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Michael J. McGrath

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DON QUIXOTE
AND CATHOLICISM

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DON QUIXOTE
AND CATHOLICISM

Rereading Cervantine Spirituality

Michael J. McGrath

Purdue University Press
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*This book is dedicated with much love to
my mother Virginia McGrath,
to my brother Kevin,
and the memory of my father David T. McGrath.*

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Acknowledgments

When I first read *Don Quixote* as an undergraduate student at Georgia Southern University, I had no idea that it would become as large a part of my life as it is now. While I was an M.A. student at Middlebury College and a Ph.D. student at the University of Kentucky, I had the opportunity to study *Don Quixote* under the guidance of two of the most influential scholars of the novel: Dr. Alberto Sánchez (Middlebury College) and Dr. John Jay Allen (University of Kentucky). Alberto and Jay ignited my passion for *Don Quixote* and Miguel de Cervantes. On a more personal note, their intellectual acumen was only surpassed by their kindness as human beings.

When I was elected to serve on the Executive Board of the Cervantes Society of America (CSA), I had the opportunity to present my research at the Society's annual Cervantes symposium. Earlier versions of the material in this book were subject to the scrutiny of the attendees and presenters, whose knowledge of the novel, Golden Age Spain, and literature in general inspired me to consider *Don Quixote* from new perspectives. I am grateful for their comments, questions, and encouragement. In addition, I am thankful for the reports I received from the anonymous readers of my manuscript. Many thanks, as well, to Joyce Detzner, who is the Production Editor for the Purdue Studies in Romance Literatures series, for her support and guidance.

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As my life unfolded before my eyes, the word "quixotic" was no longer an abstract literary term. It had become a guiding principle of my life. Consequently, I began to view personal experiences, accomplishments, and failures through the lens of Miguel de Cervantes's masterpiece *Don Quixote*. It is a novel that transcends time and space because, as I soon discovered, it is a blueprint for humanity. I am grateful to the many people in my life whose friendship always inspires me to dream the impossible dream.

Introduction

In this study I offer an interpretation of *Don Quixote* that is often readily dismissed. Four hundred years since its publication, Miguel de Cervantes's masterpiece continues to inspire and to challenge the reader. How to interpret a novel like *Don Quixote*, however, presents a formidable challenge because one aspect of its genius is its interpretative malleability. Hispanist Michael Gerli compares reading *Don Quixote* to peeling an onion: "one laughs and cries and is astonished as one advances from the dry exterior mantle and discovers multiple translucent layers of rich discourse built one upon another—all of them genetically connected, yet all separate, all distinct, and all with their own bite and texture. All of Cervantes's texts, it seems, point to multiple references as they produce and multiply resonances and significations—confirm, deny, or equivocate" (Gerli 3–4). British author Sarah Fielding, in the novel *The Cry* (1754), warns the reader not to limit his or her interpretation of the novel only to the knight's amusing adventures:

To travel through a whole work only to laugh at the chief companion allotted us, is an insupportable burthen. And we should imagine that the reading of that incomparable piece of humor left us by Cervantes, can give but little pleasure to those persons who can extract no other entertainment or emolument from it than laughing at Don Quixote's reveries, and sympathizing in the malicious joy [of his tormentors] ... That strong and beautiful representation of human nature, exhibited in Don Quixote's madness in one point, and extraordinary good sense in every other, is indeed very much thrown away on such readers as consider him only as the object of their mirth. (qtd. in Gerli 13)

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Cervantes's writing style, often described as "writing between the lines," a technique writers utilize to avoid persecution because of their heterodox ideology, challenges the reader to consider more than what appears on the page. Political philosopher Leo Strauss describes this style of writing as "a peculiar type of literature, in which the truth about all crucial things is presented exclusively between the lines" (25). Naturally, the irony and ambiguity of this style of expression engenders in each reader a subjective interpretation. This process is further complicated, however, if the author's writing style is purposefully ambiguous, as is Cervantes's in *Don Quixote*. In the prologue to *Don Quixote*, for example, Cervantes addresses his relationship with the knight-errant:

Pero yo, que, aunque parezco padre, soy padraastro de *don Quijote*, no quiero irme con la corriente del uso, ni suplicarte casi con las lágrimas en los ojos, como otros hacen, lector carísimo, que perdones o disimules las faltas que en este mi hijo vieres, y ni eres su pariente ni su amigo, y tienes tu alma en tu cuerpo y tu libre albedrío como el más pintado, y estás en tu casa, donde eres señor della, como el rey de sus alcabalas, y sabes lo que comúnmente se dice, que debajo de mi manto, al rey mato. Todo lo cual te esenta y hace libre de todo respeto y obligación, y así puedes decir de la historia todo aquello que te pareciere, sin temor que te calumnien por el mal ni te premien por el bien que dijeres della. (95–96)

The moment Cervantes grants the reader permission to interpret the novel according to his or her subjective reality, he creates a dynamic in which the reader shares authorial responsibility. Two Hispanists who understand the relationship between author and protagonist differently, for example, are Tom Lathrop and Howard Mancing. Lathrop suggests that the "I" who claims to be the knight's step-father is only a fictional representation, i.e., a character of the real Cervantes: "This person—this character—is not Miguel de Cervantes from the title page (that's the real one), but rather a fictional representation of Cervantes, a character created by Cervantes as another element in his fiction" (*Don Quixote* xviii). Howard Mancing posits another interpretation: "No one, to my knowledge, doubts that the ['I'] of the prologue is anyone other than the person referred to on the title page ... Miguel de Cervantes" (*The Chivalric World* 192). Spanish author and philosopher Miguel de Unamuno (1864–1936) provides yet

another example of how this passage from the prologue to Part I can be interpreted.¹ He not only distances the author from his protagonist, but he removes Cervantes altogether from the creation of his character:

No cabe duda sino que en *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* que compuso Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra se mostró éste muy por encima de lo que podríamos esperar de él juzgándole por sus otras obras; se sobrepujo con mucho á sí mismo. Por lo cual es de creer que el historiador arábigo Cide Hamete Benengeli no es puro recurso literario, sino que encubre una profunda verdad, cual es la de que esa historia se la dictó á Cervantes otro que llevaba dentro de sí, y al que ni antes ni después de haberla escrito trató una vez más; un espíritu que en las profundidades de su alma habitaba. (226)

Philosopher Costica Bradatan describes this phenomenon as a “transfer of reality” in which “the imagined character comes to appear as being more real and authentic than the author who imagined him” (456).

As the author of the written text, Cervantes guides the reader from beginning to end, but his literary style cultivates an experience by which the reader can assign his or her own meaning to the novel:

From the first days in the eighteenth century when Don Quixote ceased to be regarded as a mere satire against romances of chivalry, students of the novel have tended to join one of two critical schools, depending on their interpretation of the role played by the knight. A “soft” school regards Don Quixote as the hero as well as the protagonist of the novel ... On the mild side, this view underlines the persistent and invincible sublimity of Don Quixote’s motivation and contrasts it with the pedestrian character of the novel’s sane folk. On the extreme side, it establishes an analogy with Christ. (Mandel 154)

While critics who subscribe to the “extreme side” of Don Quixote’s role within the novel may or may not agree that there exists an analogical relationship between the knight and Jesus, they do acknowledge the subtle, and not so subtle, manifestations of the novel’s underlying religious identity. Many Hispanists, including Carlos Fuentes, Américo Castro, Marcel Bataillon, and Alban Forcione, assert, to varying degrees, that Cervantes was a Christian

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humanist whose Erasmian influence permeates the religious identity of the novel. Other critics, namely Helmut Hatzfeld and José Antonio López Calle, read the novel's religious elements as representative of Tridentine Catholicism. More recently, Ken Colston and Sean Fitzpatrick do not question the novel's Catholic ideology. Forcione offers a cogent explanation for the diversity of opinions:

Neither the view of Cervantes as orthodox spokesman for Tridentine ideology nor as freethinking, iconoclastic pioneer of the Enlightenment does justice to the vitality and incisiveness that characterize his engagement with religious subjects in his literary works. Cervantes's religious consciousness is profoundly undocinaire; it is alive with a complex ferment of spiritual and secular tendencies, and it can comfortably manifest itself at the opposite extremes of irreverent burlesque of the mental habits of the devout and hymns informed by the lofty spirituality of the most religious of his contemporaries.² (Forcione 353–54)

