

Worlds of Uncertain Status

Mary Kathleen Roberts
Boulder, Colorado

Abstract

The concept of persons as world creators is presented, and reality constraints on real world creation are discussed and illustrated using examples from Miguel de Cervantes' masterpiece, *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*. Dreams and fiction are treated as mediums in which we have freedom from reality constraints, allowing us to explore behavioral possibilities that may change our worlds. A famous dream from *Don Quixote* is analyzed to reveal the dreamer's new way of treating the world. The novel itself is analyzed to show the alternative behavioral patterns that Cervantes explored. The significance of these patterns in his life is examined, and the world-changing nature of *Don Quixote* is discussed.

"Far away, alone in the open Manchegan plain, the lanky figure of Don Quixote bends like an interrogation mark..." (Ortega y Gasset, 1961, p. 101)

Imagine a world in which competent physicians prescribe treatment based on the balance of the four humors; national leaders make decisions in accordance with the position of the planets; royalty and commoners alike make use of the mentally ill for entertainment; and writers earn the respect of the literary community only through works of poetry and drama.

What kind of world is this? Although it may seem like a fictional world, it is the real world in the time of the late Renaissance. The behavioral possibilities that are listed reflect

some of the accepted political, social, and cultural realities of the times, and people acted accordingly.

Consider a world in which children survive by being petty thieves and clever pick-pockets; adults gain respectable places by adapting to the ways of a corrupt world; and priests try to save sinners from eternal places in Hell.

Consider a world in which tender-hearted shepherds express their deep longings and anguish in verse; young women are lovely beyond compare but disdainful of their suitors; and goats and sheep graze peacefully in the meadows.

Consider a world in which fire-breathing dragons have claws of gold; knights cut down their opponents with a single blow of their swords; and beautiful damsels ride on palfreys to rendezvous with their lovers.

What kind of worlds are these? While they have elements of the real world, these are fictional worlds that were popular with readers in the late Renaissance. The first is the world of the picaresque novel, the second is the world of the pastoral romance, and the third is the world of the chivalric novel. Each of these worlds is self-contained, and we easily recognize behavioral possibilities that are fitting in one and not the other.

Finally, visualize a world in which men are not trusted, even though they have kept their word; women, once noticed for their beauty, lose their loveliness due to unending grief; and people in need ask for money.

What kind of world is this? It is a world described by Don Quixote after he emerges from an underground cave. Don Quixote is sure that what he has seen in the “underworld” is real, but we (and Sancho) treat it as a dream.

All of the worlds mentioned above – the real world and the fictional worlds, the underworld and the dream world – are *created* by people. The idea that we are the originators of dreams and the authors of fiction is generally non-problematic, but the idea that we are the creators of the real world is alien to most people.

I will start by using some of the ideas of Peter G. Ossorio to explain how people are creators of the real world. Then I will use examples from Miguel de Cervantes' *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* to illustrate some of the practical constraints on successful world creation.

A word of caution is in order for readers familiar with the musical *Man of La Mancha*. However delightful the musical is in its own right, it is not noteworthy for its depth of understanding of either Cervantes or his work. In fact Dale Wasserman, the playwright who wrote *Man of La Mancha*, claims that he has "never even read the complete *Don Quixote*" (2003, p. 93). As we will see, Cervantes' Don Quixote is a character of far different significance than the musical dreamer.

Real World Creators

"Surely you don't mean that we create the mountains and the trees and the birds..."

This is a common misunderstanding of the idea that we are creators of the real world. It sounds as if we are claiming a Godlike status for people, and saying that people make "the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves...and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth" (Genesis 1:21-26). But of course people do not make the mountains or the monsters in this way.

"Surely you don't mean that we were here first..."

This is another common misunderstanding of the idea of people as world creators. It sounds as if we must be claiming a reverse order of things, and saying that the actual progression of events through time was first people, then the world. But of course historically the world was here first.

"So what do we create?"

What we create is the real world being what it is. (cf. Ossorio, 2006a, p. 136). Because things have reality only insofar as they enter into our behavioral patterns, we create what things are by the places

we give them in our behavior. What something is depends on what we successfully treat it as being.

“But we don’t have anything to do with mountains being mountains, monsters being monsters, or the world being the world. They are completely independent of us, and it doesn’t matter how we treat them.”

This misunderstanding is what makes the concept of persons as world creators foreign to us. We are accustomed to a world view in which we are merely spectators of the world. In the Spectator view, the world was here before we were; it will be here after we’re gone; and we are completely non-essential to it in the little time that we are here.

To understand the contrasting World Creator view, consider the paradigm of the pawn (Ossorio, 1981). Pawns are not objects that existed in the world before people got here and that people came along and labeled. Instead, pawns exist because people created chess, a form of behavior and a conceptual system in which pawns are distinguished from rooks, knights, etc. Without the game of chess, nothing could be a pawn. Thus, pawns (logically, categorically) depend on people. They would not exist without chess, which in turn would not exist without real people who actually play chess.

Anything in the world can be assimilated to the paradigm of the pawn by identifying a behavioral pattern in which the particular object, process, event, etc. has a place. For example, Ossorio (1978) comments on how atoms would not exist without people who play the game of physics:

Keep in mind that physics is a game people play—physics consists of there being people who have distinctive social practices, distinctive ways of talking, and distinctive ways of acting. Were there not those people and those ways of talking and those ways of acting, what would be the basis for saying there’s such a thing as an atom? What would we understand by “atom”? (p. 273)

As these examples show, the way that we create the real world is by creating and enacting behavioral patterns. These patterns vary in size. We have compact units like social practices, mid-size units like institutions (organized sets of social practices), and life-size units like ways of life. A way of life is a dramaturgical pattern that encompasses the entire life of a person.

Corresponding to each behavioral pattern is a built-in world. The built-in world “consists primarily of a structure of statuses which defines *what* things are, not in the sense of a taxonomy but as *dramatis personae*...” (Ossorio, 1982/1998, p. 123). Thus, the *dramatis personae* of geology include rocks, fossils, tectonic plates, mountains, etc.; the players in the drama of chivalry include knights, armor, ladies, squires, horses, monsters, etc.; and the players in all our known ways of life include women, men, houses, gardens, etc.

We can understand the real world as an all-inclusive dramatic structure that has a place for everything there is. All of the smaller, pattern-specific worlds fit into the all-encompassing real world.

