

## **The Making of the Novel and the Evolution of Consciousness**

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In his article “Milton’s Logical Epic and Evolving Consciousness” (1976a), Walter Ong points out that a critic looking at sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts must inevitably engage in an examination of dissociations.<sup>1</sup> A separation takes place in that period that makes easy repetition of the old formulae no longer possible. That separation renders obsolete, among other things, the epic, giving birth in its place to the novel. In the present paper I want to reflect upon narrative as it becomes a consciously written phenomenon, taking *Don Quixote* Part I (1605) and *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) as my cases in point.

The two works, both seminal in the creation of the novel, reflect clearly that moment in Western culture when the narrative voice dissociates from collective presuppositions and values while presenting itself as purveyor of the *written* and not the spoken word. In accord with their alienated and iconoclastic natures, both works draw attention to, while questioning the authority of, their fictional narrators. *Lazarillo de Tormes* will offer itself as the autobiography of an accused towncrier whose education among cruel masters taught him to defend himself “como mejor mentir supe” (“lying as best as I could”). Aping the formula of the epic hero, Lázaro, the grown man who has emerged out of the boy-child Lazarillo, styles himself as a river-born, orphaned wanderer whose “skills” finally win him the “respect” and “favors” of the “high” and “mighty.” But his story is so written that every noun in the second half of the previous sentence is ironized to the point of obliteration. That irony is both the sign and the result of the narrator’s separation from his audience and its cultural norms and is not incidentally linked to his role as writer, as Walter Ong has shown in “From Mimesis to Irony” (1976b).

*Don Quixote* also presents itself as the work of a fictional narrator, a person on the fringes of established society. Like Lázaro, the fictional narrator of *Don Quixote* uses the cherished literary topos of the noble hero against both the hero himself and the society that harbors his values. Drawing on the formula of the scribe who recounts the heroic deeds of the exemplary Christian warrior, *Don Quixote* undermines both the chronicles of true knights and the fictional romances of chivalry so popular in the sixteenth century, while challenging at a more radical level the capacity of the written word to express truth. The fictional reader who finds the Moorish chronicler Cide Hamete's manuscript in Chapter 9 of Part I and arranges for it to be translated shatters any audience expectation about the reliability of the supposed author by arguing that perfidy and envy are native to his race.<sup>2</sup>

The representation of the narrator as dissociated from the dominant consciousness—socio-political as well as literary—far from being a secondary aspect of the text, reflects its most distinguishing trait. Lázaro and Cide Hamete are figures set off to the side of society and text, figures caught having to please a community that has rejected them, while rejecting in their turn the norms and formulae on which their success as narrators nonetheless depends. Lázaro and Cide Hamete define the place of consciousness in their respective writings as duplicitous—with all that word's cognate and etymological associations with doubling, doubting, and deviling. Removed from the arena of the storyteller, where speaker and what is spoken, telling and listening, form a single unit, the narrators in these works so central to the creation of the novel capture the essence of a new sensibility, one centered not in speaking and presence, but in writing and separation. In these two consciously “writerly” narratives, narrators, characters, words, topos, and literary conventions all disengage in varying degrees from the environment out of which they arise.

Written, respectively, just before and just after the reign of Phillip II, *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Don Quixote* stand for two key moments in the shift in consciousness of which Walter Ong has written so persuasively. No longer one with earth, the mother, the mother tongue, the collective (un)consciousness, the new genre separates and problematizes teller, audience, literary convention, the “hero,” the word itself. With separation come doubt, conflict, desire. The hero becomes thief or madman; the teller, a liar. The close look we are about to take at the early novel shows clearly

the pain, conflict, and guilt that surrounded the rejection of the oral culture, and, more basically, the rejection of the realm of the mother that was our collective Western European experience in the 1600's.

