

Chivalry and Empire: The Colonial Argument of the Princess Micomicona Episode in *Don Quijote* Part I

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CERVANTES' ENGAGEMENT WITH THE motifs of the *libros de caballerías* is undeniably deep and complex. Critics may never agree on the degree to which Cervantes' romance borrowings are admiring or antagonistic, but it remains beyond doubt that the chivalric features of *Don Quijote* are so deeply enmeshed in the fabric of the text that it would be almost impossible to unravel and catalogue each one. Without the intervention of the romances of chivalry, particularly of the *Amadís de Gaula*, which the character Don Quijote upholds as the mirror of all virtuous action, the major moments of Cervantes' text would not even exist. Both Daniel Eisenberg and Judith Whitenack have demonstrated the depth of Cervantes' chivalric borrowings, and both critics would probably categorize Cervantes' gaze as admiring more often than not.¹ Don Quijote's chivalric episodes go beyond mere citation of motif; rather, they interpret and re-contextualize the values of the source works. One episode, the appearance of Princess Micomicona, showcases Cervantes' particular reading of romance motif. In order to coax Don Quijote out of Sierra Morena, the *cura* and Dorotea present the mad knight with the fictional Micomicona, an African princess who requires the knight's assistance in order to rid her kingdom of a troublesome giant. Sancho makes his own contribution to the story by planning to enslave Micomicona's people once Quijote has slain the giant and taken control of Micomicona's kingdom.

1 See Daniel Eisenberg, "Don Quijote y los libros de caballerías," and Judith Whitenack, "Don Quijote and the Romances of Chivalry Once Again" for a discussion of Cervantine versions of chivalric motifs.

Through his representation of the lost princess storyline, Cervantes brings to the fore the colonial plot latent in both Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo and Feliciano de Silva's *Amadís* romances. The Micomicona episode updates tropes from the parent texts in order to articulate an argument about conquest, slavery, and liberation in the context of the early seventeenth century. Although the conclusion of the episode retains some ambiguities, Don Quijote's refusal of the advantageous marriage with Micomicona makes a poignant, though indirect, critique of both colonialism and the slave trade.

It may seem jarring to modern readers that the idea of slavery rears its head in a romance plot, but Sancho's immodest proposal underscores the concept of profit, which is in fact the foremost concern of the Micomicona episode. For David Quint, Micomicona and the financially advantageous marriage she offers represent a story cluster that focuses on money, the acquisition of goods, and other practical concerns. Quint does not enter into a detailed analysis of the Micomicona fiction itself, but he does oppose the story of the chivalric princess and her kingdom to the fiction of Dulcinea. Where Dulcinea represents the ideal, Micomicona represents the practical. Quint reads the Micomicona tale as a modernizing impulse within *Don Quijote*: "With the 'Princess Micomicona' plot and the marriage-and-money stories clustered around it, *Don Quijote* seems to have entered fully upon the terrain and preoccupations of the modern novel, the measure of a historical shift from a stratified feudal society to the more open social world of a nascent capitalism" (76). I agree in principle with Quint's argument, but I would like to point out the irony of using the romance of chivalry, an archaic and archaizing genre, to code for this shift towards the modern. However, Cervantes certainly does capitalize on certain pre-existing features of the chivalric genre in order to articulate this currency-driven plot. In its oblique way, the Iberian romance of chivalry has always been concerned with the very practical matters of the acquisition of wealth and territory. Many knights do in fact seek out financially advantageous liaisons, and this episode from *Don Quijote* seems to allude to several chivalric marriages in the Iberian tradition. In the marriage plots of the *Amadís* series, Christian knights find pagan brides, convert them to Christianity, and assume leadership over their new wives' inherited territories. In these romances, marriage substitutes for warfare, and colonial relationships become predicated on marital ties.