Only secondarily does the real world consist of the historical particulars that we encounter. This is not to say that the historical particulars don’t matter. Recall: “For want of a nail, the kingdom was lost.” The nail mattered because of the particular part it needed to play in saving the kingdom. Without the nail, it was not possible to carry off the corresponding drama.

The dramaturgical structure of the real world is not fixed. Instead it changes as we invent new behavioral patterns, modify existing ones, and retire old ones. As an example, consider humorism, a conceptual system and a form of medical practice in which four humors are distinguished – blood, black bile, yellow bile, and phlegm. In this system, blood is the element that is most likely to upset the humoral equilibrium, and hence bloodletting is used to try to restore the balance of humors in the body. This was the accepted place of blood and the accepted way of treating illness for more than 2000 years, until 1628 when William Harvey proposed that blood is something that circulates in the body.

When a new way of treating something is introduced, it does not necessarily change the structure of the real world. New patterns of behavior have to be accepted by the community to become part of the real world. Until a new pattern is accepted, the status of the corresponding world is uncertain.

Sometimes acceptance occurs relatively quickly, as in the case of gunpowder. After gunpowder was introduced to Europe in the fourteenth century, politicians and military leaders quickly adopted it for use in firearms and explosives. Almost overnight, medieval knights and the chivalric conduct of war became forever obsolete.

More often people are reluctant to give up their old ways, and acceptance occurs slowly. Nuland (2007) notes that it took “almost three centuries before clinical physicians...could bring themselves to forsake therapies based on the last vestiges of the theory of humors”. As new therapies replaced the old ones, the place of blood in medical practice was changed, and *ex post facto*, what blood is now is what it was all along.

It is not only scientific inventions that call for reformulation of the real world. Entrepreneurs, artists, writers, philosophers, theologians, et al., all create new forms of behavior that transform what things are. The way we observe Christmas is a mundane example. When Dickens published *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, he introduced a new status to the real world, i.e., Scrooge. Historians believe that after this, Christmas began to change into the elaborate celebration that we know today because no one wanted to be cast as a Scrooge, i.e., someone who did not know how to keep Christmas well.

There is no guarantee that the changes we make are improvements. While it is comforting to think that “the universe is unfolding as it should”, that notion is reminiscent of the Spectator view. If we create and accept social practices that are base, shallow, etc., the real world changes in that direction. If we create and accept practices that are kind, humanizing, etc., then that is the direction of change of the real world.

Reality Constraints

People sometimes take it that if we create *what* things are, then we must be able to make the world into whatever we want. “The sky’s the limit.” In fact there are a number of practical constraints on successful world creation, and I will use examples from *Don Quixote* to illustrate a few of these.

Alonso Quixada (“there is a certain amount of disagreement” about his name), a poor gentleman in early seventeenth century Spain, got the idea that he could win “eternal renown and everlasting fame” by becoming a knight errant and doing everything that knights errant do. Given the preceding discussion about how we create the real world by enacting dramaturgical patterns, it might seem that Alonso could restore the institution of knight errantry to the world in this way. What keeps him from being successful?

Who I Am

One of the constraints on world creation is *who I am*. We each have a unique part to play in the all-encompassing, non-repeatable drama of the Real World. Normatively we play that part without raising questions or having doubts about it. The things that we do are simply expressions of who we are.

At various points in life, though, we may raise questions about “Why this part?” and get carried away by ideas about the part that we would like to play. In this case, we may end up playing “a part which is, in its turn, the playing of a part” (Ortega y Gasset, 1961, p. 154). In other words, we “put on an Act”.

Notice that I *am* being myself in putting on an Act. In fact, we may admire the artistry and skill of a person putting on an Act even while we see the phoniness of the Act itself. For example, at the end of Alonso’s first sally as Don Quixote, a neighbor finds him so badly bruised and beaten that he cannot stand. The neighbor recognizes him: “Señor Quijana!” and appeals to him to drop the Act: “Your grace is an honorable gentleman.” Señor replies: “I know who I

am...and I know I can be the Twelve Peers of France...and even all the nine paragons of Fame, for my deeds will surpass all those they performed, together or singly.” (p. 43) We respect his perseverance in the face of defeat, even though we know that he is insisting on something that is completely phony. He cannot be anyone other than himself.

At the end of the novel, we weep when he accepts this. As captured in the beautiful lyrics of W. H. Auden (quoted in Wasserman, 2003, p. 94), his words to Sancho are:

*Humor me no longer, Sancho;
Faithful squire, all that is past;
Do not look for this year's bird
In the nest of last;
Don Quixote de la Mancha
Was a phantom of my brain;
I, Quijano, your Alonso,
Am myself again...*

Why does Alonso put on an Act? By nature he is a quiet and plain man, gentle in his treatment of others and fond of reading. Unfortunately what comes naturally to him will never earn him the fame and glory he craves, only “the profound abyss of oblivion” (p. 671). He does not want to be one of those people “whose names were never remembered by Fame or eternalized in her memory, but one who in spite of envy herself, and in defiance of all the magi of Persia, Brahmins of India, and gymnosophists of Ethiopia, will have his name inscribed in the temple of immortality...” (p. 409). He puts on a Knight Act because he envisions it as a way to get what he wants.

What does he succeed at doing? He creates a world that has a place for a gentle man with a Knight Act, because that is who he is being.

Mundane Particulars

Another practical constraint on world creation is whether or not there are particular historical individuals available and willing to be cast for the parts required to bring off a dramaturgical pattern. You may have what it takes to be a first baseman, but you can't be a first baseman all by yourself. You need at least nine individual players to make a team, and you need a bat, a ball, four bases, and so forth. The historical particulars may be secondary, but they are indispensable for a real game.

They are also indispensable for world creation. The Paradigm Case of world creation involves "casting" particular individuals to play the parts called for in the drama, and then treating those individuals accordingly. If key players are missing or are not able to play their parts, then it is not possible to carry off the drama.