In *Fighting for Life* (1981) and elsewhere, Walter Ong has associated the development of Western objectivist scientific consciousness with the masculine, and attributes that new consciousness in part to the use of learned Latin as the instrument of academic discourse from the sixteenth to well into the twentieth century. Crucial to an understanding of the effects on the collective Western European psyche of the lay schooling made possible by the technologies of the printing press and farm machinery is the recognition that the acquisition of learned Latin was an exclusively male prerogative achieved through a violent wrenching of young boys from their maternal environment. The forced dissociation of large numbers of boys from childhood, the emotions, the mother, the body, and home was not unique to the schooling process, however. Separation from home became the common experience of boys across a wide spectrum of classes in sixteenth-century Spain as the expanding empire required more and more young men for its military and colonial enterprises. The depletion of manpower in the countryside and the increasing value of currency helped sponsor an internal migration from the land that duplicated the external migration to the new world, and that resulted in famine and a massive swelling of the ranks of the urban poor.

Although these phenomena were common throughout Western Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they were experienced earlier and with more intensity in Spain with the empire-building aspirations of the Hapsburgs. The commitment, carried over from the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, to the concept of "one language, one faith" also favored the early development in Spain of a consciousness unsympathetic to dispersal and difference, one based on unity, clarity, and power. Those qualities of focus and order are ones associated, in Ong and elsewhere, with the masculine, the world of the father. In individual as well as in collective psychological development, that world disrupts the primary mother-child symbiosis and is experienced as invasive and traumatic by the subject in question. *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Don Quixote* can be read, as I intend to do here, as reflections of the crisis in the unfolding of the Western

European psyche—a crisis that results when masculine energies break free from their moorings in the feminine, creating the imbalance from which, collectively, we are still recovering.

In *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Don Quixote* can be found documented all the changes mentioned: the starvation of the countryside, the migration of the rural poor to the cities, the breakup of the family under the pressures of empire, the use of machinery to harness the forces of nature, the exchange of land value for money value, and the growth of an adventuring, outward-bound, home- and woman-denying spirit. Although I may refer in passing to some of these specifics of the two texts under discussion here, my attention will be primarily centered on the more basic observation of the psycho-sexual dynamics highlighted in the two works. Underlying my interest specifically in the novel is my suspicion that the new genre's subversive nature carries at its core an unconscious identification with the rejected maternal that makes the emergence of the novel at the time of empire and its creation by socially marginalized authors a natural aspect of its formation.

It has already been noted that both *Don Quixote* and *Lazarillo de Tormes* feature narrators who work actively to undercut the tradition of the hero and the social and literary norms that support him. The socially reprehensible narrators of those two works further subvert the pretenses of empire by challenging the authority not only of their own discourse, but of the written word, of social codes, of literary formulae. The structural emphasis on separation, alienation, and disorientation, as well as the thematic concern with transgression and madness, cut deeply into the emerging linear, hierarchical, orderly, impassioned consciousness that empire and the burgeoning universities would seek to inculcate.

It must be noted here that the novel, in registering a basic shift in consciousness, also provides insight into the psychic costs which that shift entailed. Both works to be examined here will reveal an intense anxiety among both narrators and main characters over issues of control, and both will present characters engaged in the struggle to recover through language and the imagination the power over their lives that economic and social forces have conspired to deny them. At a more basic level, however, the question of power and control alludes to the Oedipal phase of psychological development—not simply to the phase of

the young boy's conflict with and imitation of a superior male figure, but to the perhaps more devastating task of rejecting the hitherto all-nurturing body of the mother. Critics of the novel have readily analyzed the conflictive structure of the novel—the struggle of its protagonists and antagonists for dominance,<sup>4</sup> but little has been said about the feminine realm from which the hero must escape in order for conflict in the male world to become possible. In the two works I will be treating in this discussion, I will be highlighting not the foreground of conflict, but the anxiety, guilt, and desire for the obscured feminine that the surface struggles both reveal and seek to mask.