Superficially, the Micomicona storyline corresponds to a certain kind

of plot common to all romances, whether of Amadisian, Arthurian, or Byzantine theme. Micomicona behaves like a typical *doncella menesterosa*: she wanders the wilds seeking redress for wrongs done to her by an inhuman oppressor. The damsel in distress continues to be a familiar figure in contemporary culture, owing perhaps to the very ubiquity of her appearance in romance. In chivalric fiction, every lonely stretch of woods teems with forlorn young women in need of rescue. These lovely damsels all wander, but not all deserve the knight's trust. They all want something—but that something could just as easily be vengeance against the knight himself as rescue from pirates or giants. The chivalric code requires virtuous knights to assist all wandering women. As Don Quijote tells us himself in his *edad dorada* speech, knights came into existence in order to protect women's freedom, specifically, in order to liberate them from the lusts of unsavory men (Cervantes I, 11; 196). A successful rescue, however lofty its motivation, can be worth the lady's weight in gold currency: in the Iberian romance of chivalry, every princess is a commodity. She represents the potential for self-advancement, for the acquisition of colonies, and even for the advance of Christendom through the mass conversion of her people. When the princess concerned is a pagan, her rescue places her sovereignty and her original faith in jeopardy. Instead of freeing her, the rescue scenario allows a damsel to trade one oppressor for another. A chance encounter with a princess in distress is just the opportunity that a knight of low status needs to establish his reputation—in Edward Dudley's words, it is "precisely what is needed for the knight, as an Otherworld being, to fulfill his mission and confirm his incarnation" (252). What Dudley neglects to say, however, is that the rescue of a princess tends to be the event that brings a poor knight his material wealth. The fictional African princess Micomicona is quite literally Don Quijote's golden opportunity. Her snow-white complexion and golden tresses can, by a formula that even Sancho Panza is able to perceive and calculate, be converted into the "blancos y amarillos" of hard cash (I, 29; 411).

An examination of the details of the Micomicona fiction will enable us to see exactly how Cervantes reads the colonial resonance of existing chivalric tales of cross-cultural marriage. Dorotea undertakes the task of pretending to be Micomicona, but though she attracts more critical attention than the other characters who contribute to the charade, she is not Micomicona's only author. Three characters work together to create Micomicona: the *cura*, Dorotea herself, and Sancho. This tripartite model

of authorship mimics the way in which some chivalric texts, particularly those that can be arranged in sequels and dynasties, are constructed. The *cura* provides the initial sketch for Micomicona's personality, and thus his contribution stands in the place of the source work, much like the medieval original(s) that Rodríguez de Montalvo famously compiled and edited into the text we now know as the *Amadís de Gaula*.² Dorotea, on the other hand, performs the *cura*'s story, giving life and voice to Micomicona. Dorotea thus inhabits the place of the sixteenth-century sequel-writer, analogous to Montalvo or even to Feliciano de Silva, Cervantes' favorite whipping boy. Like Montalvo and de Silva, Dorotea makes an existing story her own and changes it in the retelling. Sancho's comments gloss Dorotea's play-acting and interpret chivalric motif, thus modeling the work of the reader and perhaps of Cervantes himself as the author confronted his chivalric sources.

The *cura* decides the basic outlines of Micomicona's personality, introducing her to Sancho as a Guinean princess who has come to Spain "en busca de vuestro amo a pedirle un don, el cual es que le desfaga un tuerto o agravio que un mal gigante le tiene fecho" (I, 29; 408). The *cura* reveals a superficial understanding of chivalric trope, and his account is both repetitive and contradictory in its details. The *cura*'s faults of understanding produce a source work that will need to be "corrected" by a second author, much like the apparently morally objectionable original upon which Montalvo based the *Amadís*.³ The *cura* describes the princess as the heiress of her kingdom "por línea recta del varón," when of course this is impossible, as she would be a *female* inheritor. Additionally, the term "mal gigante," which the *cura* uses to identify the enemy, is a repetitive term, as the gentle giants of the post-Pantagruellian era had not yet entered the Iberian chivalric imagination. Though the enemy is at least vaguely defined, the crime remains unspecified: Micomicona suffers from a "tuerto o agravio," which could be anything or nothing. The *cura* can perhaps be forgiven his confusion, as there are simply too many chivalric models to choose from. Giants with designs on heiresses either target the woman's property, thinking to over-

2 Juan Manuel Cacho Bleuca states that Montalvo "reelabora una obra en tres libros, a los que añade un cuarto y *Las Sergas de Esplandián*. . . . Refunde unos antiguos originales misteriosos, sobre los que no sabemos ni el nombre de su autor o de sus autores, en qué fecha realizaron su creación ni tampoco su localización geográfica" (57).