Alonso does a good job of casting when he offers Sancho Panza a position as his Squire. The part of Squire is close to Sancho's natural inclinations, so it is a position in which he can be himself. When questioned about why he serves Don Quixote, Sancho says: "I can't help it; I have to follow him: we're from the same village, I've eaten his bread, I love him dearly, he's a grateful man, he gave me his donkeys, and more than anything else, I'm faithful..." (p. 678)

Unlike most of the characters in the novel, Sancho usually relates to Alonso not as Don Quixote, but rather *as himself*, the gentleman from his village whom he has known all his life. This makes their dialogues an endless delight and saves Alonso from being a total phony. For example, at the end of the second sally when Alonso is being carried back to his village in a humiliating cart/cage, he swears that he must be enchanted to allow such a thing to happen to him. Sancho deftly sidesteps the Enchanted Knight Act and replies: "Even so, for your greater ease and satisfaction, it would be a good idea for your grace to try to get out of this prison, and I'll do everything I can to help get your grace out and back on your good Rocinante, who also seems enchanted, he's so melancholy and sad; and when we've

done that, we'll try our luck again and search for more adventures..." (p. 422).

In one of their "just between you and me" talks, Alonso confesses that Aldonza, a peasant girl from a nearby village, is his lady Dulcinea of Toboso. For twelve years Alonso has felt a shy tenderness towards her. Now he wants Sancho to take a love letter to her from him signed, "Thine until death, The Knight of the Sorrowful Face". Sancho clumsily blurts out: "... Praise our Maker, she's a fine girl in every way, sturdy as a horse, and just the one to pull any knight errant or about to be errant, who has her for his lady, right out of any mud hole he's fallen into! Damn, but she's strong!... And the best thing about her is that she's not a prude. In fact, she's something of a trollop: she jokes with everybody and laughs and makes fun of everything" (p. 200). Given who she is and what comes naturally to her, Aldonza is a complete and total failure as The Lady in Alonso's Knight Act.

In addition to a Squire and a Lady, the *dramatis personae* of knight errantry include castles, giants, magic helmets, etc. Some of the best known, and funniest, scenes in *Don Quixote* hinge on how Alonso fills the parts: inns for castles, windmills for giants, wineskins for giants, a herd of sheep as an army, a barber's basin as a magic helmet, etc. With status assignments like these, he creates a parody of the world of knight errantry.

Real World Context

Another practical constraint on world creation is the real world context of my behavior. For world creation to be successful, I need to have a wider context that enables and supports the behavior pattern I am enacting.

Unfortunately, when Alonso sallies forth as Don Quixote, the institution of chivalry has not been viable for more than 200 years. There is no place in the real world of seventeenth century Spain for a knight errant. In the absence of any kind of cultural support for knight errantry, how is Alonso's behavior treated?

Sometimes it is treated as provocation: when he tries to extort validation from a traveling merchant for the beauty of his lady Dulcinea of Toboso, he gets brutally beaten. Sometimes his behavior is treated as dangerous: when he charges on Rocinante with his lance lowered, a friar takes off galloping across the fields. Sometimes his behavior is treated as wrongdoing: when he frees a group of galley slaves, the Holy Brotherhood issues a warrant for his arrest. And so on. In no case does it count as the behavior of a knight errant, and so in no case does he create the world of a knight errant.

The context is changed slightly when Alonso makes his third, and final, sally as Don Quixote. The First Part of *Don Quixote* has been published, and wherever Don Quixote goes in the world, people recognize him. He is famous, and he has a place in the real world – not the place he tried to claim as a knight errant – but instead as a madman. Members of the larger community use him mercilessly for entertainment, and with appalling cruelty, pretend to treat him as a knight.

Alonso never has a place in the real world as a real knight, but it is worth noting how his behavior counts in the two-person community with Sancho. After a successful swordfight, Alonso asks Sancho, “Have you ever seen a more valiant knight than I anywhere on the face of the earth?” Sancho replies: “I’ll wager that in all my days I’ve never served a bolder master than your grace” (p. 71). Between Alonso and Sancho, it is I and Thou.

It is also worth noting how Alonso’s behavior counts in the larger scheme of things. “The pathetic, poignant, divine element that radiates from Don Quixote” (Nabokov, 1983, p. 42) has made him more famous than even the Twelve Peers of France, which is what he really wanted.

Freedom

Alonso’s attempt to restore the institution of knight errantry to the real world illustrates not only our constraints but also our freedom. In creating the real world, we are limited to what we can

get away with by way of behavior, but we are not compelled to recognize these limitations.

- There is no rule that says a leopard has to stop trying to change her spots after three tries.
- There is no law that says a theatre company cannot put on *King Lear* without any of the supporting actors.
- There is no regulation that prohibits us from sounding clarion calls from the highest hills, even if only the chipmunks hear us.

We may, like Alonso, treat the impossible as possible.

Dream Creators

In our dreams, we are not subject to the same practical constraints that limit us in the real world. If a dream scenario requires person characteristics that we do not have, we can simply give them to ourselves. If a dream performance calls for a cast of characters unavailable to us in real life, we can easily muster them in our sleep. If a dream pattern requires a context of support that does not exist for us in the real world, we can create it on demand in the night. This freedom from reality constraints allows us to envision and experiment with new behavioral patterns, ones that we might not consider otherwise.

When we wake up, our dreams may not seem to make sense, especially if we are focused on the implementation portrayed in a dream. Because we are not trying to carry off a behavioral pattern in the real world, we can be capricious and arbitrary in our casting of characters, in our portrayal of circumstances, in our enactment of performances, etc. when we are dreaming.

To understand a dream, we need to recover the pattern that we had in mind in producing it. To do this, two rules of thumb are helpful:

- Drop the details and see what pattern remains.
- Don't make anything up.

Once we have seen “the pattern that remains”, then we can look at how the pattern applies to the specifics of our real world situation. We may not accept an idea that we have portrayed in a dream, just as the community may not accept an innovation that is proposed by a community member. (See Roberts (1985, 1998) for more in depth discussions of dreams and dream interpretation.)

To illustrate this approach to understanding dreams, I will analyze the dream that Alonso had in the “underworld”, i.e., in the underground Cave of Montesinos. In the dream, an old man named Montesinos leads Don Quixote into a crystal palace where he shows him a knight lying on a sepulcher, a hairy hand covering his heart. Montesinos says that the knight is his friend Durandarte, who died in his arms at Roncesvalles. After his friend died, Montesinos fulfilled his last request and cut out his heart, sprinkled a little salt on it, and carried it to the beautiful Belerma, Durandarte’s lady. They have all been enchanted since then.

