers they are caught by pirates who divest them of all they own before sending them overboard in a small boat. The couple rows to shore in the pitch of night before reaching their destination.

Even in the otherwise arid Don Quixote Part I the lady who manages to draw Don Quixote down from the mountains —Dorotea— first appears to the men who find her as she washes her feet in a mountain stream. Don Quixote fantasizes a wonderful encounter with
ladies and with the sensuous in Chapter 50 as the reward for the Knight who dares plunge into the forbidding lake.

In Part II, Don Quixote's search for water in the parched terrain of Guadalajara and Soria coincides with his new and all-consuming search for Dulcinea. It also coincides with a new tendency toward introspection, and an attraction to such enclosures as Don Diego's monastery-like country house, Montesinos' cave, Basilio and Quiteria's hut, and the room in the Duke and Duchess's house where Don Quixote spends most of his time.

The images that come to the surface in Part II—the water, the night, the moon, the mirrors, the mysterious (through all the deceptions practiced on Don Quixote)—are associated with the unconscious and with the woman not only in Cervantes, but throughout Western Culture. Those elements work together in Cervantes' 1615 novel to relieve its overly-mental, lettered, isolated, solar hero of his one-sidedness. Because the elements associated with the feminine are so alien to Don Quixote, even though he often seeks them out, he responds to their appearance in resistance and fear, turning their potentially healing presence into a

Don Quixote in Part II can be seen struggling—valiantly, as Avalle-Arce would have it—to protect his solar image from the undermining to which it is increasingly subjected. The solar images of knight and lady belong to fiction. "Knight" and "lady" are by their nature opposites destined endlessly to desire unfulfilled. The knight's exploits, the lady's petty resistances, are designed to keep the action going, the fiction spinning itself out. Don Quixote, however, is already undercutting the pattern of his fiction in Part II by shifting his focus from the giants and abductors to the lady herself. His first adventure in Part II marks a moving toward—in stark contrast to the running away from of Part I—the lady.

Don Quixote Part II cannot be a quest romance on the pattern of the Persiles, however, because the main character has no true vision of the unified world which, unconsciously, he is seeking. Consciously, he remains committed to a fictionalized version of himself—to "Don Quixote" and "Dulcinea." That version originates in fiction, and belongs, inevitably, to the divided world. In that world, lover and loved-one cannot unite, nor can the opposites within the self be reconciled. The result is the story of a character in conflict no longer so much with the outside world as with himself. He seeks out the lady, the dream image, the wisdom, the water, the mystery, without being able to embrace them. The topography as well as the events of his story reveal a discontinuity between conscious and unconscious desire, the one insisting on division, the other pulling toward a wholeness which, if it is not expressed through eros, becomes a falling toward death. Don Quixote, in Part II, is a representation of eros failed, of eros bound to the conventions of the divided world. The Persiles, on the other hand, leads its characters past those literary, illusory conventions into an eros liberated, an eros conducive to marriage and prosperity.

7 See his "Libros y charlas, conocimiento y dudas in Don Quijote como farina de vida" (Valencia: Editorial Castalia, 1976).

Eros, because of its enslavement to idealism and rationalism, has a bad reputation. Less a child in its own right, it has been looked at through the lenses of its progenitors, Mars and Venus, and has consequently been identified with seduction and / or conflict. Erotic literature, as C. S. Lewis and Denis de Rougemont have pointed out, is the realm of adultery. It stresses Venus and Mars to the exclusion of all more lasting and peaceable forms of sexual union. Don Quixote's problem, then, as a reader, and as a citizen of his Catholic, Western European place of origin, is the problem of eros, whose failure Cervantes has meticulously documented. The failure, however, is not inevitable. There is evidence to show, from Cervantes' earliest works, that he was not happy with the reigning literary conventions, and that those conventions were intimately linked to the love / marriage problem. Like Don Quixote himself, however, Cervantes was for a long time a part of the problem, no more able than his character to envision a world in which eros could be a means rather than an obstacle to marriage.