3 Most famously, Montalvo rejects two different stories about Amadís' infidelity with Briolanja, saying in an aside that "ni lo uno ni lo otro fue assi" (I, 40; 613).

take it by force, or seek to usurp both body and fortune by marrying the heiress against her will. When Dorotea elaborates the story, she confirms the giant's unnatural lusts, stating essentially that the giant's war on her kingdom is also a campaign for her body: "podía escusar toda esta ruina y desgracia si yo me quisiese casar con él" (I, 30; 420). As Walter Stephens reminds modern readers in his landmark book *Giants in Those Days*, giants in the Middle Ages "were distinguished from ordinary human beings because they were dedicatedly, unremittingly evil" (3). The giant is a symbolic representation of appetite itself—his lust, gluttony, and greed overspill the boundaries of his enormous body at every turn. Cohen states that "[t]he desires to which [the giant's] excessive form gives instant expression mark him as not quite human: men control their appetites [...] and domination over their own bodies is what constitutes their humanity" (38). If giants are inhuman, and thus both evil and strange, then it does not matter what a giant's particular crime is—the mere presence of a giant gives a knight cause to intervene.

The mention of Guinea is at least more precise than the term "mal gigante," but it is perhaps even more problematic. Guinea refers to the west coast of Africa, particularly the region victimized by Portuguese slave traders in the Early Modern era. Covarrubias defines "Guinea" as "la tierra de negros ó Etiopes en Africa, a do contratan los Portugueses." This definition shows a lack of geographical specificity surrounding the term and also a slippage between Guinea and Ethiopia. Dudley notes that Covarrubias' "confusion between east coast Ethiopia and west coast Guinea may originate with the earlier use of *Ethiopian* as a term applicable to all blacks" (255). The difference between the two terms may be important for Cervantes' use of the damsel-in-distress motif. Regarding Ethiopia, Covarrubias gives an even more problematic definition that only presents the etymology of the word and some examples of its use in Latin texts. Even in the dictionary, "Ethiopia" reads like an imaginary place. Guinea, the name given to the point of origin of the African slaves present in so many parts of the Americas, has a practical ring in a chivalric tale. "Ethiopia," however, resonates with the ideal, as mentions of Ethiopia frequently occur both in the *Amadís* series and in the romance tradition more generally. All geographical locations in the romances are vague and approximate, and even very real cities like Constantinople and Jerusalem do not appear with any sort of historical or cultural accuracy. In the *Sergas de Esplandián*, several of the pagans (and even some of their *enanos*) are identified as Ethiopian.

The most famous use of Ethiopia in romance is, of course, Heliodorus' *An Ethiopian Romance*, whose female protagonist, Chariclea, is exiled from her home because of her white skin. Dudley reads the slippage between Guinea and Ethiopia as a deliberate gesture which "reinforces the literary link to Heliodorus and endows Dorotea/Micomicona with the aura of a Byzantine heroine" (256-257). Cervantes may also be referencing appearances of Ethiopia in later romances as a Christian enclave in otherwise pagan Africa.⁴ It is important to note, for the purposes of the Micomicona episode, that while the specific geography of Guinea or Ethiopia may not be a primary concern for either Covarrubias or the *cura*, the locations are not devoid of meaning. Rather, the citation of either place is associated with blackness, as is made quite clear both in Covarrubias and in Sancho's interpretation of the *cura*'s story.