When Durandarte, who is not dead in the dream, reproaches Montesinos for *not* fulfilling his last request, Montesinos tries in vain to reassure him. Nothing Montesinos says or does makes any difference, which causes him endless sorrow. A procession of women mourners appears with the lady Belerma in the rear, carrying the dried and lightly salted heart of Durandarte. Once beautiful, the lady Belerma has become rather ugly from grief. Her grief is continuously renewed by carrying Durandarte’s shriveled heart, which she has been doing four times a week for more than 500 years.

When Montesinos speaks of the beauty of Belerma in comparison to the beauty of Dulcinea, Don Quixote reproaches him for the comparison. Montesinos apologizes and Don Quixote accepts the apology. Then Don Quixote sees three peasant girls jumping in the fields like nanny goats, and he recognizes one of them as Dulcinea. One of the girls approaches him and asks for money for Dulcinea. After consulting with Montesinos, Don Quixote gives her all the money he has, four *reales* that he is carrying so that he can give alms to the poor. The dream ends with the peasant girl leaping into the air instead of curtsying.

All of Chapter 23 in the Second Part of *Don Quixote* is devoted to the dream, so I have already dropped most of the details (and alas, most of the humor, too). If we drop the remaining details, what pattern do we see?

The first part of the dream portrays a knight (Durandarte) who is oblivious to his circumstances and to the positions that he is putting people in. The second part portrays a knight (Don Quixote) who is responsive to the situation and to the people around him. We can understand the first part as a problem formulation: “The same things will keep happening over and over and over if I do not listen and see and respond to what’s going on around me.” The second part can be understood as a possible solution, captured in the prescription, “Respond to what’s out there.”

How does this pattern apply to the specifics of Alonso’s world? In the First Part of *Don Quixote*, Alonso has repeatedly charged into adventures for adventure’s sake without a thought to those around him. He has been as oblivious to the pleadings of Sancho as Durandarte is to the pleadings of Montesinos. For example, on a dark night when he and Sancho hear a terrifying pounding sound, Sancho begs Alonso not to leave him alone, “in a desolate place far from all other human beings. By the One God, Señor, you must not wrong me so...” (p. 143). Alonso is not moved by his squire’s “tears, advice, and pleas”, so Sancho resorts to sneakily tying Rocinante’s forelegs together so that his master cannot go anywhere until morning.

In the Second Part of *Don Quixote*, when Sancho is terrified by a man with a huge, hideous nose, Alonso responds very differently. He legitimizes Sancho’s fear about the nose: “It is so large... that if I were not who I am, I would be terrified, too, and so come, I shall help you climb the tree” (p. 545). He delays his charge on his opponent until Sancho has reached safety. Alonso’s response here is consistent with the new way of treating the world portrayed in the second part of the dream, as are many other scenes in the Second Part of the novel.

This is an example of the applicability of a fictional dream to a fictional world rather than the applicability of a real dream to a real

world. The fact that the Cave of Montesinos dream illustrates the principles of dream interpretation so well is indicative of the genius of Cervantes, who awake, authored a dream for his hero that is fascinating, funny, and psychologically perfect. (Cervantes believed that dreams may reveal the concerns of the dreamer, as he explains and illustrates in Chapter VI of *Journey to Parnassus*.)

Fiction Creators

Fiction is another medium that allows us to experiment with different ways of treating the world. While a person's reality constraints are most relaxed in dreams, fiction also offers a great deal of freedom from constraint. Authors are free to create whatever characters and circumstances are needed to portray the patterns that they have in mind, as long as they write something coherent and intelligible for their readers.

I will now look at Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and show how the alternative behavioral patterns that he explores in the novel are related to patterns that he was enacting in his life. In doing this, I am approaching the work as a Descriptive psychologist, not as a literary critic. *Don Quixote* has long been recognized as a masterpiece, and no disrespect is intended by approaching it this way. On the contrary, my hope is that the approach offers an extra dimension of appreciation.

Nabokov (1983) believes that "the only thing that really matters in this business of literature [is] the mysterious thrill of art, the impact of aesthetic bliss" (p. 76). For a Descriptive psychologist, pattern bliss – the thrill of recognizing a pattern and its real world applicability – also counts.

What are the top-level patterns in *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*? How do they apply to Cervantes' life? Cervantes wrote the novel in two parts, publishing the First Part when he was 58 years old and the Second Part when he was 68. I will treat each part separately and look at each part in the context of Cervantes' life at the time it was published. This will make it

possible to see the resolution that Cervantes achieved in the final years of his life.

Cervantes' Life

Imagine that you are in a tavern in seventeenth century Valladolid, enjoying a glass of wine. A frayed but engaging gentleman asks if he can join you. You try not to look at his ugly, maimed left hand while he devours your tapas. He begins to speak about himself. . .

He has worked in Rome, he says, a city that “transcends its fame as divine” (Cervantes, 1617/1989, p. 311), served as a soldier in the Spanish Army, and been enslaved by Barbary pirates. His left hand is beautiful because it was injured by a blunderbuss shot in the naval battle of Lepanto, “the greatest event ever seen in past or present times, or that the future can ever hope to see” (p. 455).

He surpasses many in imagination (“Yo soy aquel que en la invención excede a muchos.” (Cervantes, 1614/1883, p. 106)), and has aspired all his life to win a place of honor among the poets. After he returned to Madrid at the age 33, he was successful for awhile as a playwright and “wrote some twenty or thirty plays, which were performed without causing cucumbers, or any other missiles, to be thrown at them” (Cervantes, 1615/1996, p. 4).

You have your doubts about the twenty or thirty plays, but you are sure that he hasn't eaten all day. You order more tapas for him.

At the same time that he was starting his career in the theatre, there was an 18 year old, Lope de Vega, “one of nature's prodigies” (Cervantes, 1615/1996, p. 4). Although Lope started out writing traditional theatre, he soon began to experiment, to do something different. He broke the accepted rules of drama and wrote plays solely to entertain the public. The public loved his innovations so there was no uncertainty about the status of Lope's *comedia nueva*. In a very short time he radically changed the theatrical world.

There were only eight acting companies licensed by royal decree to perform plays in public at that time (Smith, 1996, p. 147), and they

became “the empire of the mighty Lope”. “The actors all became his slaves and were subject to his rule. He filled the world with his own pleasing and well-made plays” (Cervantes, 1615/1996, pp. 4-5).