The reader's engagement with Catholicism in *Don Quixote* is not unique, however, with respect to Cervantes's *oeuvre*, nor is the author's subtle criticism of it. Michael Armstrong-Roche notes the ostensible Catholic orthodoxy of *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* (1617): "For many readers, therefore, few matters would appear to be so clear-cut as the religious allegiances of *Persiles*. Its chaste heroes Persiles and Sigismunda travel as pilgrims to Rome, ostensibly for instruction in the faith, and readers more than once are treated to creeds and paeans to Rome's status as seat of the Catholic Church" (114). The protagonists' marriage in Rome and subsequent procreation of offspring, for example, are in accord with the Council of Trent's decree on the unitive and procreative dimensions of marriage: "During this council, a concept of the 'social responsibility' of love and marriage was also introduced for the first time ... the consequence of post-Tridentine love is the happy ending that closes the book, with the promise of an offspring that will make the couple's life happier upon their return to their kingdom, and expand throughout the northern lands the gospel of God and submission to the Roman Catholic Church" (López Alemany 213). Monipodio's den of thieves in the *Novela ejemplar Rinconete and Cortadillo* is an example of the duality of Cervantes's perspective on Catholicism

(Johnson, *Cervantes and the Material World* 42). In general, the practices, which include a novitiate year, prayer in front of a statue of the Virgin Mary, recitation of the Holy Rosary, and votive Masses are in opposition to Erasmian spirituality. In addition, Stanislav Zimic observes Cervantes's satiric depiction of Erasmus's *Colloquies* (1518) in *Rinconete and Cortadillo*: "Lo que aquí nos preocupa, sobre todo, es destacar la típica perspectiva irónica de los *Coloquios* erasmianos y, en general, de la literatura satírico-moral de inspiración erasmiana" (138–39n). The same venue is also home to characters, however, whose beliefs, including the sale of indulgences and false piety, are reminiscent of Cervantes's exaggeration of Catholicism and the Catholic Church in *Don Quixote*.

Historian David Hannay observed in 1898, "There is a difficulty in speaking of *Don Quixote*. One has to come after Fielding and Scott, Heine, Thackeray, and Sainte-Beuve. ... These are great names, and it may seem after they have spoken there is nothing left to say" (152). More than one hundred years later, Hannay's list of "great names" now includes Américo Castro, Marcel Bataillon, Carlos Fuentes, Miguel de Unamuno, and the names of many other scholars whose innovative and sagacious research inspired me to undertake this study. The authors and texts I cite, as well as my arguments and interpretations, are mediated by my religious sensibility. Consequently, I propose that my study represents one way of interpreting *Don Quixote* and a complement to other approaches. It is my assertion that the religiosity and spirituality of Cervantes's masterpiece illustrate that *Don Quixote* is inseparable from the teachings of Catholic orthodoxy. Furthermore, I argue that Cervantes's spirituality is as diverse as early modern Catholicism. I do not believe that the novel is primarily a religious or even a serious text, and I consider my arguments through the lens of Cervantine irony, satire, and multiperspectivism.³ As a Roman Catholic who is a Hispanist, I propose to reclaim Cervantes's Catholicity from the interpretive tradition that ascribes a predominantly Erasmian reading of the novel.

Chapter One

Miguel de Cervantes and Early Modern Catholicism

Miguel de Cervantes was born in Alcalá de Henares, a university town about twenty miles from Madrid, in 1547. While his exact date of birth is unknown, it is believed that he was born on September 29, which is the Feast of Saint Michael, and baptized on October 9 in the Iglesia de Santa María la Mayor:

Domingo, nueve días del mes de octubre, año del Señor de mill e quinientos e quarenta e siete años, fue bautizado Miguel, hijo de Rodrigo Cervantes e su mujer doña Leonor. Bautizóle el reverendo señor Bartolomé Serrano, cura de Nuestra Señora. Testigos, Baltasar Vázquez, Sacristán, e yo, que le bapticé e firme de mi nombre. Bachiller Serrano.¹ (Fernández Álvarez 24–25)

The decision of Cervantes's parents to have him baptized under the patronage of St. Michael, the archangel whose first responsibility is to combat Satan, provides insight into his family's religiosity.² Cervantes's sister Luisa (1546–1620) was prioress of the Carmelite Convent of the Imagen in Alcalá de Henares on three different occasions. In addition to Luisa, Cervantes's sisters Andrea (1544–1609) and Magdalena (1553–1611), as well as his wife Catalina de Salazar (1565–1626), were members of the Third Order of St. Francis.³ In 1609, Cervantes joined the Brotherhood of the Slaves of the Most Holy Sacrament, a confraternity whose members included Lope de Vega (1562–1635) and Francisco de Quevedo (1580–1645). Cervantes biographer and noted Hispanist Jean Canavaggio postulates that Cervantes was a faithful and obedient member who followed the Order's strict rules "to the letter" (Canavaggio 236).⁴

Cervantes's paternal grandfather, Juan de Cervantes (ca. 1477–1556), who was an esteemed scholar and lawyer in Spain, worked

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in Alcalá de Henares from 1509–12, and the author's father, Rodrigo, was born there in 1509 (d. 1585). The powerful religious reformer Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros (1436–1517) founded the University of Alcalá de Henares in the same year, and soon thereafter the city became one of the most prominent cities of learning in Renaissance Europe. In addition to its world-famous university, Alcalá de Henares was also the home to more than twenty convents, two major seminaries, five monasteries, and three parish churches. In his book *Spanish Cities*, Richard Kagan comments on Anton van den Wyngaerde's (1525–71) drawings of Alcalá de Henares from 1565: "By minimizing his references to secular life, Wyngaerde seems to be suggesting that the city of Alcalá de Henares was dedicated to the study of theology and to the service of the Catholic Church, two of the university's avowed goals" (Canavaggio 236). The young Cervantes did not live many years in Alcalá de Henares before his father Rodrigo's itinerant lifestyle, a result of his economic and legal difficulties, moved the Cervantes family to Córdoba, where Juan de Cervantes still lived, in 1553. In this same year, the city of Córdoba opened its first Jesuit school, Santa Catalina.

The influence of Juan de Cervantes, who served Córdoba as its mayor and chief magistrate, made it possible for his grandson to attend Santa Catalina, whose students belonged to aristocratic families. Jesuit schools during Cervantes's day focused heavily on grammar and rhetoric. Cervantes and his family lived in Córdoba for only three years. The death of Juan de Cervantes motivated Cervantes's father to seek the security offered by another family member, Andrés (1518–93), who was Rodrigo's brother and the mayor of Cabra, a village forty miles from Córdoba. The Cervantes family remained in Cabra, although information about their stay there is scant, until 1564, the year in which Rodrigo's name appears on a real estate document in Seville.

In 1563, Cervantes continued his Jesuit education at the Colegio San Hermenegildo (Seville). One of his teachers was Father Pedro Pablo Acevedo (1522–73), who had been Cervantes's teacher at the Colegio de Santa Catalina in Córdoba. Father Acevedo was a playwright who established the norms, including staging and music, of Jesuit school drama. He incorporated drama into his classes as a teaching aid, and this manner of instruction must have sparked the young Cervantes's passion for drama, a

genre in which he would not earn the recognition he aspired to achieve.⁵ Years later, Cervantes would write about his time as a Jesuit school student in *El coloquio de los perros*:

No sé qué tiene la virtud, que, con alcanzárseme a mí tan poco, o nada della, luego recibí gusto de ver el amor, el término, la solicitud y la industria con que aquellos benditos padres y maestros enseñaban a aquellos niños, enderezando las tiernas varas de su juventud, por que no torciesen ni tomasen mal siniestro en el camino de la virtud, que justamente con las letras les mostraban. Consideraba cómo los reñían con suavidad, los castigaban con misericordia, los animaban con ejemplos, los incitaban con premios y los sobrellevaban con cordura, y, finalmente, como les pintaban la fealdad y horror de los vicios y les dibujaban la hermosura de las virtudes, para que, aborrecidos ellos y amadas ellas, consiguiesen el fin para que fueron criados. (Cervantes, *Novelas* 316)

Rodrigo de Cervantes moved his family to Madrid in 1566. During this time, Cervantes was a disciple of the Catholic priest Juan López de Hoyos (1511–83), who was an admirer of the Christian humanist Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536) and the director of the Estudio Público de Humanidades de la Villa de Madrid, where Cervantes studied for several months.⁶

Cervantes's literary accomplishments during the time he was a student of the Estudio Público de Humanidades de la Villa de Madrid included a sonnet that he dedicated to Queen Isabel de Valois (1545–68), who was the wife of King Philip II (1556–98), as well as four poems in honor of the Queen upon her death a year later. López de Hoyos published the poems Cervantes wrote shortly after the Queen's death. Cervantes's lack of critical acclaim as a poet, however, did not discourage him from writing poetry. In fact, Cervantes's masterpiece *Don Quixote* contains forty-five poems that appear in a variety of formats.