Early in Part I of *Don Quixote*, the mad knight sets forth the problem he has taken up arms to redress. Elaborating on the familiar classical and Renaissance theme of the Golden Age, he laments in Chapter 11 the passing of that time when “the crooked plough had not yet dared to force open and search the kindly bowels of our first mother with its heavy coulter; for without compulsion she yielded from every part of her fertile and broad bosom everything to satisfy, sustain, and delight the children who then possessed her” (86). Further developing the imagery of not only the plundering of the once-bountiful mother earth, but of the state of danger in which her daughters must live, he goes on to refer to “this detestable age of ours,” in which “no maiden is safe . . . for. . . through some chink or through the air. . . the plague of love gets in and brings them to their ruin despite their seclusion” (86). While much of what Don Quixote says echoes the *beatus ille* topos, his speech veers from his models in its fanatical horror of lust and concomitant urge to protect widows and damsels.

Crazy as Don Quixote is portrayed to be—his narrator calls the speech a “harangue, which might well have been spared” (87) and notes that the goatherds to whom it was directed listened in dumbfounded silence—his concern for the feminine in two of her archetypal aspects, mother and virgin, represents a cry for balance in a world clearly alienated from the feminine. Carolyn Merchant has shown that precisely in the sixteenth century one finds a major shift from an organic to a mechanistic view of the world:

Central to the organic theory was the identification of nature, especially the earth, with a nurturing mother: a kindly beneficent female who provided for the needs of mankind in an ordered, planned universe. . . . An organically oriented mentality in which female principles

played an important role was undermined and replaced by a mechanically-oriented mentality that either eliminated or used female principles in an exploitative manner. As Western culture became increasingly mechanized in the 1600's, the female earth and virgin earth spirit were subdued by the machine (1980:2).

By the time *Don Quixote* is written it seems no longer possible to recover the longed-for union with Demeter, or the happy innocence of Kore. As incident after incident will show, the feminine as mother has all but disappeared from a landscape now dominated by windmills, fulling mills, the wool industry merchants, and civil and ecclesiastical figures of authority. The feminine as virgin is trapped in the role of prey. It is no wonder that the last female figure that Don Quixote tries to rescue (Part I, Chapter 52) is that of the Virgin Mary in mourning, painted with tears on her face. In that final amalgam of virgin and mother is condensed the whole issue of the feminine in Part I of *Don Quixote*. That she would be carried in procession by penitents praying for relief of the drought that is threatening to bring starvation to the area further underscores the wasteland effect her mourning brings to the land.

The ambiguity of Don Quixote's quest and of the novel in which he comes to life is grounded in the hero's complex relation to the feminine. His plan to devote his life to succoring widows, maidens, and orphans is premised on his escape from a household made up precisely of an unmarried mother figure and a "young damsel," his own orphaned niece. He abandons, in other words, the widow, maiden, and orphan of his household in order to save others whom he imagines endangered. The ethereal Dulcinea, whom Don Quixote invents as the woman of his heart, guarantees that, even out on the road, he will be protected—out of loyalty to her—from any real engagement with women. Don Quixote's decision to protect the feminine is also, and radically, a decision to escape involvement with women. By choosing the way of adventure and combat, Don Quixote is caught mirroring the very enemies he has set out to conquer. The battle is clearly as hopeless as it is never-ending. Even if the last rival were finally killed, Don Quixote would be no closer to a real resolution of his desire to restore his lost relation to the feminine than before, since to do that would require that he break out of his own armored, distanced, combative position.<sup>5</sup>

Don Quixote is a hero working in the masculine modes of

arms and letters. Modeling himself on the heroes of chivalric romance, he seeks out service to women through masculinist means. His effort is anachronistic not only because the age of feudalism is gone, but because neither damsel nor mother are what they were when land rather than money ruled the economy. Careful analysis of the events of Part I shows in any case that women consistently and radically undercut with their deeds the presuppositions of weakness and vulnerability that Don Quixote—and all the other men in the novel—project onto them. Don Quixote, in other words, is caught in a misreading of the real world of the women he aspires to protect, a misreading that betrays an inner affliction of the feminine that affects not only him, but the other lettered male characters as well.<sup>6</sup> Unlike the chivalric heroes whom *Don Quixote* hopes to emulate, the male characters of the early seventeenth-century novel carry within them, in their own economic and social marginalization, the image of the rejected feminine they are seeking to redeem. The very technology that produced this combative hero has also marginalized him, and rendered insignificant his ancestral home and the class of the landed nobility from which he sprang. His longing for mother earth's all-giving bounty is therefore an expression of his own sense of loss in the face of urbanization and industrialization.