Along with the word "Guinea," the *cura* provides the reader with one further detail of import: the name of the kingdom, and by extension, the name of the princess. The *cura*'s tautology, "llámase... la princesa Micomicona, porque llamándose su reino Micomicón, claro está que ella se ha de llamar así" demonstrates, in miniature, how narratives of chivalric conquest work (I, 29; 408). In fact, as far as the chivalric tradition is concerned, the land and the princess are one and the same: to be the husband of Micomicona is to be the king of Micomicón. Nowhere is this connection more clear than in the *Amadís* romances. In these works, cross-cultural marriages are often less about love than about the conquest of new territory. Both Montalvo and de Silva stage their continuations of the *Amadís* in the Eastern Mediterranean, and as such most of their women characters are exotic pagans. Two of de Silva's princesses, Niquea and Persea, take on the name of the territory they stand to inherit, just as Micomicona does. In the *Amadís* series, far more territory is gained for Christendom through marriage than through warfare. Poor Christian knights gain wealth and power through marriage to pagan heiresses, and their brides' hereditary kingdoms become Christian colonies. Sancho, despite a relative lack of experience with chivalric convention, grasps this proto-colonial plot intuitively, perceiving after the *cura*'s first sentence that Don Quijote stands

4 For example, when Torquato Tasso reworks Chariclea's story through the character Clorinda, he describes her homeland as a Christian African kingdom. The idea of a Christian Ethiopia relates both to medieval stories of Prester John and to the legendary presence in the region of the Queen of Sheba, one of the wives of Solomon. It may also reference the very real community of Ethiopian Coptic Christians.

to win both a bride and a kingdom. It is worth noting that Dorotea-as-Micomicona does not make an offer of marriage to Quijote until their second conversation and that her decision to do so may have been inspired by Sancho's assumptions.

The name Micomicona adds one further strand to the tightening web of convention that creates this adventure. "Micomicona" has two possible connotations that depend on different interpretations of "mico." The first possible reading of "Micomicona," the one that suggests itself most easily to twenty-first century readers, is essentially misogynist. "Mico" is a colloquial term used in some parts of Latin America to refer to female genitals, and although such an interpretation would dovetail nicely with Dorotea's compromised chastity, it is most likely an anachronism. The second, and probably the more correct, interpretation depends on reading "mico" as a type of monkey. Covarrubias defines "mico" as "una especie de mona, pero con cola, y de faciones, y talle más jarifo." The word "monkey" has a racial connotation today, serving as a slur on stereotypically African features. The romances demonstrate a parallel practice to the modern racial slur. While not specifically linked to blackness, the terms *mono* and *ximio* are associated with deviations from the white, blond and Christian default state of humanity in both Montalvo and De Silva. The essential quality of the monkey, for the romances, is that of a mock-human. Covarrubias mentions in his definition of "mona" that sailors often mistake apes for human beings in their travels: "en algunas Islas, donde ay monos muy grandes, engañan a los navegantes, pareciéndoles ser hombres." In the *Sergas de Esplandián*, monkeys both imitate and transgress against humans. Two large apes (*ximios*) steal helmets from Christian knights and use them to mock their former owners: "poníanlos en las cabezas y quitávanlos" (268). In his notes to the text, Carlos Sainz de la Maza reads this detail as an "entremés cómico" but also remarks that "[l]os simios simbolizan al Diablo en la tradición medieval." Montalvo's *ximios* have a vaguely evil quality; similarly, the ugly dwarf Ximiaca of Feliciano de Silva's *Florisel III* mimics chivalric femininity in a perverse manner. This minor character, different from the typical woman of romance both in stature and in beauty, elicits laughter as she promises to release the Christian hero from prison in return for sexual favors (80). Ximiaca is a grotesque figure, an aberration of femininity both through her lack of chastity and through her the repulsiveness of her physique. Cervantes' "Micomicona" inherits both the ideas of simulacrum, as she is a mock-princess, and of deviation from the

ideal, as the reader knows Dorotea's chastity to be compromised. Augustin Redondo expands on the understanding of "mico" as monkey, extrapolating that Micomicón itself must be the land of giant monkeys:

En efecto, ¿qué será ese reino Micomicón, sino el de los Micomicones—que pueden hacer pensar en los famosos Patagones, esos gigantes que aparecen en el *Primaleón* [...] Un Micomicón no puede ser sino un mico agigantado, lo que subraya la duplicación. El reino Micomicón sería pues la tierra de los monos gigantes. Tierra de fantasía en que estaría instaurado *un mundo al revés*. Una salida posible para la utopía, una manera paródica de volver a los orígenes de la Humanidad. (365)

Redondo's reading is provocative for several reasons, though there is little in *Don Quijote* to suggest that the land of Micomicón is meant to have a utopian resonance. Redondo has introduced at once the idea that Micomicona is not just a princess, but also a giantess. "Micomicona," with its repetitive syllables, has a certain nonsense sound that parrots Amadisian names for giants. "Micomicona" might feel right at home with Famongomadán, Madanfagul, Basagante, and their monstrous brethren. A modern reader might assume that if all male giants are usurpers and abusers, then female giants are also morally suspect. However, based on numerous Iberian chivalric giantesses, that conclusion would be entirely false. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen states, the sins of the giant are specifically masculine transgressions: "the giant is encountered in the performance of a masculinity that is as necessary as it is obscene" (xii). The defeat of the giant is a masculine rite of passage, symbolizing the triumph over appetites that, while "natural" in men, are nonetheless destructive (66). In French and English Arthurian texts, female giants do not usually exist. In the Iberian romances, giantesses abound, but they are scarcely different from ordinary human women. They tend to exhibit the typically female chivalric virtues of heightened sensibility and extreme modesty, and although some, like Feliciano de Silva's Xarandria, are described as tall, the specific physicality of most Amadisian giantesses is limited to the golden curls and pale skin that they share with all beautiful chivalric women. Consider the example of Bruçarinda, a lovely giantess featured in Ruy Páez de Ribera's unpopular continuation of the *Amadís*, known as the *Florisando*. Bruçarinda, despite being a giantess and a pagan, is described as "blanca como la nieve y ruvia como oro," a physical appearance that is directly at odds with her

father's vaguely African features: "[era] moreno de color: [con] los cabellos muy crespos [...] los ojos turnios" (32v, 31r). Perhaps Bruçarinda's whiteness is meant to prefigure her eventual conversion to Christianity, for in the Iberian romances of chivalry in general, whiteness always equates to virtue while blackness signifies sin. What is clear from this example, however, is that Dorotea's pale beauty would not necessarily disqualify her from playing the role of a giant princess, even one of African origin. The idea of the giant, as suggested by Redondo, does raise one other provocative issue—that of religious difference. Giants and giantesses, while not always physically different, are always pagans in the Iberian romances; if Micomicón is a land of giants, its people are certainly infidels. However, other than the possible resonance of Micomicona's name, *Don Quijote* gives the reader no indication that Micomicona might herself be a giantess, and despite Redondo's interesting reading, the matter cannot be fully resolved.

While the *cura* provides a basic outline for Micomicona, the most significant aspects of her character depend on Dorotea's performance. Like the sequel writer, Dorotea takes on the task of continuing someone else's story when she volunteers to embody Micomicona, the perhaps-giant, perhaps-pagan princess. In order to fill in the holes in the *cura*'s rather garbled and amateurish citation of chivalric motif, Dorotea draws both on her own knowledge as a reader of chivalry and on her recent traumatic experience as the victim of male cruelty. Based on her narrative of abuse at Fernando's hands, Dorotea is probably the one character in the text who best understands the darker side of chivalric fantasy, namely, its dire consequences for female autonomy. By giving Dorotea the mask of Micomicona, Cervantes superimposes one story on another and allows for a new reading of the chivalric rescue plot. It is important to remember that Dorotea chooses the role of "doncella menesterosa" for herself, convincing priest and barber that she will be able to "hacerlo al natural," as she possesses the proper look, clothing, and knowledge of the genre (I, 29; 407). The chivalric pose becomes a part of Dorotea's self-fashioning, and the story of Micomicona should be read as a corollary to the narrative of the rich *labradora* deceived by an evil nobleman that she recounts as her own life story. Below the surface fantasy of Micomicona lies the more "realistic" (or at least, verisimilar) narrative of a middle-class woman seduced, deceived, and ultimately abandoned by a "giant" of a nobleman, her superior in social and economic status. Fernando's cruelty, selfishness, pride, and greed make him a giant in every sense but the physical. As Dorotea embodies