You hear the bitterness and the mocking praise, and you know that he had no place in that world.

He says that “with other things to occupy my time, I put aside my pen and wrote no more plays” (Cervantes, 1615/1996, p. 4). During the next ten years he traveled the mountains and plains of Andalusia, first as a provisioner for the Spanish Armada and later as a tax collector. At age 50, he was imprisoned in Seville for irregularities in his accounts.

You pour him another glass of wine. You know all too well the staggering levels that taxes have reached over the past ten years in Spain (Kamen, 1991, p. 167), and how despised provisioners and tax collectors are. Why does Lope wear the crown in Madrid, while this poor gentleman is shut out as a playwright, spends his days rambling on a nag through the south of Spain, is shunned by everyone he meets, and finally is thrown into prison by the government he patriotically served?

But he is no longer speaking of his life. He is speaking of his disdain for *comedia nueva*. “Drama, according to Marcus Tullius Cicero, should be a mirror of human life, an example of customs, and an image of truth, but plays that are produced these days are mirrors of nonsense, examples of foolishness, and images of lewdness” (p. 416). Will there never again be plays that follow the classical rules? Is that world gone forever?

The First Part of *Don Quixote*

*“He felt himself at the end, poor and alone,
unaware of the music he was hiding;
plunging deep in a dream of his own,
he came on Sancho and Don Quixote, riding.”
(Borges, 2000, p. 179)*

In the First Part of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes portrays two ways of being in the world, one embodied in Don Quixote and one in Sancho. If we drop the details of Don Quixote's adventures, the top-level pattern that remains is "a person in a position of higher social status insists on following an obsolete pattern in order to win fame and renown". If we drop the details of Sancho's adventures, the top-level pattern is "a person in a position of lower social status does what comes naturally and brings delight to people".

How do these patterns apply to Cervantes' real life? After he was jailed for malfeasance, he knew that he had no future even as a tax collector. He must have been asking himself questions on the order of "What do I do now?" "Where do I go from here?"

We can understand the Don Quixote pattern as one answer. As a young man, Cervantes had accepted the values of Renaissance humanism, and it was a given for him that artistic works should follow classical patterns. He was also enormously ambitious. We can almost hear him say: "I know who I am, and I know I can be Heliodorus and Homer and even Virgil, for my works will surpass all those they created, together or singly." He passionately wanted to achieve a place as one of the best poet/playwrights of his day by imitating and transcending classical models.

But then Lope de Vega changed the world out from under him. Just as the acceptance of gunpowder made medieval knights obsolete, the acceptance of Lope's *comedia nueva* made playwrights like Cervantes old fashioned. Cervantes was free to try to restore neoclassical drama to the world; to create works in imitation of "the two princes of Greek and Latin poetry" (p. 414); and to fight anyone who would not agree that drama should both delight *and* teach. In the same way, Alonso was free to try to restore the order of knights errant to the world; to create deeds in imitation of Amadís of Gaul or "Roland, or Roldán, or Orlando, or Rotolando (for he had all those names)" (p. 194); and to fight anyone who would not confess that "in the entire world there is no damsel more beauteous than the empress of La Mancha, the peerless Dulcinea of Toboso" (p. 39). This was one option.

A second answer to the question of “What do I do now?” is portrayed in the Sancho pattern: “Do what comes naturally.” There are many examples throughout the book of Sancho affirming what is natural for him. When Alonso wants Sancho to quit tormenting him with his endless strings of proverbs, Sancho responds: “Your grace complains about very small things. Why the devil does it trouble you when I make use of my fortune, when I have no other, and no other wealth except proverbs and more proverbs? And right now four have come to mind that are a perfect fit, like pears in a wicker basket...” (p. 736). When Alonso commands him *not* to speak in the Sierra Morena, Sancho soon counters: “Your grace should give me your blessing and let me leave, because now I want to go back to my house and my wife and children, for with them, at least, I’ll talk and speak all I want; your grace wanting me to go with you through these deserted places by day and by night without talking whenever I feel like it is burying me alive...” (p. 190).

What was natural for Cervantes was narrative writing. Unfortunately, prose fiction was not held in high esteem in early seventeenth century Spain, and writers could not earn respect or status in the literary community through this genre. Nonetheless, as Cervantes affirms in the Prologue to his *Exemplary Stories*, his natural inclination led him to novellas (1613/1998, p. 5).

Literary critics believe that “*Don Quixote* was originally intended by Cervantes to be a long short story, providing amusement for an hour or two. The first sally, the one from which Sancho is still absent, is obviously conceived as a separate novella” (Nabokov, 1983, p. 28). But then (dreamlike) Cervantes begot Sancho, and began to write whatever came to his mind just as Sancho speaks whatever comes to his mind.

Like many Spaniards of his time, Cervantes had grown up on romances of chivalry. They were one of the few means of escape from the social disintegration of the times, and “every cultured person had them in his library” (Kamen, 1991, p. 113). Cervantes was unusually well-read in the genre, so it is not surprising that he drew on this background knowledge when he just let himself write.

Don Quixote objects to his approach: “The author of my history... without rhyme or reason, began to write, not caring how it turned out, just like Orbaneja, the painter of Úbeda, who, when asked what he was painting, replied: ‘Whatever comes out.’” (p. 478 and p. 923). Literary critics agree. As Nabokov (1983) succinctly puts it, “It is no use looking for any unity of structure in this book” (p. 169), or as Madariaga (1961) more gently expresses it, “The ‘story’ of *Don Quixote* has no plan other than the caprice of Rocinante” (p. 79).

Humor also came naturally to Cervantes, and he could appreciate and portray the humor in any situation. Imagine how liberating it must have been for him to conceive of Don Quixote. As an artist, he would have rejoiced at his new conception, and as a person, he would have delighted in seeing himself in light of his noble knight (just as readers for more than 400 years have enjoyed seeing themselves and/others in light of The Knight of the Sorrowful Face).