While very much the hero of arms and letters, the secret of Don Quixote lies in his pre-history. As Alonso Quijano he was in a real sense part of what as Don Quixote he leaves behind, a part of the spurned feminine to whose defense he has come by becoming a knight errant. The richness of his character depends on his dual role as both the abandoner and the abandoned, a figure reaching out through his masculinized armor for the spurned and ever-endangered feminine within.

The complex place of the in-between that Don Quixote inhabits also characterizes the novel which bodies him forth. The text lies precisely at the intersection of those energies that would enshrine and those that would destroy the romances of chivalry. Popular with all classes in the early part of the sixteenth century, the romances of chivalry were denounced by most literary theorists by the time Cervantes was writing *Don Quixote*. By the early seventeenth century, the books of chivalry were considered pulp fiction, read and enjoyed by large numbers, to be sure, but disdained by the learned elite. Knowledge of learned Latin appears to be the marker most surely distinguishing those who decry the



popular romances from those who embrace them, the most articulate spokesman against those works in *Don Quixote* I being the figure highest in the ecclesiastical order, the Canon of Toledo. When Don Quixote defends the books of chivalry in Chapters 49-51 of Part I, he does so not by appealing to the intellect, which is a faculty the Canon most obviously enshrines, but to the imagination. Don Quixote offers up the books of chivalry as works in which the senses are stimulated, and in which one can participate imaginatively in a world of passion and fulfillment prohibited in ordinary life.

Don Quixote, and with him most of the other readers presented in the novel, reads in a participatory fashion, while the Canon, who might also be tempted to fall into the stories' seductions, urges a critical reading that separates and finally disenchants him. The Canon says: "For myself I can say that they give me a certain pleasure when I read them—so long as I do not deliberately reflect that they are all triviality and lies" (436). Clearly, learned Latin is doing for the Canon and for all those neo-Aristotelian erudite critics of the romances of chivalry just what Walter Ong has promised it would do. It has provided a separation from the world of participation, the world of the passions and the senses.

Cervantes, who confesses in his own prologue to being incapable of sprinkling his work with Latin quotes and other signs of erudition,<sup>7</sup> shares with his main character that uncomfortable place of the in-between, being neither a part of the intellectual elite who would condemn the novels of chivalry, nor a part of the unquestioning public who would surrender entirely to their charms. Like Don Quixote, Cervantes is caught between the longing for a good, fantasy-engaging story—for an immersion in what we can here call the feminine participatory<sup>8</sup>—and a critical consciousness prepared only for separation, struggle, and resistance. *Don Quixote* is a novel, in other words, that radically calls into question its own authorship and the authority of the written word while also finding itself inextricably entangled in the web of the very writing it questions. The result, as many critics have shown, is a wonderful amalgam of voices and styles, a veritable compendium of popular and erudite systems of expression, a compendium that undoes all pretense to ideological coherence and aristocratic hierarchy while nonetheless remaining locked within the distancing ironies of a solitary consciousness.



If *Don Quixote* marks the last major effort in Spanish Golden Age literature to defend the endangered nexus of elements associated with the mother/virgin against the totalizing and power-motivated forces of a consciousness broken off from it, *Lazarillo de Tormes* marks the first. Like *Don Quixote*, *Lazarillo de Tormes* captures that difficult place of the in-between, balancing both popular and elitist cultures in a diction that draws from folk as well as from classical and Biblical sources. The main character reduplicates the lexical and tropological anomalies of the work in his own position at the lowest rung of the social hierarchy, from which he mediates between the classless and the classed in a society whose rigidities would otherwise prohibit their interaction.