In his biography of Cervantes, *No Ordinary Man: The Life and Times of Miguel de Cervantes*, Donald McCrory relates that a royal warrant dated September 15, 1569 authorized the arrest of Cervantes for wounding another man in a duel. The victim was Antonio de Sigura, and the punishment, as dictated by a panel of judges that consisted of four jurists (Salazar, Ortiz, Hernán Velázquez and Álvaro García de Toledo), called for Cervantes's right hand to be cut off (Fernández Álvarez 57). Aware of the

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punishment he was facing, Cervantes fled Madrid for Seville, where he remained a short time before he moved to Rome to work in the household of Cardinal Giulio Acquaviva (1546–74).⁷ Cervantes's tenure in the household of Cardinal Acquaviva provided him with an insightful education in Catholicism and its traditions and rituals:

Not yet twenty-three, Cervantes's time in an ambitious prelate's household in Rome, the centre of the universal Church, would have shown him the power of a culture where ceremony ruled supreme; a world of patronage, faction, and worship. It was also his entry into the world of a Christian prince being educated for high office. This granted, his sojourn in Rome would have been much more valuable than generally credited. He would have seen aspects of courtly and ecclesiastical life as well as the functioning of the diplomatic process; no prince of the Church was free from the machinery of statecraft and political intrigue. The history of alliances, truces, secret affinities and clandestine negotiations which involved the Papal States and other states at the time prove this. Aware of these or not, while working for Acquaviva he was soon to hear rumours of the growing conflict between Venice and Turkey; it was the talk of the town. (McCrorry 51)

In addition, the brief time he spent in Italy afforded Cervantes the opportunity to learn about Italian literature, references to which appear frequently throughout *Don Quixote*. The *novella* of *El curioso impertinente*, as well as other interpolated stories in *Don Quixote*, are based upon Italian models.⁸

Cervantes enlisted in the army in 1570 as a harquebusier and supported the Holy League, which consisted of soldiers from Spain, Italy, and Malta, in its battles against the Turkish Muslims. Cervantes fought valiantly in the Battle of Lepanto (Greece, 1571), the naval campaign during which he lost use of his left hand as a result of a serious wound. In spite of a serious illness that afflicted him, Cervantes refused to abandon the Battle of Lepanto. Cervantes biographer Manuel Fernández Álvarez describes the author's military service and the pride with which Cervantes would remember this time in his life:

Una batalla en la que Cervantes participa heroicamente—y aquí el término heroico adquiere toda su grandeza—, hasta el

punto de que le faltaría poco para perecer en la contienda ...
pero de la que guardaría un recuerdo emocionado, como algo
grandioso de lo que estaría profundamente orgulloso toda su
vida. (Fernández Álvarez 88)

The Christian fleet consisted of more than 200 galleys and Cervantes, as well as his brother Rodrigo, served on *La Marquesa*. The Holy League's victory did not come without a price. In all, it suffered nearly 13,000 casualties and lost 50 galleys. The number of Ottoman casualties and prisoners, however, numbered over 28,000, and the Ottomans lost 210 ships, 130 of which the Holy League captured.

Cervantes's participation in the Battle of Lepanto was, arguably, the defining moment of his life. In the prologue to Part II of *Don Quixote* (1615), he praises Spain's participation in the Battle of Lepanto and writes proudly about the crippling injury he received to his left hand:

Lo que no he podido dejar de sentir es que me note de viejo y de manco, como si hubiera sido en mi mano haber detenido el tiempo, que no pasase por mí, o si mi manquedad hubiera nacido en alguna taberna, sino en la más alta ocasión que vieron los siglos pasados, los presentes, ni esperan ver los venideros. Si mis heridas no resplandecen en los ojos de quien las miras, son estimadas, a lo menos, en la estimación de los que saben dónde se cobraron; que el soldado más bien parece muerto en la batalla que libre en la fuga; y es esto en mí de manera, que si ahora me propusieran y facilitaran un imposible, quisiera antes haberme hallado en aquella facción prodigiosa que sano ahora de mis heridas sin haberme hallado en ella. Las que el soldado muestra en el rostro y en los pechos, estrellas son que guían a los demás al cielo de la honra, y al de desear la justa alabanza.⁹
(25–26)

Cervantes's dedicated service to the Holy League is even more admirable, considering that the years in which he served were difficult ones. In addition to the crippling injury to Cervantes's left hand, Barbary pirates, under the leadership of Arnaut Mamí (d. 1600) and his lieutenant Dalí Mamí, captured *El Sol*, the ship on which Cervantes and his brother were returning to Spain in 1575.¹⁰ The pirates took Cervantes to Algiers, where he remained for five years as a prisoner. His captivity, as María Antonia Garcés notes, was by no means an anomaly for sixteenth-century

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Spaniards: “From the massive campaigns led by the ransomer monks to raise funds for the rescue of captives, to the processions held when these ransomed men and women returned home, to the chains and shackles hung in churches and public buildings to signify liberation, the cruel reality of captivity in Barbary was ever present for the Spaniards” (*Cervantes in Algiers* 172).¹¹ When Dalí Mamí saw that Cervantes had letters of commendation from Don Juan de Austria (1547–78), who was King Philip II’s half-brother, and Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba (1520–78), who was the third Duke of Sessa (Italy), for his military service, he increased the price of the ransom, believing that Cervantes was an important soldier. Cervantes describes his experience as a prisoner in *El capitán cautivo*, another one of the interpolated stories that appears in *Don Quixote*.

Cervantes’s captivity in Algiers must have been transformational with respect to his spirituality. When he arrived there, he discovered a multicultural and multilingual city that attracted a heterogeneous population of people: Turks, Arabs, Berbers, Christian captives, Jews, exiled *moriscos*, and converts to Islam from different parts of the world (Garcés, *An Early Modern Dialogue with Islam* 2).¹² His captivity would later inform his literature. In the biographical drama *El trato de Argel*, which Cervantes wrote shortly after he returned to Spain, for example, the captive Saavedra tries to persuade another prisoner not to convert to Islam:

Si tú supieses, Pedro, a dó se extiende
la perfección de nuestra ley cristiana,
verías cómo en ella se nos manda
que un pecado mortal no se cometa,
aunque se interesase en cometerle
la universal salud del mundo.
Pues ¿cómo quieres tú, por verte libre
de libertad del cuerpo, echar mil hierro[s]
al alma miserable, desdichada,
cometiendo un pecado tan enorme
como es negar a Cristo y a su Iglesia? (*Teatro completo* 905–06)

Islam continued to be anathema to Cervantes after he returned to Spain, and he expressed his anti-Muslim sentiment, at times disdainful and confrontational, numerous times in his literature.¹³ Cervantes’s years of captivity, however, also provided him with

a new perspective on Muslim-Catholic relations and of his own faith: “Placed in that context, Cervantes’s dealings with Moors and renegades, his stirring defense of the Catholic faith, are illuminated with a new light, one that makes him more accessible, more human, and—in a word—more real” (Canavaggio 91).

Evidence of Cervantes’s enlightened attitude toward Muslim-Catholic relations is *El capitán cautivo*, whose protagonists are Zoraida, a Muslim who is a convert to Catholicism, and Captain Ruy Pérez de Viedma, a Christian who is a prisoner in Algiers. Zoraida, who adopts the name María because of her devotion to the Virgin Mary, arranges for Ruy Pérez to escape but on the condition that he take her to Spain, where she hopes to be baptized a Catholic and to marry the captive captain. Their prospective marriage, more than an act of love, fulfills the religious beliefs of Catholicism and assumes a mystical dimension because Zoraida, or María, and Ruy Pérez also desire to grow closer to God.

Before they can marry, however, Zoraida must be baptized a Catholic, and only then is she able marry in the Catholic Church.¹⁴ The sincerity of Zoraida’s intentions is open to debate. Francisco Márquez Villanueva postulates that Zoraida’s desire to convert to Catholicism and to marry Ruy Pérez is pure chicanery, motivated by a longing to be free. Franco Merregalli affirms that Zoraida genuinely loves Ruy Pérez but that she wishes to convert to Catholicism because it is the religion of the man she loves. Ciriaco Morón Arroyo, however, disputes Villanueva’s and Merregalli’s interpretations completely. Morón Arroyo reads the episode through a strictly theological lens, informed by a Thomistic explanation of the characters’ words and actions. He believes the theological underpinnings of the episode are apparent from its beginning when Luscinda asks if Zoraida is baptized. Morón Arroyo notes that Cervantes would have chosen different words if the meaning of the episode were not intended to be interpreted within the context of Catholic doctrine.