Part I of Don Quixote perfectly captures the masculine / feminine imbalance not only in the main story, as it afflicts its obviously mad hero, but in the interpolated stories. Cervantes' 1605 novel offers on the one hand Dulcinea and her coterie of charmingly inaccessible damsels: Marcela, Luscinda, Camila, Leandra. All of them find themselves in literature because they exist on the interface between two possessions: that of father and that of husband. For a brief moment, in the full bloom of their young adulthood, they appear to belong to no one but themselves. At that moment they embody the Artemis or Diana archetype and lead scores of adoring young men into the wilderness in hopeless pursuit of her. On the other hand,

10 Cesáreo Bandera's insightful chapter "Cervantes frente a don Quijote", in Mimesis conflictiva shows to what extent Cervantes is caught in the problems for which he is attacking his main character. For an excellent revaluation of the place of eros in marriage, see Suzanne Lilar's Aspects of Love in Western Society, translated by Jonathan Griffin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965).
Along with water, caves, moon, night, and animals, etc., we find in Part II a great increase in the number of women who are active, form: it does not abolish her.

overwhelming his limited consciousness. His rejecting attitude toward the “real” woman simply makes her appear to him in negative

the unconscious is rising up in him. It is really independent of his personal wishes, and nothing he does can prevent it from finally

beating down of instinct and of the body is bound to liberate the dream woman within. But, as the attraction to night and water shows,

the antithesis of the sacred” (p. 51).

The trick, somehow, is for the feminine both to remain one with itself and to respond in openness to the presence of the masculine.

The woman in the fallen world, if she is to produce the magic of healing it, cannot accept the alienated position that the dominant social

values have imposed on her. If she can accept the Other as Other without losing herself in the process, she can play a transforming role, in life and in literature. No character reveals this process more clearly than does Dorotea who, among the marriageable young women of Don Quixote I occupies the lowest rung on the social ladder. She yielded to Fernando's importunings

and he reacted predictably by abandoning her after satisfying his desires. She could easily have moved at that point from Diana to Hecate, accepting her relegation to a place in “no man's land” —a place where virgins and prostitutes remain, forever locked out of the favors of the dominant social order. Instead, she insists upon that order and becomes herself the instrument by which violence and madness are averted.12

Dorotea remains herself while yielding to the other out of the strength of her desire for social acceptance. A stronger and more radical position still is taken by Zoraida in the Captive's tale, with even more thoroughly liberating results. Zoraida stays close to the feminine archetype by allying herself consciously with Mary: Mary as mother and as virgin —Mary, therefore, as both fertility and as self-sufficiency.13 Zoraida restores, in other words, the original contradictory nature of the virgin / mother moon goddess. The Captive, for his part, has lost his dominant acculturation through his experience with shipwreck and captivity. He is therefore open to the feminine as less purged male characters could not be. Combining attributes and forces, Zoraida and the Captive work together and separately to effect their mutual liberation, something neither could do alone.

Don Quixote's struggles with the feminine in Part II are revealed in his mixed attraction to the elements that symbolize her —the water, the cave, the night, the occult— and his failure truly to accept the strangeness, the otherness, of those elements. The conflict is reflected clearly in the dual image of Dulcinea, who is now both the ethereal beauty of Don Quixote's imagination and the coarse peasant girl whom Sancho, or sense consciousness, has

provided him. Don Quixote insists to the end that his literary image of her is the true Dulcinea. As a perfect expression of how the abstract is enforced on resisting matter, Don Quixote imagines that if Sancho, the image of his bodily, sensual nature, beats himself to a pulp, Dulcinea, as perfect and disincarnate, will finally be his. To Don Quixote's mental, abstract, masculinist-dominated mind, continual beating down of instinct and of the body is bound to liberate the dream woman within. But, as the attraction to night and water shows, the unconscious is rising up in him. It is really independent of his personal wishes, and nothing he does can prevent it from finally overwhelming his limited consciousness. His rejecting attitude toward the “real” woman simply makes her appear to him in negative form: it does not abolish her.