This is not to say that Cervantes gave up his earnest conviction that *good* plays should be performed again in the theatres, even if he saw it in light of Don Quixote. As Littmann (1983) explains in an elegant formulation of humor, to see a serious matter as humorous is to attain a nonserious view of it while nevertheless retaining the serious view “not as a competing view, but as a background ‘given’” (p. 189). While a person is “seeing-the-serious-as-nonserious”, new possibilities for involvement in the world are introduced because the serious matter “no longer assumes the same priority it did when it was appraised as serious” (p. 198). But a person can transition to seeing the serious exclusively as serious again, because the serious viewpoint has not been lost or invalidated.

We have now looked at the First Part of *Don Quixote* and seen how the patterns there fit with Cervantes’ real life. For the Don Quixote pattern:

- The higher level description is “a person in a position of higher social status insists on following an obsolete pattern in order to win fame and renown”.

- The fictional representation is “a hidalgo (Alonso) insists on imitating the medieval practices of knight errantry in order to win fame and renown”.
- The real world application is “a playwright (Cervantes) insists on emulating neoclassical models in order to win fame and renown”.

For the Sancho pattern:

- The higher level description is “a person in a position of lower social status does what comes naturally and brings delight to people”.
- The fictional representation is “a peasant (Sancho) says what comes naturally and brings delight to people”.
- The real world application is “an author (Cervantes) writes what comes naturally and brings delight to people”.

Notice that in the lower level descriptions, specific individuals have been cast for the parts specified in the dramaturgical pattern.

Cervantes' Life

“Is Cervantes making fun of something? And of what?...What was that poor tax-gatherer mocking from the depths of a dungeon?” (Ortega y Gasset, 1961, p. 101)

The First Part of *Don Quixote* was an instant success when it was published in 1605, and six editions were printed within the first year of its release. Because he was cheated out of royalties by the publisher, Cervantes did not benefit financially from the success. And while he became famous, he became famous as a comic narrative writer, which was even *lower* in status in seventeenth century Spain than a narrative writer.

He did get some satisfaction in relation to his archrival Lope de Vega, however. In the Prologue to the First Part, Cervantes clearly states that he “intends only to undermine the authority and wide acceptance that books of chivalry have in the world and among

the public” (p. 8). Readers of his day, however, would easily have recognized his many ironic allusions to Lope.

Cervantes makes his mockery of Lope explicit towards the end of the First Part. As Alonso is being carried home in the humiliating cage, a Canon from Toledo appears on the scene. With the help of the curate from Alonso’s village, the Canon performs a thorough degradation ceremony of Lope and his *comedia nueva*. This public degradation of Lope was carried “by Rocinante on his crupper” throughout all of Spain and much of Europe and into the New World.

Cervantes, still desperate financially and still hoping for a place of honor as a poet, decided to try his hand at plays again, even making some concessions to the ideas of *comedia nueva*. Not surprisingly, given Lope’s power in the theatrical world and Cervantes’ far-reaching degradation of him, Cervantes found that “the birds of yesteryear had flown the nest. I mean to say that no actor-manager wanted [my plays]” (Cervantes, 1615/1996, p. 5).

Booksellers, however, wanted to publish his writing. Given this opportunity, Cervantes worked with incredible intensity in the last decade of his life. After the success of the First Part of *Don Quixote*, he completed five more books before his death, in spite of failing health.

Exemplary Stories was the first to be published. It went through four editions in 10 months and established Cervantes’ place as the master of the Spanish short story. In the Prologue to his *Stories*, Cervantes affirms, “These are my very own, neither imitated nor stolen” (Cervantes, 1613/1998, p. 5). In the same year, he began to receive a small pension from a benefactor, the Count of Lemos, and he joined a Franciscan lay order, which gave him a real place in a community very different from the hostile and humiliating literary world.

Cervantes published his *Journey to Parnassus* next. It is a long burlesque poem (with cameo appearances by Sancho and Rocinante) written in imitation of an Italian poem. It was not successful, but it is intriguing psychologically. Cervantes narrates the poem as himself, and there are references to his failing health. Most notably, Apollo

confides to Cervantes that dizziness (*vaguidos de cabeza*) sometimes makes it impossible for him to write.

It is significant that with time running out, Cervantes chose to complete this poem rather than focusing on some of the other works that he hoped to finish before he died. In Chapter I, he tells us that he would not have “made the journey” except for the desire “to place a laurel wreath upon me” (“*una guirnalda de laurel ponerme*”) (Cervantes, 1614/1883, p. 2). But after he sets out, Mercury welcomes him into the service of the god Apollo, the father and inventor of poetry.

In Chapter IV of the poem, there is a scene where a hundred Spanish poets take seats of honor around Apollo, but Cervantes is not one of them. Apollo offers him the chance to sit on his cape, but Cervantes declines: “I have no cape.” Then, with a nod to those assembled, Cervantes observes: “You get a good seat only through favor or wealth.” (“*No hay asiento bueno, / Si el favor no le labra, la riqueza.*”) (Cervantes, 1614/1883, p. 110).

In Chapter VIII, the situation is different. All the poets are hoping to be recognized, but this time neither rank nor riches matter, only wit (“*Ni a calidades ni riquezas miran, / A su ingenio se atiende cada uno*”) (Cervantes, 1614/1883, p. 232). Apollo asks the Nine Muses to give up their lovely crowns to be used as honors, and he awards three to Naples, three to Spain, and three to poets who have made the pilgrimage to Parnassus. Cervantes does not identify the nine poets laureate who receive the Muses’ crowns.

The poem ends with Cervantes back in Madrid, and we get a feel for what his life there was like. He wears the dress of a pilgrim, and is afraid of being stabbed in the back as he walks the street in daylight. Several wealthy young poets mock him, and one derisively calls him decrepit (“*Que caducais sin duda alguna creo*”). Cervantes goes to his old and gloomy lodging house and throws himself worn out on the bed. (“*Busque mi antigua y lobrega posada, / Y arrojeme molido sobre el lecho.*”) (Cervantes, 1614/1883, p. 258)

Then Cervantes adds an amazing Appendix in prose, in which Pancraccio de Roncesvalles, a wealthy young poet, brings him a

personal letter from Apollo. The letter contains a document entitled, “Privileges, Decrees, and Warnings, which Apollo Sends to the Spanish Poets”. It is a set of humorous decrees, many of which would in fact make Cervantes’ world better. Poignantly, one states: “That every good poet, though he may not have composed a heroic poem or given great works to the world’s stage, may with any works, however small, achieve the distinction of ‘divine’” (Cervantes, 1614/1883, p. 295).