While Cervantes was a prisoner, he refused to convert to Islam, and even though he was living in an environment hostile to Christians, he remained steadfast in his faith. According to witnesses, he lived “as a good Christian, zealous for God’s good name, confessing and taking communion when Christians customarily do so; and if he occasionally had dealings with Moors and renegades, he always defended the Holy Catholic faith, and

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he strengthened and inspired many not to become Moors or renegades” (Canavaggio 82). Antonio de Sosa, who wrote about his experiences as a captive in *Topografía e historia general de Argel* (1612), and, specifically, the time he spent with Cervantes, testified that Cervantes also wrote poetry about Christ and the Virgin Mary while a prisoner (McCroly 78).

Cervantes married Catalina de Salazar y Palacios, who was from the town of Esquivias (Toledo), after he returned to Spain in 1580.¹⁵ Shortly thereafter, he began his literary career. In addition to writing plays at this time, Cervantes published the first, and only, part of the pastoral romance *La Galatea* (1585). While this novel did not earn Cervantes the recognition he had hoped, he included this genre in *Don Quixote*, which contains several pastoral narrations, including the episodes of Marcela and Grisóstomo (Part I, Chapters X–XIV) and the false Arcadia (Part II, Chapter LVIII).

Cervantes worked as a royal commissary from 1587–94 in Andalusia, during which time he traveled frequently from town to town. One of his duties as a royal commissary included gathering corn, wheat, olive oil, and other supplies for the Spanish Armada, which waged an unsuccessful war with England in 1588. In fact, Cervantes’s first commission was to requisition wheat for the armada in the town of Écija. The townspeople, however, were not willing to provide wheat or any provisions until they received payment for previous requisitions. Cervantes, with unshakable determination, seized whatever wheat he could find from the granaries of landowners, among whom were prebendary canons. In response to Cervantes’s affront to the Church, the vicar general of Seville excommunicated him.¹⁶ Two months later, in December of 1587, the Church excommunicated Cervantes once again after he imprisoned a recalcitrant sacristan in the town of Castro del Río (Córdoba). After successfully appealing both edicts of excommunication, Cervantes returned to full communion with the Church. In 1592, while Cervantes was in Castro del Río, he had to defend himself once again, but this time the civil authorities levied charges against him. Francisco Moscoso, the chief magistrate of Écija, issued a warrant for Cervantes’s arrest that falsely charged him with the illegal sale of wheat. In spite of his protestations of innocence, however, he was imprisoned for several days. Cervantes was able to go free after Pedro Isuzna, who was the

commissary general, cleared his name. The years Cervantes lived in southern Spain provided him with further knowledge of its people and its geography, which he writes about in future literary endeavors, namely *Don Quixote* and the *Novelas ejemplares*.

Cervantes began to work as a tax collector in 1594, but three years later Cervantes fell victim to Simón Freire de Lima, a crooked banker in Seville who absconded with all of the money Cervantes had deposited with him. Unable to repay the money, Cervantes was sent to Seville's royal prison, where he resided for more than a year with prisoners of the same ilk as criminals of Monipodio's den of thieves in the exemplary story *Rinconete and Cortadillo*. In spite of his personal setbacks, Cervantes continued to write. It is believed that he began his masterpiece *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* while in jail.

Cervantes spent time in Madrid, Esquivias, and Toledo from 1597–1604. In 1604 Cervantes and his family moved to Valladolid, the city where King Philip III (1598–1621) moved his royal court in 1601. Cervantes lived the last ten years of his life, however, in Madrid. During this time, Cervantes published his best known literary accomplishments: *Novelas ejemplares*, *El viaje del Parnaso* (1614), *Segunda parte del ingenioso caballero don Quijote de la Mancha* (1615), *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses, nunca representados* (1615), and *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* (1617).

Before Cervantes died on April 23, 1616, he requested that ten Masses be celebrated for the repose of his soul and that his burial place be inside the walls of Madrid's Convent of the Discalced Trinitarians.¹⁷ Francisco Pérez, who was an almoner of the Trinitarian monastery, administered extreme unction to the author, who acknowledges receiving it in the prologue to *Persiles*, on April 18.¹⁸ Cervantes reveals his belief in the afterlife, also in the prologue to *Persiles*: “¡Adiós, gracias; adios, donaires; adios, regocijados amigos; que yo me voy muriendo, y deseando veros presto contentos en la otra vida” (36).

Dutch historian Johan Huizinga and German philosopher Ernst Cassirer assert that the humanist spirit of the Middle Ages intensified in the Renaissance, fostering a new secular and non-secular individualism in which self-reflection, meditation, and the potential for human achievement manifested itself not only in material practices and productions, such as art and politics,

but also in theory and form.¹⁹ Cassirer believes that the mystical theologian Nicholas Cusanus (1401–64) exemplifies “the full consciousness and spiritual essence” of Renaissance humanism:

Cusanus is the only thinker of the period to look at all of the fundamental problems from the point of view of *one* principle in which he masters them all. His thought knows no barriers that separate disciplines. In keeping with the medieval ideal of the whole, it includes the totality of the spiritual and physical cosmos. He is both a speculative theologian and a speculative mathematician; he is as interested in statics and in general theories of movement as he is in questions of astronomy and cosmography; he is as concerned with problems of church history as he is with problems of political history, history of law, and general history. ... We can apply to Cusanus' thought the antithesis *complicatio* and *explicatio*, which he uses to illuminate the relationship of God to the world and of the world to the human mind. (Cassirer 7; author's italics)

The religious movement *Devotio Moderna*, for example, which began in the late-fourteenth century, was the impetus for other methods of prayer, notably *Ejercitatorio de la vida espiritual* (1500), by the Benedictine Spanish mystic García de Cisneros (1455–1510), and St. Ignatius of Loyola's *Ejercicios espirituales* (1522–24), that personified Renaissance Christian Humanism.²⁰ The new individualism of the Renaissance also motivated the devout, who now included the elite of society, to attend confession on a regular basis, which, according to Jesuit historian Robert Bireley, “facilitated a private conversation between priest and penitent and encouraged the use of the sacrament for individual spiritual direction and the application of moral norms to individual cases—that is, casuistry” (230). In addition to the repentance of sins to receive absolution from the priest, who sits *in persona Christi*, general confession was another expression of this new individualism. This type of confession considers all the sins a person has committed at the time of confession, and the goal is to gain greater self-knowledge and to live a more devout life.

Self-flagellation was another manifestation of devotion in early modern Spanish culture. Before the establishment of flagellant brotherhoods in the sixteenth century, self-flagellation was usually in response to Marian visions or during times of

crises. By 1575, according to William A. Christian, Jr., there were thousands of flagellant brothers, known as “Blood Brothers,” who participated in processions, especially on Holy Thursday and Good Friday (185). The four flagellant brotherhoods in Toledo, for example, consisted of members who numbered six hundred to two thousand. The following description of the activities of Cuenca’s True Cross brotherhood in 1578 provides insight into the practice of self-flagellation:

There is another brotherhood of the holy True Cross, in which there are more than five hundred brothers of candle [*bacha*] and discipline, with a few women. On the night of Holy Thursday a procession is held and the brothers go out, those of candles with their candles lit, and those of discipline flagellating themselves and shedding much blood. Clergy and monks who are in town go in the procession. It is very devout, and well-supplied with wax. They say sixty masses for each brother who dies. (Christian, Jr. 189)

Penitential culture was most prevalent in southern Spain, especially in Córdoba and Seville, where Cervantes attended Jesuit schools.