Although the anonymous author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* remains unidentified, most speculators agree that he may well have been a *converso*, and most probably a humanist. In the Spain of the mid-1500's, to be a *converso* or a humanist was to walk constantly on the edge of the precipice (Elliott 1964:204-17). Like Cervantes, the anonymous author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* left the image of his dissociation from dominant cultural values in the figure of his surrogate. Quotations in the text from Cicero, Pliny, Homer, and the Bible suggest a person of considerable learning, a person, therefore, born into the hallowed and masculinized world of academic letters, but severed, at the same time, from a position of true power.

If *Don Quixote* I offers for our contemplation that moment of regret and guilt when the realization has dawned that the mother has been left, that her bounteous giving is no more, that only through male-oriented combat can what remains of her be protected, *Lazarillo* takes us further back, to that pre-verbal moment of union from which the hero is brutally and prematurely wrested. In *Don Quixote*'s world the plow has already long since pried open "the kindly bowels of our first mother." *Don Quixote* comes into the story as an old man.

*Lazarillo de Tormes*, on the other hand, is a story that insists on origins, a story that is designed, finally, not to defend a male-combative alliance, but to protect a continued embeddedness in the feminine. Alonso Quijano, through his reconstruction as *Don Quixote*, takes up a wandering, alienated, eccentric, struggle-based, and body-denying attitude in a conscious decision to abandon home, anonymity, and control by the feminine. *Lazarillo* weeps as he is led away from his maternal home by the

first of several masters bent on teaching him that he is alone in the world.

Because the severance was unwilling and premature, Lázaro will spend his efforts seeking to return to the place of protection and fulfillment that the feminine represents for him. In the unending combative structure of the novel, Lazarillo finds himself perpetually at odds with relentless male masters who, from beginning to end, will seek to displace him from the comforts of the mother and all that is associated with her: food, shelter, peace of mind, bodily satisfaction. His predetermined unconscious decision to ally himself with the feminine radically affects the way he adjusts to the demands of the masculinized world into which he is thrown, and the quality of the skills he develops to survive in it.

Lázaro's skill with words has none of the repose and assurance of Don Quixote, for whom reading and conversing represent a kind of recreation. Ineluctably linked with the struggle for survival, Lázaro's developed intellect remains associated with anxiety and the never-ending threat of failure. His story, then, is one of suspended accommodation to the male world. His true allegiance, from beginning to end, is to the feminine world he has never really left. The ingenuity, verbal skill, and sense that he is alone—all hard-won lessons learned in the school of his several heartless masters—do in fact equip him for survival, and even for a kind of precarious acceptance in the hierarchized male world of church and state. At what he calls the height of his good fortune he has secured a job in the royal hierarchy—the lowest job on the ladder, that of town-crier, which involves, among other things, denouncing in public processions the crimes of the paraded prisoners—and lives in a comfortable and well-stocked house with his wife. He got to his place of success and prosperity, he proudly explains in his prologue, not by right of birth, but by hard work.

What the autobiography makes clear is that Lázaro's continued success and prosperity hang on his ability to manipulate the spoken and written word. As both town-crier and author his ever-demanding task is to accuse and denounce as a defense against being accused or denounced. Here, combining the communal, voiced word of town-crier with the individual, written word of an accused rogue, we find joined within the text and character of Lazarillo de Tormes the oral culture's sense of the activity and power of the word combined with the written culture's sense of its instability and unreliability.

On one level, Lázaro would like to convince us that his is a success story, that he is offering of his own free will the autobiography of a young man of humble birth who, with wit and determination, pulls himself up to a respectable place in society. That reading would honor the male world into which he has apparently won access, and is shored up by the pretense in the prologue that he is writing the book for art and for honor's sake.

The whole relationship to the masculine is turned upside down, however, by the revelation in the prologue that the writer is not in fact performing a disinterested work of art, but that instead he is responding defensively to a master ("Your Worship"), through whom the accusation has come that this living situation is at best irregular. The true addressee of the work is not "dear Reader" after all, but "Your Worship." The autobiography is not the product of a successful author's leisure, but yet another episode in the struggle to preserve his precarious hold on access to bodily comforts in a world full of menacing authority figures.