Micomicona's story, she blends with it the emotional underpinnings of her own suffering. Ruth El Saffar states that "[a]s Micomicona, Dorotea repeats the role she played for the priest and barber, but with a greater awareness of how that role is dissociated from her true self" (70). El Saffar reads this second storytelling as a restorative moment, and she would certainly disagree with Vladimir Nabokov's highly negative reading of Dorotea as one of the prime practitioners of "mental cruelty" in *Don Quijote* (55). The Micomicona plot simplifies and recasts Dorotea's own story, circumventing potential concerns about the lady's chastity in order to construct her as a more virtuous victim, one who would be worthy of compassion and assistance in either of her guises. "Micomicona" lends Dorotea some of the social and moral status that she has lost, and Dorotea, for her part, adds an emotional component to the Micomicona story that would otherwise be lacking in a rote citation of chivalric motif. Dorotea is a masterful author adapting multiple sources, both her own life experiences and the priest's outline of a chivalric tale, into a single work of fiction. The process enriches the meaning of both tales.

Dorotea, as the figure of the sequel writer, proves extremely adept at mimicking chivalric convention. Like Montalvo, Paéz de Ribera, de Silva, or Cervantes himself, Dorotea is herself a reader of her chosen genre, confessing that she has read "muchos libros de caballerías y sabía bien el estilo que tenían las doncellas cuitadas cuando pedían sus dones a los andantes caballeros" (I, 29; 407). The idea of literary and linguistic *estilo* is important here, as Dorotea's main contribution to the Micomicona plot is the elaboration of existing motifs in the language of the chivalric romance. It is, perhaps, a poor reflection on Dorotea's virtue that she would know how to flesh out a chivalric motif. Dorotea was not always willing to confess to chivalric reading; in fact, this admission is at odds with her earlier autobiographical narrative, in which she mentioned only her reading of devotional books. In itself, the reading of chivalric romance might be considered suspect; most conduct books, including Vives' celebrated *The Education of a Christian Woman*, warn against chivalric or sentimental reading choices for virtuous women. Interestingly, Vives makes a list of pernicious books that reads suspiciously like a shelf from Quijote's library, expressly prohibiting women from reading the *Amadís*, *Tirant lo Blanch*, *Tristán de Leonís*, and *Las Sergas de Esplandián*. No education would be preferable to a chivalric one: "For such girls [female readers of chivalry] it would have been preferable not only that they had never learned literature but that they had lost

their eyes so that they could not read, and their ears so that they could not hear" (74). The disapproval of moral and social authorities, however, gives Dorotea one more point in common with the sequel writer. It is Feliciano de Silva's prose that first brings on Quijote's madness, and in the famous scrutiny of Don Quijote's books, the *cura* criticizes de Silva directly for his "endiabladas y revueltas razones;" in other words, for poor style (I, 1; 114; I, 6; 152). Thus, if Dorotea's preferred reading material or style are improper, she is in good company.