Along with water, caves, moon, night, and animals, etc., we find in Part II a great increase in the number of women who are active,
married and yet independent. They are the Teresa Panzas, the Doña Rodríguezes, the duchess, Doña Cristina, who have so much to say in Part II. The presence of the wife / mother as independent of, though not necessarily separated from her husband, suggests a shift of consciousness in Cervantes' late works toward an appreciation of the feminine both as creative and as self-sufficient. Though the married women who populate Part II are neither especially attractive nor especially exemplary, they reveal a facet of life hitherto largely neglected, not only in Cervantes' works, but throughout Golden Age literature. Their presence makes more understandable the role of such characters as Doña Estefanía in La fuerza de la sangre and Queen Isabela in La española inglesa, and they prefigure the all-important, if scarcely visible presence of Queen Eustoquia in the Persiles. Through these late characters in Cervantes' work we bear witness to the emergence of what Edward F. Edinger has called “the archetype of the Great Mother,” of whom he says: “In psychological terms, the great mother corresponds to the unconscious which can nourish and support the ego or can swallow it up in psychosis or suicide.”

For Don Quixote, like most of his compatriots, the Great Mother stood for nothing better than the routine of everyday existence, something to run from in favor of a more exciting,

---


---

adventure-filled world. She is the beginning and ending of consciousness, however, the place of birth and death, and escape is at best only temporary. The flashes of water imagery, of night-time journeys and visions in caves, the hallucinization of the everyday world and the transformation of beautiful damsels into murderous or treacherous amazons mark the invasion of consciousness by the unconscious, the signs of the Great Mother coming to claim her own.

The nightmare that is Don Quixote's reduction to Alonso Quijano-dom, is mollified by the hero's deathbed revelation and conversion. Don Quixote dies, to be sure, but he dies reconciled with his origins and with his destiny, freed of the illusions that bound him to the desire of the desire of the other. But the story, fortunately, does not end there. Cervantes' hero is resurrected for one final incarnation. He is literally born again on the first pages of the Persiles, hailed all dirty and mute from a cave in which he had been held captive for three days.

This hero comes to life having learned the lessons of Alonso Quijano. His fictional journey will not presuppose the abandoning of origins and the eradication of the self's true name. His will be a final journey into fiction, a journey to end fiction. In the Persiles the lady will not be a distant, abstract ideal, nor will she be the all-too-present inversion of that ideal. She will be both goal and companion, both object and means to a desire unfilled yet capable of fulfillment. In the Persiles, wet and dry, hot and cold, north and south, woman and man will all have their places within a system that both includes and transcends them all.

Topography, narrative structure, character interrelations all reflect and reinforce one another throughout Cervantes' works. An examination of any one aspect leads eventually to a contemplation of the others and ultimately to the informing vision which determines the entire pattern and each particle within it. The divided world that is the spawning-ground of fiction cannot be surpassed, however clearly its failures are perceived, so long as one set of elements from the natural world is consistently suppressed in favor of another set.

In Don Quixote Part I the cluster of elements associated with the masculine —the sun, the hard, dry earth, travel, adventure, homelessness— underscore the alienation and alienating effect of the female characters within it. In Don Quixote Part II an underground rumbling, like an earthquake, breaks up the harsh dry terrain of the hero's travels, introducing into the narrative signs of darkness, liquidity, and enclosure. The eruption of such feminine-associated forces comes against the grain of the will, however, and emerges in fierce, frightening aspect.

The androgyne vision which informs the Persiles brings, finally, the elements into balance. It is a vision which, though at odds with the dominant culture of Cervantes' time and place, was not without its advocates in the age immediately preceding. Leone Hebreo, from whose book Cervantes drew liberally in La Galatea, built a whole theory of love on the image of the androgyne. The Corpus Hermeticum, which was the source book for the Renaissance occult, and which attracted some of the best minds of the 16th century, includes this exhortation: “make yourself higher than all heights, and lower than all depths; bring together in yourself all opposites of quality, heat and cold, dryness and fluidity; think that you are everywhere at once, on land, at sea, in heaven . . . .”

The Galatea in which Cervantes began his adventure of binding together the opposites, proposed much, as he himself later said, but concluded nothing. Between that first pastoral romance and his last Byzantine romance we can observe the long, painful process by which those elements are restored to balance and the androgyne is liberated, once again, from its place of hiding.

---

15 Leone Hebreo, Dialoghi D'Amore (1535).
Quoted, of course, from his famous commentary in Chapter 6 of *Don Quixote* Part I.

Fred Jehle  jehle@ipfw.edu
URL: http://www.h-net.org/~cervantes/csa/artics83/elsaffar.htm