Unlike *Don Quixote*, where everyone speaks, where authority is challenged by a polyphony of voices, dictions, and lexicons, in *Lazarillo de Tormes* silence constitutes the only radical undermining of the structures of authority. Speaking, naming, identifying, and structuring are marks of privilege and power in the world created by *Lazarillo de Tormes*. They are marks of power not because of their intrinsic value, however, but because of their capacity to command silence.

The ambiguity regarding Lázaro's position vis-à-vis the authorship of his life story is reiterated in the last chapter of the book, wherein the nature of the case against him is guardedly revealed. The arrangement is as follows: Lázaro, who as town-crier also has control over whose wine gets sold, has married the archpriest's mistress. In that way the archpriest, who has his own vineyard, guarantees the sale of his wine, and shrouds his affair. Lázaro, in the exchange, gets a nice little house next to the archpriest, and plenty of food. It looks very much as if the peak of Lázaro's good fortune has been achieved by transgressing the two central codes of secular and ecclesiastical conduct, that is, by ignoring both the archpriest's vow of celibacy and the honor code's stringent repudiation of cuckoldry. Lázaro's transgression, however, affords all three members of the *menage à trois* every kind of bodily comfort in a world officially structured to insure their denial.

What Lázaro's education has taught him is that denial is not based on the intrinsic relation of signified and signifier. To say "one should not indulge in the sins of the flesh" is not in fact to avoid such indulgences. Lázaro has learned that what one requires for survival in this world is access to dominion over those signifiers. His whole book is a case in point. Regarding his sharing of his wife, he has first the gossiping neighbors and then the "Your Worship" to deal with.

For the neighbors, the task of keeping the affair secret is relatively easy. He reports telling them, "I swear on the Sacred Heart itself that she [his wife] is as good a woman as any in Toledo. If anyone says the opposite I'll kill him!" Then he adds "as a result nobody says anything and there is peace at home." For the "Your Worship" who has ordered Lázaro's defense, however, the task is more complicated. In Chapter 1, when the boy Lazarillo had been confronted with an accusatory authority figure, he had neither the experience nor the distance the written word provides to elude condemnation successfully. The result of his failure to lie at that time was the breakup of his home and ending of his security. Now a grown man, and possessor of the skills needed to manipulate the male codes of power, Lázaro's rhetorical strategy involves the transformation of this latest threatening male authority figure, "Your Worship," from the role of reader outside his story to that of participant in it. He does this by reminding his accuser that the Archpriest is his friend. It is now Lázaro, having miraculously harnessed the power of the written word, who can reduce his "master" to silence by implicating him in his story as character.

The goal for handling both "Your Worship" and the neighbors is the same: to achieve the place where "nobody says anything and there is peace at home." That is what all the struggle, all the rivalry among men, all the development of rhetorical skill in *Lazarillo de Tormes* is about. The very writing of his story is yet one more task in Lázaro's never-ending struggle to return to silence, to "peace at home."

Critics have had little to say about the role and presence of the feminine in *Lazarillo de Tormes*, of its constant impulse in the direction of silence and home. A careful look shows, however, that beneath all the struggle and posturing among men is a single-minded devotion, bordering on the obsessive, for the food, sex, and protection the woman represents in the structure of

*Lazarillo de Tormes*. Women are associated in the story with the free supply of food, money, sex, and shelter, while the men in positions of authority are identified with the official suppression of the need for such things. Because the official codes—civil as well as ecclesiastical—stress restriction, plentiful supplies of the desired objects, always associated with the feminine, are available only through transgression, through that which cannot be named or spoken.

Lazarillo and his first master, the blind beggar, engage in endless skirmishes centering around money, wine, and food. As the blind man guards the vessels in which such desirables are contained, he teaches Lázaro the fundamental lesson, that his privations are intended to school him in the dual arts of lying and thievery. The second master, the cleric, raises up his penury and near starvation of Lazarillo to a virtue, instructing the boy “not to indulge his greed too much,” while the priest himself leaves only the gnawed bones from his meal for Lazarillo to eat. As with the blind man, Lazarillo finds himself locked in struggle with the priest over the vessel in which food is stored yet forbidden. Once again the boy is forced to marshal skills of verbal trickery and deceit in order to survive. And once again it is a feminine vessel that bears the “breadly paradise” from which Lazarillo finds himself barred.