In 1576, the residents of Chillón (Ciudad Real) organized a procession during a time of crisis, which included flagellation, hopeful that their devotion would be rewarded:

In April 1576 we witnessed a great drought in this town, and after many processions were made to the chapels on the outskirts—Saint Sebastian, Saint Catherine, and Saint Bridget, which are near the town—and considering the dryness of the township, and that everything was being ruined as it was already April, almost all the people of the town decided to go [to the shrine of Our Lady of the Castle] in procession one morning, including a great number of men, women, and children and some brothers of the Holy True Cross who went flagellating themselves. All of these people, together with the clergy, left the town under calm skies [*con gran serenidad*]. And [at the shrine] they celebrated mass and preached and then left to return to the town. And it pleased Our Lord through the intercession of this Holy Lady Saint His Mother to send so much rain that everyone got wet and had to return very quickly because the roads turned to rivers. As a result all of the townspeople held it certain that this grace and many others in remedy of the needs of this town had been done through the intercession of this Holy Lady. (Christian, Jr. 64)

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In Part I, Chapter LII, Don Quixote and Sancho encounter a similar procession, whose participants pray for an end to a drought. In addition to the procession to a holy shrine, there are also prayers and flagellations. In Part II of *Don Quixote*, however, Cervantes portrays the act of self-flagellation differently. In order to disenchant Dulcinea, Sancho must flagellate himself three thousand three hundred times. Once the squire realizes that he cannot avoid the self-flagellation, he resolves to “salir de la deuda lo más presto que sea posible, porque goce el mundo de la hermosura de la señora Dulcinea del Toboso, pues, según parece al revés de lo que pensaba, en efecto es Hermosa” (333). Sancho’s use of the word *deuda* alludes to the Sacrament of Confession, which was “the centerpiece of the Posttridentine program of religious reform and reeducation” (O’Banion 21).²¹ Penitents who self-flagellate do so for the expiation of their sins. They repay their “debt” to God and to society. Any sin, but especially a mortal sin, requires the debt of sinfulness to be repaid, either eternal, when the sinner does not seek absolution, or temporal, when the sinner receives absolution through the Sacrament of Confession:

If anyone says that satisfaction for sins, as to their temporal punishment, is in no way made to God through the merits of Christ by the punishments inflicted by Him and patiently borne, or by those imposed by the priest, or even those voluntarily undertaken, as by fasts, prayers, almsgiving or other works of piety, and that therefore the best penance is merely a new life, let him be anathema.²² (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* 140)

In Part II, Chapter LXXI, Don Quixote offers to pay Sancho, who has not yet completed his “penance,” for each of the three thousand three hundred lashes. In addition, the knight volunteers to keep count of them with his rosary, which David Quint describes as an agreement that “smacks of religious parody, of a donor paying monastics for prayers to be said in order to free the dead from purgatorial time” (159). In order to mitigate the temporal punishment for a sin, the priest may ask the penitent to pray the rosary, an act of devotion that includes the recitation of the Hail Mary for each of the fifty beads that begin and end with one of the four sets of mysteries.²³ In this scene, the rosary may be read as a sacramental that the knight uses to help Sancho complete

his act of “penance.” I discuss at length the rosary in *Don Quixote* in the chapter titled, “Tilting at the Truth: Don Quixote’s Spiritual Journey as a Contemplative in Action.”

It is within this environment that Erasmus, an ordained priest who in spite of his condemnation of beliefs and practices that he considered to be superstitious or corrupt remained Catholic his entire life, propagated Christian Humanism, whose core principle was *philosophia Christi*, or “philosophy of Christ,” which he defines in *Sileni Alcibiades* (1515):

For it seems that Sileni were small images divided in half, and so constructed that they could be opened out and displayed; when closed they represented some ridiculous, ugly flute-player, but when opened they suddenly revealed the figure of a god, so that the amusing reception would show off the art of the carver. (Phillips 77)

Erasmus considered Jesus to be the quintessential *silenus*:

If you look on the face only of the Silenus-image, what could be lower or more contemptible, measured by popular standards? Obscure and poverty-stricken parents, a humble home; poor himself, he has a few poor men for disciples, chosen not from king’s palaces, not from the learned seats of the Pharisees or the schools of the Philosophers, but from the customs-house and the fishermen’s nets ... In such humility, what grandeur! In such poverty, what riches! In such weakness, what immeasurable strength! In such shame, what glory! In such labours, what utter peace! (Phillips 79–80)

Christian Humanism exalts the individual worth and personal dignity of the common man, who, created *in imagine Dei*, is called to unite his life with the teachings of Jesus through the pursuit of knowledge, especially Latin and Greek texts and patristic literature; civic humanism, which consists of an active political life that promotes self-realization vis-à-vis a collective concern for the common good; and an intimate and deeply personal relationship with Jesus, as opposed to the opulent public displays of piety, such as ceremonies, parades and processions that permeated early modern Spanish society.²⁴ Erasmus expounds on the *philosophia Christi* in *Enchiridion militis Christiani* (1501):

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It was plainly set forth, at least for all Latinate readers, in the *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, the “Handbook [or, better, Dagger] of a Christian Warrior,” where the subject is the *imitatio Christi* and the emphasis is on the inwardness of true religion ... The true way of piety is in following Christ. He is the “sole archetype, from which if anyone swerve by even a nail’s breadth he goes astray and deviates from the way.” Christ’s “philosophy” is for Christians nothing other than the meaning of Christ himself, “no empty voice,” but, on the contrary, simplicity, patience, purity; in short, whatever he himself taught. (Reardon 34–35)

In the *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486), Italian Christian Humanist and Platonist Pico della Mirandola (1463–94) argues that the dignity of a human being is his or her potential to ascend the Great Chain of Being, the hierarchical order of the universe where God is at the top, Man is in the middle, and inanimate objects are at the bottom:

The nature of all creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We have laid down; you, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature. I have placed you at the very center of the world, so that from that vantage point you may with greater ease glance round about you on all that the world contains. We have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal or immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer. It will be in your power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life; you will be able, through your own decision, to rise again to the superior order whose life is divine. (Mirandola 7–8)

The English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) was a Christian Humanist who asserted that happiness is the product of a person’s relationship with God: “Every man has an immortal soul, capable of eternal happiness or misery, whose happiness depending upon his believing and doing those things in this life which are necessary to the obtaining of God’s favor and are prescribed by God to that end” (46). I address Christian Humanism within the context of Sancho’s governorship in Chapter 3.

While there is no concrete evidence that Cervantes ever read any of Erasmus's literature, it is reasonable to conclude based on his relationship with López de Hoyos and the popularity of Erasmus's doctrines in Spain at the time that Cervantes was familiar with Erasmus's writings. Perhaps the most important critic on Erasmus and Cervantes is Forcione, who has written prolifically about Erasmus' influence in Cervantes's literature, especially the *Novelas ejemplares* (1613): "Cervantes's collection of exemplary tales ... is perhaps Spain's most imposing tribute to the breadth of vision and generosity of spirit inspiring the Christian Humanist movement and distinguishing its enduring literary products" (21). Specifically, Forcione cites the Christian Humanist literary characteristics of the *Novelas ejemplares*:

The Novelas ejemplares stand as one of the fullest literary realizations of the characteristic nonlinear discourse of the great humanist writers of the sixteenth century, who turned to dialectic, ironic, and paradoxical modes of exposition in their efforts to explore the complexities of truth, to provoke their readers' collaboration in that exploration, and to revitalize perceptions blunted by the tyranny of familiarity and appearance. (28–29)

Not all critics agree, however, with Forcione. Joseph Ricapito rejects outright any Erasmian influence in the *Novelas ejemplares*, reasoning that Cervantes's literature is more a product of the spirituality of the Counter-Reformation than of the earlier Christian Humanism, which was more prevalent in Spain during the first half of the sixteenth century: "Although he sustains his theory with much erudition, it strikes me that the Erasmian influence Forcione discusses appears in Spain much earlier than the seventeenth century ... Cervantes's is a different spiritual atmosphere from the sixteenth century, when Erasmus's writings and thought flourished in Spain" (Ricapito 7). Ricapito subscribes to Américo Castro's "two Cervantes" theory: a public persona and a private one (6).

In spite of Erasmus's disdain for the immorality and extreme ritualistic practices of the pre-Tridentine Catholic Church, his writings soon became popular in Renaissance Spain, and his supporters included King Charles I (1516–56); King Philip II (1556–98), who read Erasmus's complete works as a child; Alonso

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Manrique de Lara (1476–1538), who was Inquisitor General from 1523–38; and Alonso de Fonseca (1475–1534), who was the Archbishop of Toledo (Rawlings 29). In 1522, Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros invited Erasmus to be one of several distinguished Spanish and foreign scholars who contributed to the *Complutensian Polyglot Bible*, which is a six-volume critical edition of the Scriptures that contains parallel text in Hebrew, Latin Vulgate, Greek, and Aramaic (Tovar Foncillas 65).²⁵ Marcel Bataillon notes that several of Spain's most well-known religious figures, including Fray Luis de León (1527–91), Fray Luis de Granada (1505–88), and Fray Diego de Estella (1524–78) were also followers of Erasmus:

Hombres apegados a todo lo exterior de la religión, pero que no temen denunciar el sofocamiento de lo interior por lo exterior; hombres, en definitiva, que tienen profundo parentesco con Erasmo y que difieren sobre todo de él por su adhesión más resuelta a los dogmas y a los ritos fundamentales del catolicismo. (Bataillon 785)