In the same year that *Journey to Parnassus* was published, Cervantes was in fact “stabbed in the back” when a spurious Second Part to his *Don Quixote* was published. Scholars generally believe that it was the work of Lope de Vega or someone in his service, writing under the pseudonym of Avellaneda. The Prologue to the False Second Part is a vicious attack against Cervantes, and confirms the glimpse into his world that he gave us at the end of *Journey to Parnassus*.

Cervantes nonetheless published his own Second Part the following year, and it was enormously successful.

The Second Part of Don Quixote

“One of the cruelest adventures in the book [is] when Sancho enchants Dulcinea, bringing the most noble of knights, for love of the purest illusion, to his knees before the most repulsive of realities: a Dulcinea coarse, uncouth, and reeking of garlic.” (Madariaga, 1961, p. 145)

When Alonso and Sancho set out for their third sally, their destination is “the great city of Toboso”, where Alonso hopes to receive the blessing of the peerless Dulcinea. Alonso is no longer so preoccupied with winning fame and glory, and he even cautions Sancho about the “vanity of the fame achieved in this present and transitory world” (p. 506). But he really wants to see his lady.

Sancho, caught in a position where he doesn’t know what else to do, pretends that Dulcinea is one of three peasant girls who are

riding their donkeys down the road from Toboso. When Alonso sees only poor country girls, Sancho swears that Dulcinea is there but must be transformed by malevolent enchanters. Alonso kneels before the “deformed beauty” that Sancho claims is Dulcinea. Throughout the rest of the Second Part, Alonso is preoccupied with how he can restore Dulcinea back into the lovely woman who is his lady.

Why is this so important to him? “Taking away his lady from a knight errant is taking away the eyes with which he sees, and the sun that shines down on him, and the sustenance that maintains him. I have said it many times before, and now I say it again: the knight errant without a lady is like a tree without leaves, a building without a foundation, a shadow without a body to cast it” (p. 671). As expressed more mundanely in the section on reality constraints, Alonso can’t be a knight all by himself. He needs a Lady on his Knight team for a real game.

Unable to disenchant Dulcinea, Alonso dies a defeated man. As he is dying, Sancho pleads with him: “Don’t die, Señor,” and suggests that they go out together again. “Maybe behind some bush we’ll find Señora Doña Dulcinea disenchanted, as pretty as you please...” But Alonso stops him with a proverb: “There are no birds today in yesterday’s nests” (p. 937).

As Madariaga (1961) beautifully shows, while Alonso’s fortunes are declining in the Second Part, Sancho’s are on the rise. Sancho is proud of the fact that he is famous, “wandering the world now in books” (p. 681), and is eager for Alonso to fulfill his promise that he would make Sancho the governor of an *ínsula* that he would win in an adventure.

The idea of Sancho as a governor would have been even funnier in Cervantes’ time, because *señoríos*, i.e., jurisdictional lordships, were a serious matter to readers of the day. In order to meet the financial needs of the monarchy, Philip II, the King of Spain from 1556 to 1598, sold jurisdiction of lands and cities to seigneurs (lords). Seigneurs had the right to administer justice and collect taxes from the people in their territories. Also known as the sale of vassals, the sale of *señoríos* was one factor contributing to a powerful and

corrupt nobility in Spain (cf. Kamen, 1991, p. 157). Seigneurs were minimally motivated to protect the poor and highly motivated to increase taxes.

Sancho and Alonso end up in the court of such a ‘noble’ couple, a Duke and Duchess who have read Part One of *Don Quixote*. The couple is delighted to have the chance to use the knight and his squire for entertainment, and wealthy enough to stage elaborate hoaxes, hoaxes that amount to psychological torture.

One of their hoaxes is to promise Sancho an *ínsula* to govern, a town in the Duke’s seigneurial region. Sancho is naturally eager to get going, but the Duchess observes that if Sancho is so foolish as to follow Don Quixote, then he must be too foolish to govern. Sancho refuses to let her have a ring through his nose: “I may be a fool, but I understand the proverb that says, ‘It did him harm when the ant grew wings,’ and it might even be that Sancho the squire will enter heaven more easily than Sancho the governor... [followed by eight more proverbs]. If your ladyship doesn’t want to give me the *ínsula* because I’m a fool, I’ll be smart enough not to care at all... [followed by four more proverbs]” (p. 679).

Eventually Sancho is taken to his *ínsula*, where he governs well but is subject to more of the noble couples’ tricks. After ten days he resigns as governor, declaring: “I was not born to be a governor... I have a better understanding of plowing and digging, of pruning and layering the vines, than of making laws or defending provinces and kingdoms. St. Peter’s fine in Rome; I mean, each man is fine doing the work he was born for. I’m better off with a scythe in my hand than a governor’s scepter” (p. 808). Sancho goes to find his master, “whose companionship pleased him more than being governor of all the *ínsulas* in the world” (p. 810).

In light of these excerpts, we can now look for patterns in the Second Part of *Don Quixote*. If we drop the details of Don Quixote’s trials, the top-level pattern that remains is “a person sees that what he loves is debased but cannot do anything about it”. If we drop the details of Sancho’s trials, the top-level pattern is “a person gives up

a position that does not fit him and affirms a place that is right for him”.

How do these patterns apply to Cervantes’ real life? Cervantes loved the theatre, and he expresses his vision of the theatre in these words: “[Plays] are the instruments whereby a great service is performed for the nation, holding up a mirror to every step we take and allowing us to see a vivid image of the actions of human life; there is no comparison that indicates what we are and what we should be more clearly than plays and players” (p. 527). It may well have seemed to him that the theatre of Spain had fallen into the hands of an Evil Enchanter, Lope de Vega, who reduced the theatre to something coarse and uncouth.

Why was this so important to Cervantes? Both because he cared about the influence of the theatre on the public, and because he found satisfaction in writing plays that could delight and teach. He had known the joy of staging plays successfully, and he describes it as “a thing of exquisite delight (*cosa de grandisimo gusto*)” (Cervantes, 1614/1883, p. 290). Without a stage on which to see his plays performed, he was like a knight without a lady.

There was nothing Cervantes could do, however, to restore the corrupted theatre to its former state, just as there was nothing Alonso could do to transform the repulsive wench back into his beautiful Dulcinea. Cervantes expresses the futility of both endeavors with the same proverb: “There are no birds in yesterday’s nests.”