The vessels, containing and withholding the promises of physical sustenance, are from the beginning of Lazarillo’s life and right through his apprenticeship years the unspoken, unnamed focal point of male struggle. Lazarillo’s father was sent away as punishment for having cut into grain sacks at the mill where he worked. Lazarillo in his turn will learn to cut and bore his way into the sacks, jugs, and chests whose contents of food and wine he so ardently desires. But about all this nothing will be said. The conversation will center on the forbidden objects of desire only when the boy is caught in the effort to steal. Success, along with the efforts leading to it, must be left unspoken. Language, then, can be used only to accuse and to deflect. It plays an adversarial role. Like the honor and ecclesiastical codes it enunciates, it serves to distinguish, separate, and deny, setting up hierarchies and limiting access of mankind to the natural world.

No character better illustrates the life-denying impact of the literary acceptance of such codes than the squire of Chapter 3. The squire’s total identification with honor has left him without land, home, work, money, food, or sex. Emptied of all signs of

life, without even a poor old chest with dried bread inside to struggle over, the house which the squire inhabits becomes for Lazarillo a coffin, one in which both he and his master would surely die were it not for kindly neighbor ladies who discreetly and illegally provide Lazarillo with food and who later shelter him when the squire disappears.

The episode with the squire is definitive in the development of Lazarillo's attitude toward both authority and language. In choosing life, Lazarillo chooses along with it refusal of integrity—refusal of the integration of word and deed, of appearance and reality, of intention and desire. The very short Chapters 4-7 show Lázaro finding his way into the official structures, the structures of power, while simultaneously learning to fulfill his and his male compatriot's appetites for sex, food, and money. His final position on the lowest rung of the ladder of the hierarchized world of church and state represents that precarious place of the in-between from which he mediates between powerful men whose codes would, if taken literally, cut off their access to life, and anonymous women who, while they supply those very things their masters surreptitiously desire, lack any power to define themselves.

Lázaro supplies wine and women to the likes of "Your Worship" and the Archpriest while promising to keep intact their official codes of honor and celibacy. He colludes, in other words, in the seemingly all-pervasive determination of the powerful to possess that which their codes are designed to expel and debase. As town-crier, he uses words—both spoken and written—in the desperate and ever-escalating search not for their correlates in reality, but for "silence, and peace at home," for, in other words, the comforts of the body which only the squire is foolish enough to allow words to destroy.

*Lazarillo de Tormes* captures Spanish urban society at the end of the reign of Charles V, at a time just before the Inquisition was given free reign to persecute illuminist and other Erasmian and *converso*-associated heresies, just before the imposition of a strict index of forbidden books, just before the period when the Jesuits took over the schooling of young boys on a scale never before known in Western Europe. The impact of the printing press, large-scale education, and new machinery can surely be felt in the 1550's. But we can see that these two novels, *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Don Quixote*, represent two very distinct moments in the

transition from orality to literacy. In the *Lazarillo*, the hero of the in-between feigns allegiance to and participation in the world of the father—of authority, hierarchy, discrimination, and language—while revealing his and the whole society's continued dependence on and desire for the world of the mother—of anonymity, oneness, indiscriminacy, and silence.

By 1605 the young boy for whom childhood separation from the mother remains the most significant event has become an old man so immersed in letters, so divorced from the world of childhood and the mother, that he verges on madness. His place of the in-between begins not with the mother but with the father. *Don Quixote* will take up his position in no-man's land as knight errant and scholar. He will glory in his rhetorical and literary capacities, which are no longer associated with survival, but with enjoyment and ornamentation. And he will seek re-contact with the lost feminine out of those skills of language and combat that identification with the world of the father has taught him.