As Erasmus's influence spread throughout Spain, however, conservative Catholics, including several of Spain's most well-known theologians, as well as Franciscans and Dominicans, who opposed Erasmus's anti-monastic views, protested Christian Humanism.²⁶ The strength of the anti-Erasmian movement, which began in earnest in the 1530s and included support from the Inquisition, weakened Erasmus's authority considerably.²⁷

The same time Erasmus's influence was spreading throughout Spain, two saints whose spirituality permeated Spanish society during Cervantes's formative years were St. Teresa of Avila and St. Ignatius of Loyola. The life of Teresa of Avila (1515–82), a mystic whom Pope Paul VI (1963–78) declared a Doctor of the Church in 1970, exemplified Catholic spirituality.²⁸ She underwent a conversion in 1554 after reading St. Augustine, and in 1562 she was responsible for changing the atmosphere of her convent, which had become more of a place for gossip than for worship.²⁹ As a result of the reforms introduced by Teresa, the convent became a place more conducive to prayer and spiritual growth. In addition, she founded convents throughout Spain, in spite of the restriction that prohibited nuns from being seen

in public. The basis of Teresa's spirituality was a contemplative encounter with God. Unlike Ignatius, who believed that God "pulls us out" to all things on earth, Teresa's spirituality is based upon mastering the inner world. The inner journey to wholeness is but a stepping stone to the mystical union with God; the degree to which we know and love God is proportionate to the depth of our self-knowledge.

In *El castillo interior* (1588), Teresa provides many examples of her belief that images are the primary experience of the journey to a mystical union with God. The soul is a crystal that contains many dwelling places. In order to enter the first dwelling place, however, a person must practice prayer and reflection. Humility, Teresa asserts, is necessary to pass from one place to the next, and she compares this virtue to a bee that is always making honey. When the bee stops working, "todo va perdido" (Sicari 43). The visually symbolic in *Don Quixote*, which I address later in this chapter, is evocative of Teresian spirituality.³⁰

Ignatius was born in 1491 at Loyola castle in Guipúzcoa, Spain. At the age of sixteen he became a page to the treasurer of the kingdom of Castile. As a result of the time he spent at the court, he developed an affinity for women, an addiction to gambling, and a keen interest in weaponry, especially swords. When Ignatius was thirty years old, he fought for Spain against the French, who had attacked Pamplona. A cannonball wounded one of Ignatius's legs and completely broke the other. The French admired Ignatius's courage so much, they returned him to his home at the castle of Loyola instead of sending him to a prison.³¹ When Ignatius was not able to find any books of chivalry in the castle, his sister-in-law Magdalena gave him Ludolph of Saxony's *The Life of Christ* and Jacobus de Voraigne's *Golden Legend*, also known as *Flos Sanctorum*.³² Soon after, he realized that his goals of fame and glory as a soldier did not provide him with the inner peace and fulfillment he experienced while reading these books. Ignatius writes about his conversion in the *Ejercicios espirituales* (1522–24), which he describes as:

Todo modo de examinar la consciencia, de meditar, de contemplar, de orar vocal y mental, y de otras espirituales operaciones, segun que adelante se dirá: porque asi como el pasear, caminar, y correr son ejercicios corporales, por la mesma manera todo

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modo de preparar, y disponer el ánima para quitar de sí todas las afecciones desordenadas, y, después de quitadas, para buscar, y hallar la voluntad de Dios en la disposición de su vida, para la salud del ánima. (1)

Inspired by his conversion, Ignatius traveled to Jerusalem in 1522.³³ First, however, he wanted to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Montserrat. Along the way, Ignatius visited the Franciscan sanctuary of Our Lady of Aránzazu, where he commended his pilgrimage to the Holy Land to the Virgin Mary.³⁴ The next day, Ignatius departed the sanctuary and continued his pilgrimage to Montserrat.

While travelling to Montserrat, Ignatius engaged in a conversation with a Moor, who informed him that he did not believe in the perpetual virginity of the Virgin Mary. Ignatius countered the Moor's belief with several arguments, but his efforts were futile. After the Moor departed, Ignatius, feeling troubled and angry that he had not defended the Virgin's honor, vowed to punish the Moor for his blasphemy. Ignatius's determination to restore the Virgin's honor by means of violence began to waver, however, as he considered his new vocation in life. When Ignatius was approaching a crossroads that consisted of a highway road and a village road, which was the one that would lead him to the Moor, he thought even more about what God wanted him to do. Undecided about which road to follow, he gave free rein to his mule, trusting that God's will would be apparent based on which road the mule chose to follow.³⁵ When the mule walked toward the highway road and away from the village road, Ignatius accepted the mule's choice as the will of God.

When Ignatius arrived to Montserrat, he made a general confession and prayed all night at the base of the altar dedicated to the Our Lady of Montserrat. The next day, he left his sword and knife at the altar, gave away all of his fine clothes to a poor man, and dressed himself in worn clothes and sandals. Ignatius's next stop was a cave outside of the town of Manresa, where he spent nearly ten months in prayer.

Ignatius studied philosophy at the University of Alcalá de Henares and later at the University of Salamanca from 1526–27, but the authorities of the Inquisition suspected him of being an *alumbrado*, an accusation that hindered his academic progress.³⁶

Consequently, Ignatius traveled to Paris in 1528, and he remained there as a student of the University of Paris until 1535. After being ordained a priest in 1537, Ignatius went to Rome, where he met with Pope Paul III, who invited Ignatius to teach Scripture and theology. In 1540, Pope Paul III promulgated *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae*, the papal bull that granted the Society of Jesus official status within the Catholic Church. The members elected Ignatius as the Society's first Superior General in 1541, and by the time of his death in 1556, there were more than 1,000 Jesuits in Europe and Latin America.³⁷ The Catholic Church celebrates Ignatius's feast day on July 31, the day Pope Gregory XV (1621–23) canonized him in 1622.³⁸

The quixotic nature of Ignatius's life has not escaped the attention of readers over the centuries.³⁹ The first critic to undertake a comparative study of Ignatius and Don Quixote was the Swiss theologian Jean Leclerc, who, in 1688, published his research in *Bibliothèque universelle et historique*. In 1736, French priest Pierre Quesnel published a two-volume satire of Ignatius titled *Histoire de l'Admirable Dom Inigo de Guipuscoa, Chevalier de la Vierge, et Fondateur de la Monarchie des Inighistes*.⁴⁰ Quesnel, who was also a journalist, employed poetic license in writing about the events of Ignatius's life, which he portrays as quixotic:

My present undertaking is to write the history of a Spanish gentleman, who proposing to copy the wonderful achievements of the heroes of the legend, quitted a military life to dedicate himself to the service of the Virgin Mary, and after having vowed himself her knight, in this quality traversed a great part of the world, rendering himself as famous by his extravagances in spiritual knight-errantry, as his illustrious countryman Don Quixote was afterwards in temporal. (1)

In *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1764), Voltaire, who was an Enlightenment writer and philosopher, couches his harsh critique of Ignatius's fervent religiosity in the context of Don Quixote's madness:

If you are desirous of obtaining a great name, of becoming the founder of a sect or establishment, be completely mad; but be sure that your madness corresponds with the

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turn and temper of your age. Have in your madness reason enough to guide your extravagances; and forget not to be excessively opinionated and obstinate. It is certainly possible that you may get hanged; but if you escape hanging, you will have altars erected to you.

In real truth, was there ever a fitter subject for the Petites-Maisons, or Bedlam, than Ignatius, or St. Inigo the Biscayan, for that was his true name? His head became deranged in consequence of his reading the “Golden Legend”; as Don Quixote’s was, afterwards, by reading the romances of chivalry. (Voltaire 256)

In 1777, Rev. John Bowle, an English scholar who published an annotated edition of *Don Quixote* in 1781, asserted his belief that Cervantes did indeed base the character of Don Quixote on Ignatius in a letter to Rev. Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore (Ireland):

Amidst the uncertainty of guesses, if I am not peremptory and dogmatical, you will with your wonted candour receive my reveries and conjecture, that Ignacio Loyola might have been pitched upon by the author, as a person worthy of distinguished notice from him. In a word, it has been justly remarked of him by a late French writer, that he was as famous in his spiritual knight errantry, as his illustrious countryman Don Quijote was in his quest of adventures. (136)

An anonymous author in 1836, however, disagrees with the notion that *Don Quixote* is a satire of Ignatius and the Jesuits:

But the Spanish critics are not alone in such wild fancies, an Englishman has even surpassed them in absurdity. We allude to the Rev. Mr. Bowles [sic], who gravely contends that the whole book is a covert satire on the Jesuits, and their founder, Ignatius de Loyola. It will be sufficient to observe, that if the book does contain such a satire, it has been so carefully hid that it was reserved for a foreigner to detect it. (“Cervantes and His Writings” 350)

In 1854, the journal *Notes and Queries* was the forum for disparate opinions. An author, identified only by the initials J. B. P., postulated that *Don Quixote* is most definitely a satire of Ignatius

and the Jesuits. Later that same year, W. B. MacCabe offered a strong rebuttal, concluding, “J. B. P., like many others, cries out ‘Jesuit’ where there is ‘no Jesuit’” (408).