When the moment of her actual performance arrives, Dorotea impresses her audience with a skillful distillation of the major preoccupations of chivalric romance. Don Quijote is, of course, an expert reader of chivalry, and at other times in the novel, he corrects different characters' understanding of the romances. The fact that he accepts Micomicona's appeal marks out the skill with which Dorotea plays her part. First, Dorotea asks the knight for a *don* in ritual language: "De aquí no me levantaré ¡oh valeroso y esforzado caballero! fasta que la vuestra bondad y cortesía me otorgue un don, el cual redundará en honra y prez de vuestra persona y en pro de la más desconsolada y agraviada doncella que el sol ha visto (I, 29; 409). Dorotea's expansive syntax and archaic style reveal a deep knowledge of both the content and the form of the genre: in fact, in one sentence, she encapsulates the major features of chivalric narrative. She defines the knight's identity through his leading virtues (*valor* and *esfuerzo*), and she acknowledges the knight's quest for *honra y prez*. Moreover, she identifies herself as a stock figure of romance by both word and gesture. Her humble posture (kneeling) and her described state of mind (*desconsolada* and *agraviada*) identify her as a suppliant, the *doncella meneñterosa* that she promised the *cura* she could be. The words themselves articulate a chivalric motif in a straightforward manner, but it does not follow that the motif itself is everything it appears to be, as chivalric fiction often uses the request for a *don* to create conflict. Dorotea, as an expert reader herself, must certainly know that a request for an unspecified *don* in a chivalric narrative is always a trap. Courtesy requires the knight to accept even before he knows what particular favor the lady wants, and the *don* usually puts him in a compromising position, endangering either his safety or his morals. A virtuous suppliant, on the other hand, asks for a specific favor, because there is no reason to believe that the knight might refuse. With an unspecified *don*, the knight is not allowed to know what task is required of him until he gives his unbreakable word to complete it. Quijote himself realizes that all is

not as it seems, because he makes Micomicona promise that her favor will not harm king, country, or Dulcinea. Of course, Dorotea's words are quite literally meant to entrap Quijote—the entire purpose of the Micomicona fiction is to force him to follow her to the inn. After he vows to comply with her request, Dorotea evokes a second chivalric motif by making her favor open-ended, asking that “la vuestra persona se venga conmigo donde yo le llevaré [...] hasta darme venganza de un traidor” (I, 29; 410). This linguistic construction places the knight in Micomicona's power until *she* decides that the conditions of the *don* have been met, effectively giving her a means to abuse him, should she wish to. Once Quijote agrees, Dorotea makes a third chivalric gesture, albeit one that usually occurs at the conclusion, not the outset, of a chivalric adventure. She attempts to kiss Quijote's hands in gratitude, and he stops her, not wishing for her to abase herself. Here, Dorotea makes a small change to chivalric motif, reversing the gender roles for this particular action. It is the victorious knight who is supposed to attempt to kiss his lady's hand after he has completed some task, and it is she, in her gratitude, who is supposed to embrace him instead. The gesture closes off chivalric episodes, and it shows that, from Dorotea's perspective, her aim has now been achieved. Her part in knight's deception is complete, even though her “rescue” from her precarious social position is still pending. Although Dorotea will entertain Quijote in the next chapter with further details about both Micomicona and the evil giant Pandafilando de la Fosca Viſta, the key moment for her performance is earning Quijote's promise. At that moment, the success of the *cura* and *barbero's* deception is ensured, because even if Micomicona were to remove her mask, Quijote is irrevocably bound by his vow. Moreover, the reversal of gender roles in Dorotea's gesture of gratitude looks forward to the moment when Dorotea will play against the type of the passive princess and assume an active role in the settlement of the love-conflicts among the couples at the inn—though once again, she will appear as a suppliant, this time in a direct appeal to Fernando to behave himself in accordance with propriety. In a few short paragraphs, Dorotea has shown mastery of chivalric technique (including its concomitant *disparates* and *mentiras*) by authoring a clever tale that is at once true and false. The giant might be an egotistical nobleman instead of an oversized monster, but Dorotea is truly a woman in need. She is simultaneously the good damsel and the bad—the victim and the seductress—and the ambiguity is intentional. Dorotea leaves us with a knot of signification that cannot be entangled based on

her words alone.

The final work of interpretation will fall to the figure of the reader, not the writer. Sancho, despite his relative inexperience with the chivalric genre, is the keystone of the episode, the one figure who helps us best approximate the message of the Micomicona plot. Like Quijote, he is fully convinced that Micomicona is a real person, and he is much more vocal about his reading experience than his master. Sancho's presence in this episode might surprise many readers. There is no plot-related reason for the humble *escudero* to be involved in the elaboration of the Micomicona story, and yet, the text depicts him reacting to every detail. The interventions of Sancho in this episode underscore the reader's role in creating meaning in a literary text. Sancho's interpretative work mimics Cervantes' own task in reading the romances of chivalry, and his commentary reveals possibilities of meaning in the romances that others have neglected to see.