The Don Quixote pattern is one of insistence. Even though Alonso cannot have what he wants, he doesn’t let go of it until he is dying. This is reminiscent of an image from Descriptive therapy known as Monkey Nut, or “I’ve Got to Have It”.

Down in South America there’s a place where there’s a certain kind of monkey, and there’s a certain kind of nut that these monkeys really love. So what the natives do is build a little wicker cage with one of the nuts inside and tie it to a tree. The monkey comes around, sees the nut, and puts his hand in and grabs the nut. But the wicker cage is built so that the monkey has just

enough room to get his hand in, but he can't get his hand out with his fist clenched around the nut. You'd think the monkey would just let go and go elsewhere, but he doesn't. He just hangs on. And that's how the natives catch the monkeys.

The contrast to the “I’ve Got to Have It” approach is letting go when the situation calls for it, and this is what Sancho does. When he realizes that being the governor of an *ínsula* is not what comes naturally to him, and is not his part to play in the scheme of things, he doesn’t hang on. To the Duke’s representatives he says: “Make way, Señores, and let me return to my old liberty; let me go and find my past life, so that I can come back from this present death” (p. 808).

How does the Sancho pattern apply to Cervantes’ life? We have seen how much Cervantes wanted a status of honor and respect among the poets of his day. This was his monkey nut. Towards the end of his life, however, he may have let go of it. While modern critics discount Cervantes’ Catholicism (e.g., Bloom, 2005), there is no question that he found “refuge in the sanctuary of the Church” (Avellaneda, 1614/1989, p. 766) and took vows in the Third Franciscan Order. At a minimum, Cervantes’ place in the Franciscan community and the Franciscan way of life may have helped him to see his hunger for status in the world of Lope de Vega in a different light.

If we look at the patterns in his *Journey to Parnassus*, we see that Cervantes accepts a place in relationship to the divinity (Apollo, God), and declines a place as “one of them” in a community where good seats are based on wealth and favor. Whether or not he receives a Muses’ crown, he continues to enjoy a relationship with the divine upon his return to Madrid. In light of this special relationship, he may have become less insistent (less grabby) about having a good place among the poets.

We have now looked at the Second Part of *Don Quixote* and seen how the patterns there may fit with Cervantes’ real life. For the Don Quixote pattern:

- The higher level description is “a person sees that what he loves is debased but cannot do anything about it”.
- The fictional representation is “Alonso sees that his beloved Dulcinea is enchanted but cannot do anything about it”.
- The real world application is “Cervantes sees that his beloved theatre is corrupted but cannot do anything about it”.

For the Sancho pattern:

- The higher level description is “a person gives up a position that does not fit him and affirms a place that is right for him”.
- The fictional representation is “Sancho resigns from the governorship of an *ínsula* in the world of the Duke and Duchess, and affirms his place as a squire”.
- The real world application is “Cervantes renounces a place among the poets in the world of Lope de Vega, and affirms his place as a Franciscan”.

Cervantes' Death

“Goodbye, humor; goodbye, wit; goodbye, merry friends; for I am dying and hope to see you soon, happy in the life to come!” (Cervantes, 1617/1989, p. 16)

After publishing the Second Part of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes lived long enough to finish *The Trials of Persiles and Sigismunda: A Northern Story*, an epic in prose that tells the story of a young couple making a spiritual pilgrimage to Rome. He died four days after completing his *Persiles'* Prologue (quoted above), and was buried by the Franciscans in a monastery in Madrid. Only two mediocre poems were composed to honor him after his death, compared to the “two entire volumes in verse, one in Spanish and one in Italian” composed to honor Lope de Vega (Weller & Colahan, 1989, p. 393).

Conclusion

In their own realms, Lope de Vega and Miguel de Cervantes each changed the dramatic structure of the real world. After the fact, we can see that Lope de Vega did Cervantes a favor by creating *comedia nueva*. Cervantes' ambition was so powerful that he could not easily have turned to something as low status as narrative writing. If Lope had not barred the door to the stage, Cervantes might have spent his life putting on a Neoclassical Poet Act in order to win the fame and renown he craved. Instead, he fulfilled his own authentic possibilities.

Narrative writing is treated differently today than it was in Cervantes' time. It is a given now that novels are works of literature, and novelists are worthy of respect and honor along with playwrights and poets. Just as Harvey initiated the change in what blood is through his work in the early seventeenth century, Cervantes initiated the change in what novels are through his creation of *Don Quixote*.

What did Cervantes do in *Don Quixote* that was world-changing? Before its publication, each narrative genre had its own artificial, self-contained world, like the world of the picaresque novel, the world of the pastoral romance, the world of the chivalric novel, and so forth. Lovesick shepherds didn't wander out of the confines of the pastoral romance, and pícaros stayed within the boundaries of picaresque novels.

Cervantes' innovation was to place the worlds of the various narrative genres into the context of the real world of his day, and juxtapose them with each other and with the real world. Thus, a knight keeps a vigil at the equivalent of a Super 8 Motel; he hears the laments of a lovelorn shepherd in the rugged terrain of the Sierra Morena; he chats with a pícaro who is working on his autobiography which will be published as a picaresque novel; he walks into a printing house in Barcelona where the False Second Part of his history is being printed; and so forth.

Once Cervantes used the real world as an all-inclusive context for the more limited worlds of a wide range of narrative genres, the old, self-contained genres were never the same. As Fuentes (2005) expresses it, “Cervantes inaugurates the modern novel by breaking through every genre so that they all may have room to exist in a genre of genres, the novel” (p. 206).

Initially, *Don Quixote* was not seen as “a genre of genres”. It simply had the status of a very funny book. No one thought that Cervantes had created a new form of behavior, a new form of narrative writing. But as writers began to imitate Cervantes’ work and to experiment with the freedom that he had given them, *Don Quixote* was elevated to the status of a new art form and eventually treated as the first modern novel. Cervantes in his turn was recognized as a creative genius, and today stands beside Shakespeare and Dante, wearing a Muses’ crown.

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Author's Note

An earlier version of this paper was presented on September 23, 2005 at the Society for Descriptive Psychology annual conference in Estes Park, Colorado. All of the quotations from *Don Quixote* are from Edith Grossman's 2003 translation.