The author who has perhaps written most extensively about the similarities between Ignatius and Don Quixote, however, is Unamuno. In *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho* (1905), he cites numerous events in Ignatius’s life that are nearly identical to the life and adventures of Don Quixote.⁴¹ Unamuno’s comparisons not only support the supposition that Cervantes based Don Quixote on the life of the saint, but their unmistakable similarities also blur the line that separates reality and fiction: “For Unamuno there doesn’t seem to be any significant difference between the life of St. Ignatius as drawn in Rivadeneira’s biography, and that of Don Quixote, as narrated by Cervantes” (Vandebosch 22).

A constitutive element of the spiritualities of Teresa and Ignatius, who share the belief that prayer should be meditative and contemplative, is mental imagery. Teresa does not use images to convey her thoughts; instead, her thoughts convey the meanings of the images and the experience. For example, the interior castle is a symbol of wholeness in God, and there are seven mansions, or dwelling places, that the soul must pass through in order to reach the center where God dwells. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius instructs the retreatant to imagine himself or herself at a scene from the life of Jesus and to contemplate on it and its significance to the life of the retreatant. For example, the First Contemplation, which occurs on the first day of the second week, is dedicated to contemplating the Incarnation.⁴² The spiritual director instructs the exercitant to visualize people and events associated with the Incarnation in order to see them, to listen to them, and to observe what they are doing. The first Contemplation concludes with a colloquy in which the exercitant contemplates what to say to the people in the scene, who are the Three Divine Persons and the Virgin Mary, and to ask them for favors that will cultivate spiritual growth. Unlike Martin Luther, who believed that the sense of hearing and not sight defined a true Christian, and Erasmus, who espoused that authentic Christianity is a spiritual and not a visible worship of God, Cervantes demonstrates in *Don Quixote* a proclivity toward the visually symbolic, aligning himself with the Catholic Church and the visually symbolic elements of its faith (altars, images, rosary beads, statues, etc.).

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While imaginative contemplation fostered a transformational theological experience, the visually symbolic in Cervantes manifested itself in a more concrete way. The publication of Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum Liber* in 1531 gave birth to a new genre of visual symbolism that quickly spread all over Europe. The publication of Juan de Horozco's *Emblemas morales* (1589), the first book of emblems published in Spain, formalized the symbiotic relationship between visual and literary culture as a medium of understanding "the way in which certain encounters or events compel us to transcend our mundane existence and to contemplate what appears to be a higher, more universal—more *real*—experience of meaning and being" (B. Nelson 3).⁴³ An emblem consists of a motto, an illustration, and text, often didactic, whose message appears as an allegory in the illustration.⁴⁴

Studies of visual symbolism in Cervantes's prose began to surface on a regular basis in 1975 with the publication of Karl-Ludwig Selig's "The Battle of the Sheep: *Don Quixote* I, xviii" (1975). Since Selig's publication, a number of academics, including Edward C. Riley, Marissa C. Álvarez, E. C. Graf, and Christopher Weimer, have addressed the visually symbolic in Cervantes's literature (see Works Cited). The most influential scholar, however, is Frederick A. de Armas, who reads Cervantes's prose as ekphrastic texts. His seminal studies *Cervantes, Raphael and the Classics* (1998) and *Quixotic Frescoes: Cervantes and Italian Renaissance Art* (2006) focus on the different ways in which Cervantes depicts Italian art and architecture. Ekphrasis and pictorial allusion, de Armas asserts, is more difficult to uncover because of Cervantes's authorial style: "It is as if we have to look beneath writings and rewritings to discover the remnants of an Italian fresco, oil painting, or sculpture. The text is thus exhibited as a site for archaeological reconstruction where remnants from the past (scattered objects and figures from early modern art and its antique models) can be discovered beneath a sixteenth-century Spanish ideological and physical landscape" (*Quixotic Frescoes* xiii). De Armas, nevertheless, approaches the emblematics of *Don Quixote* by using memory markers that the narrators place in the text or the knight imagines to reveal the hidden images of Italian art and architecture in the novel.

In his article, Selig compares the episode of the battle of the sheep and the image of Alciato's Emblem 176 titled the "Insani

Gladius.”⁴⁵ The visual symbolism of this episode, Álvarez points out, provides insight into Don Quixote’s temperament (152).⁴⁶ The narrator’s description of the knight’s disposition when he attacks Alifanfarón de la Trapobana and his army illustrates the resolve he displays in other episodes, such as the attack on the windmills: “Esto diciendo, se entró por medio del escuadrón de las ovejas, y comenzó de lanceallas, con tanto coraje y denuedo como si de veras alanceara a sus mortales enemigos” (264). The didactic text that accompanies Alciato’s Emblem 176, “Insani Gladius,” speaks to the consequences that befall a person who is unable to control his or her anger: “Fury does not know how to confront its enemies: its blows / fall wide and, lacking any plan, it rushes to its ruin.” This same episode from Part I, Chapter XVIII also provides the reader with an example of the knight’s paradoxical character: “Como eso puede desaparecer y contrahacer aquel ladrón del sabio mi enemigo. Sábeta, Sancho, que es muy fácil cosa a los tales hacernos parecer lo que quieren, y este maligno que me persigue, envidioso de la gloria que vio que yo había de alcanzar desta batalla, ha vuelto los escuadrones de enemigos en manadas de ovejas” (265). I elaborate on the knight’s temperament vis-à-vis the condition of the moral act in the chapter titled “*Don Quixote and Moral Theology: What a Knight and His Squire Can Teach Us About Cervantes’s Catholicism.*”

The first Jesuits had a profound impact on Catholicism during Cervantes’s lifetime. Pope Paul III appointed Diego Laínez (1512–65) and Peter Faber (1506–46) to teach theology at the University of Rome. The Pope also appointed Laínez, Faber, Alfonso Salmerón (1515–85), and Claude Le Jay (1504–52) as theologians to the Council of Trent (1545–63). Pope Paul III designated Faber as his *peritus*, or expert, who, because of this title, exercised a great deal of authority at the Council of Trent. In spite of the high profile positions these first Jesuits occupied, they did not seek to reform the Church, heeding the words of Ignatius, who remarked, “Where there are different factions and sects, members of the Society will not oppose either party but show love for both” (O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* 285). It was inevitable that they would engender some degree of controversy, however, due to the nature of the authority granted to them by Pope Paul III. The accusations of heresy leveled against the Jesuits by some Catholic leaders, including Bishop Eustace du Bellay (1551–63) of Paris

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and the faculty of theology at the University of Paris, reflected more a general distrust of the Society than any position espoused by the Jesuits who held teaching positions or who participated in the Council of Trent. A letter from the faculty of theology at the University of Paris in 1554 reads in part:

This new society claiming for itself alone the unusual title of the name of Jesus admits anybody quite without restraint or discrimination, however criminal, illegitimate, and shameful they be. It has no difference from secular priests in its outward garb, in tonsure, in saying privately the canonical hours or in singing them publicly in church, nor in observing cloister, silence, in its choice of foods and days, in fasting and in its various laws and ceremonies which distinguish and preserve the status of Religious ... [This Society] seems to violate the uprightness of the monastic life and weaken the zealous, pious, and very necessary exercise of virtues, abstinence and austerity; indeed it provides an opportunity to freely desert the other Religious Orders and detracts from proper obedience and subjection to bishops; it unjustly deprives both civil and ecclesiastical lords of their rights; it brings on trouble for both the [civil and ecclesiastical] community and jealousies and various schisms. (*Jesuit Writings of the Early Modern Period* 244)

In spite of these attacks, which Ignatius perceived to be more hostile toward the papal bulls that established the legitimacy of the Society of Jesus than against the beliefs and practices of the Society itself, the Jesuits remained steadfast in their mission. In order to counter the efforts to discredit the Society, Ignatius enlisted the assistance of several notable supporters of the Society, including kings, dukes, university representatives, and bishops throughout Europe. The accusations and efforts to delegitimize the Society emboldened the Jesuits to remain faithful to their founding principles and to establish a stronger bond with the papacy, which continued to support Ignatius and the members of the Society.