Preceding and following these two moments—markers in the development of consciousness—we have on the one hand the romances of chivalry, and on the other body- and woman-denying texts that tend to refuse the innovations of the novel.<sup>9</sup> These are oversimplifications, of course. But the general trend points from an earlier immersion in the senses and passions, and a participatory reading of the romances, to a violent rejection of those things and a separate, body-denying consciousness in the literature of the Baroque. And in between, in the period that brackets the reign of Phillip II, are two crucial works in the development of the novel, works capturing the conflicts of a consciousness in the process of breaking the comfortable pre-verbal, mother-child symbiosis. *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Don Quixote* reflect upon both the pain experienced by the young boy and the guilt of the old man whose life experience was to grow up separated from the world of mother, home, and the oral culture.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup>“Attempts to describe in depth what happened to the Western European psyche during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries inevitably find themselves dealing with dissociations—T. S. Eliot’s ‘dissociation of sensibility,’ for example—which logic registers and defends” (1976a:305).

<sup>2</sup>The fictional reader who stumbles upon the manuscript in a market in Toledo says: “Now, if any objection can be made against the truth of this history, it can only be that its narrator was an Arab—men of that nation being ready liars, though as they are so much our enemies might be thought rather to have fallen short of the truth than to have exaggerated.” The fictional reader further accentuates the separations built into the entire work by opening a cleavage between narrator and subject, a cleavage whose rupture has carried into twentieth-century commentary on the work. He goes on: “In this history I know that you will find all the entertainment you can desire; and if any good quality is missing, I am certain that it is the fault of its dog of an author rather than any default in the subject” (Chapter 9, Part I:78, *The Adventures of Don Quixote*. All subsequent quotations from *Don Quixote* are drawn from this edition.) See de Unamuno 1967 for a twentieth-century expression of reader dismay at the author’s failure to render fairly the character’s high quality.

<sup>3</sup>Works in which Ong discusses the shift from orality to literacy are too numerous and too familiar to cite. For the purposes of this paper, however, I want to call particular attention to “Latin Language Study as Renaissance Puberty Rite” (1971) and “Transformations of the Word and Alienation” (1977). I single out these articles because of their careful linking of orality with the realm of the mother. For further discussion of the links of language and narrative with the mother, see Garner et al. 1985.

<sup>4</sup>For discussions of the conflictive nature of the novel, see Girard and, as specifically related to *Don Quixote*, Bandera 1975.

<sup>5</sup>In his last work, his posthumously published romance *The Persiles* (1617), Cervantes satirizes the situation of male struggle as a means of recovering the endangered feminine.

<sup>6</sup>For a fuller discussion, see El Saffar forthcoming.

<sup>7</sup>Explaining that he is ashamed to bring his book before the public, he tells his friend in the Prologue, “. . . I have nothing to quote in the margin or to note at the end. Nor do I even know what authors I am following in it; and so I cannot set their names at the beginning in alphabetical order, as they all do, starting with Aristotle and ending with Xenophon. . .” (26).

<sup>8</sup>It needs to be stressed that the term “feminine” as used here refers to a whole cluster of attributes which, while historically projected onto and assimilated by women, are in no way to be confused with female human beings. The attributes of the feminine belong within the fullness of all human beings, male and female. Here and throughout this paper I have linked, through the connection of orality with the mother tongue, the feminine with the oral culture, with environment, the body, nature, silence, anonymity, the participatory, and the unconscious. The masculine, on the other hand, is associated with writing, separation, the mind, technology, directed activity, individuality, and consciousness. I am indebted to Thomas J. Farrell for

pointing out the need to clarify this point.

<sup>9</sup>John Beverley (1982) has observed that after *Don Quixote* there are no true novels in Spain until the nineteenth century. The great literary works of the Spanish Baroque tend, instead, toward poetry and drama, and aim not at a general audience, but at the highly sophisticated audience at court, the very audience Cervantes both envied and feared. Deeply invested by the political and economic circumstances in “reconstituting the ideological coherence of aristocratic hegemony” (41), that audience generates a literary product linguistically and tropologically embedded in classical literature and caught up in subjects thematically polarized into sharply conflicting sets of opposites.

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