The mission of the earliest Jesuit schools founded in Europe was to educate the young men who would later serve the Society of Jesus as priests. The first school opened in Gandía, Spain in 1545. In 1548, however, a Jesuit school that admitted all students, including those who did not wish to join the Society of Jesus, was founded in Messina, Italy; this school became the prototype of

subsequent Jesuit schools. The pedagogical approach of the Jesuit schools that Cervantes attended in Córdoba and Seville was based on the Parisian method, a methodology practiced at the University of Paris, where Ignatius earned a Master's degree in philosophy and lived with Peter Faber and Francis Xavier (1506–52), with whom Ignatius would establish the Society of Jesus in 1540.⁴⁷ Ignatius first learned about the Parisian method, however, at the University of Alcalá de Henares during the brief time he was a student there.

In spite of the Jesuits' indifference to scholasticism and humanism, if not total rejection in some cases, several books of piety, including the writings of Catherine of Siena (1347–80), *Vita Christi* by Ludolph the Carthusian (1374), and Giovanni de Caulibus's Pseudo-Bonaventuran devotional text *Meditationes vitae Christi* (1300), influenced their theology and spirituality. The book that had the most impact on the Jesuits was, however, Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* (1418–27). Even though *The Imitation of Christ* did not espouse all of the Jesuits' beliefs, most notably the importance of ministry, the Jesuits, as John O'Malley notes, still relied on it for guidance and inspiration:

In the *Imitation* they found in fact a great deal that was supportive and that confirmed certain directions they had taken; the book contained at least in embryonic form some of the first Jesuits' great themes. It encouraged frequent confession and Communion, though without defining what "frequent" meant. It encouraged daily examination of conscience. The whole of Book Three was entitled "The Book of Consolation" and emphasized the significance of the presence and absence of inner devotion—rudiments of ideas elaborately and systematically articulated in the "Rules of the Discernment of Spirits" in the *Exercises*. (*The First Jesuits* 265)

Thomas à Kempis's discussion of the interior life must have been especially inspirational to the Jesuits, who believed that ministry cannot be efficacious unless a person is properly disposed to performing it.

During Cervantes's lifetime, Catholicism embodied many of the features that defined the Renaissance in Spain. The conservative Christian culture of this time did not succumb, however, to the Baroque obsession of novelty, espoused by individuals who believed that only a radical transformation of economic and social

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institutions would improve their quality of life. José Antonio Maravall argues that the intransigence of the people who governed these institutions was foundational to their survival:

Una crisis económica, social, con repercusiones de toda índole, que el hombre del Barroco vive, lleno de inquietud por las desfavorables novedades que el tiempo pueda traer. Es un estado de ánimo particularmente en España. ... De expectativas así, el hombre del XVII, y muy especialmente el español no espera nada bueno (nos referimos, claro está, a los integrados en el sistema). Consecuentemente, para ellos, en la política, en la religión, en la filosofía, en la moral, se trata de cerrar el paso a toda novedad, precisamente porque, aun no queriéndola, se presenta traída por el desorden de los tiempos. ... Nada de novedad, repitémoslo, en cuanto afecte al orden político-social. (455–57)

The control exerted by the Inquisition since the late fifteenth century and the Catholic Monarchs' campaign to consolidate their power formed the foundation of a society whose religious identity became, nominally, more entrenched in Catholicism with the doctrinal and dogmatic mandates from the Council of Trent, especially those that address the Eucharist, and, specifically, the public adoration of the Body of Christ:

The holy council declares, moreover, that the custom that this sublime and venerable sacrament be celebrated with special veneration and solemnity every year on a fixed festival day, and that it be borne reverently and with honor in processions through the streets and public places, was very piously and religiously introduced into the Church of God. For it is most reasonable that some days be set aside as holy on which all Christians may with special and unusual demonstration testify that their minds are grateful to and mindful of their common Lord and Redeemer for so ineffable and truly divine a favor whereby the victory and triumph of His death are shown forth.⁴⁸ (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* 110)

Due in large part to the Council of Trent's dogmatic decrees, popular religious culture in early modern Spain encompassed society, as devotion extended beyond individual parishes to city-wide celebrations that included religious processions, especially Corpus Christi, and the veneration of saints' days. These

celebrations, whose nature was part-sacred and part-profane, were so plentiful that in late sixteenth-century Castile, “up to one day in every four was devoted to a religious feast” (Rawlings 94).⁴⁹ In accord with the Renaissance’s spirit of renewal, there was a revival of the writings of the Church Fathers and St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), whose influence on Cervantes I discuss in this study.⁵⁰ In addition, devotional literature by St. John of the Cross (1542–91), Fray Luis de León, St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), Fray Luis de Granada, and Fray Alonso de Madrid (1485–1570), among many others, further defined Spain’s Catholic identity.

The novel’s polyphonic composition engenders different readings, but it does not necessarily exclude an interpretation that can be substantiated by historical and literary evidence. The skepticism about Cervantes’s Catholic faith, and, specifically, how he manifests it in *Don Quixote* should be challenged. The preponderance of scholarship that focuses on Erasmus’s influence on Cervantes minimizes or discounts entirely the presence of serious and devout Roman Catholicism in the novel.⁵¹ While it may be convenient to dismiss the abundant references to Catholicism, and, specifically to the teachings of Ignatius, as exclusively a source of satire or a dimension of daily life in seventeenth-century Spain, I think doing so would ignore another example of Cervantes’s genius and deprive the reader of a mystical experience.

About the Book

Don Quixote and Catholicism: Rereading Cervantine Spirituality

Michael J. McGrath

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Four hundred years since its publication, Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* continues to inspire and to challenge the reader. The universal and timeless appeal of the novel, however, has distanced its hero from its author and its author from his own life and the time in which he lived. The discussion of the novel's Catholic identity, therefore, is based on a reading that returns Cervantes' hero to Cervantes' text and Cervantes to the events that most shaped his life. The authors and texts McGrath cites, as well as his arguments and interpretations, are mediated by his religious sensibility. Consequently, he proposes that his study represents one way of interpreting *Don Quixote* and a complement to other approaches. It is McGrath's assertion that the religiosity and spirituality of Cervantes's masterpiece illustrate that *Don Quixote* is inseparable from the teachings of Catholic orthodoxy. Furthermore, he argues that Cervantes's spirituality is as diverse as early modern Catholicism. McGrath does not believe that the novel is primarily a religious or even a serious text, and he considers his arguments through the lens of Cervantine irony, satire, and multiperspectivism. As a Roman Catholic who is a Hispanist, McGrath proposes to reclaim Cervantes's Catholicity from the interpretive tradition that ascribes a predominantly Erasmian reading of the novel. When the totality of biographical and socio-historical events and influences that shaped Cervantes' religiosity are considered, the result is a new appreciation of the novel's moral didactic and spiritual orientation.

About the Author

Michael J. McGrath is a Professor of Spanish at Georgia Southern University and a Corresponding Fellow of the San Quirce Royal Academy of History and Art (Segovia, Spain). His research focuses on early modern Spanish life and literature, with special emphasis on cultural studies, the *comedia*, *Don Quijote*, and intellectual history. He is the author of more than 60 publications, including two books based on archival research, *La vida urbana en Segovia: Historia de una ciudad barroca en sus documentos* and *Teatro y fiesta en la ciudad de Segovia (siglos XVIII y XIX)*, editions of four of Miguel de Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares* and plays by Pedro Calderón de la Barca, María de Zayas, Diego de San Pedro, articles that have appeared in the journals *Cervantes*, *Comedia Performance*, *Bulletin of Comediantes*, *Estudios Segovianos*, *ehumanista*, and *Romance Quarterly*, several book chapters, and over 20 book reviews. He has been the editor of *Juan de la Cuesta Hispanic Monographs* since 2008.

“Don Quixote, an example par excellence of multiperspectivism, fittingly lends itself to diverse interpretations. A lesson of *Don Quixote* is that, as with the dancer and the dance, the interpreter cannot be separated from the interpretation. Michael McGrath emphasizes precisely this point as he posits that Cervantes's novel solidly reflects the principles of Catholic theology. McGrath does not eliminate Erasmus from the picture, but he does remove the noted humanist as a guiding force of the commentary. Here, the aims of satire and irony are juxtaposed with a deep respect for Catholicism and its teachings. McGrath's personal faith and analytical skills serve him well. This is a thoughtful and well-argued study that will add to the critical dialogue on *Don Quixote* by accentuating a key ingredient of Spanish life, culture, history, and, lest we forget, fiction.”

Edward H. Friedman, Vanderbilt University