It must be said that Sancho does not read the episode as the *cura* and Dorotea probably intend. He seems to forget the needs of the *doncella meneñterosa* and instead focuses on how his master—and he himself—might benefit from their contact with her. Sancho emphasizes two particular details in his reading of Micomicona, namely, the princess' African origin and her sexual availability to the knight who assists her. As soon as the *cura* introduces the princess, Sancho's mind leaps to the idea of financial gain. In Sancho's mind, Micomicona's plight poses a simple exchange of one service for another: Don Quijote kills the giant, and then the princess marries him. Giant-slaying is the most ordinary of chivalric enterprises, of course, but what is particular about Sancho's attitude is his emphasis—before Quijote even encounters the giant—on the advantageous marriage. One can imagine Micomicona being traded back and forth like a commodity between the giant and the Christian knight; her body, and her wealth, might change owners, but she would never achieve autonomy. The giant who has taken over Micomicona's kingdom, especially if he is a mask for the abusive Fernando, should also be read as a sexual predator. However, in Sancho's interpretation of the motif, the Christian knight is no less opportunistic—he merely wishes to replace the giant in Micomicona's kingdom and also in her bed.

Sancho has forgotten the knight's vocation to free the oppressed and champion the helpless in favor of the concept of profit. In the romance tradition, virtuous knights help many needy damsels, but they can only marry one. With the exception of Feliciano de Silva's lecherous Rogel de

Grecia, knights prove their moral worth by refusing to take sexual advantage of all the women they rescue. Sancho, however, is determined to use Micomicona, and as such, he has an interest in reading her as something foreign, something other. It is Sancho, not Quijote, who fixates on the idea of Africa and the blackness of Micomicona's subjects. The *cura* specifies the princess's origin as Guinea, or West Africa, but Sancho amends Guinea to the romance location Etiopía when he introduces the princess to Quijote. The thought of Africa, and the presumed blackness of Micomicona's subjects, troubles Sancho greatly: "sólo le daba pesadumbre el pensar que aquel reino era tierra de negros" (I, 29; 411). Micomicona herself is quite noticeably white; at her introduction, the priest and barber observe her impossibly pale bare feet and her golden curls. Sancho's mention of Ethiopia might be his way of reasoning out Micomicona's whiteness, referencing the famous episode in Heliodorus' *An Ethiopian Romance* in which the heroine Chariclea is born white despite having black parents because her mother Persina gazed upon a painting of the white-skinned Andromeda as the young princess was conceived (94). Torquato Tasso, in his Renaissance epic *Gerusalemme Liberata*, adapts Chariclea's story to create the birth narrative of Clorinda, another puzzlingly white African princess (XII; 21-25, 259-20). The reader must remember that no one else has told Sancho what the people of Micomicón look like—he only assumes that Micomicona's whiteness is some sort of romance anomaly. Sancho partakes unquestioningly of the racist idea, present in Heliodorus, Tasso, and the romance tradition in general, that whiteness equates to virtue and blackness to sin. Sancho assumes that Micomicona is an anomaly and that her subjects are black and thus, by racist romance logic, evil and only barely human. With that assumption in place, a leap to the idea of monetizing them seems almost logical: "¿Habrà más que cargar con ellos y traerlos a España, donde los podré vender. . . y por negros que sean, los he de volver blancos o amarillos [?]" (I, 29; 411). Sancho might be criticized as a bad reader of the romance of chivalry—when he speaks of enslaving instead of liberating, he has entirely forgotten the ideals Don Quijote fights for. However, he might also be named an extraordinarily perceptive reader of the source texts. Cervantes might certainly have found the inspiration for Sancho's colonial ambitions in Montalvo and De Silva.

When Sancho plans the enslavement of Quijote's future subjects, he proposes a seventeenth-century solution to a chivalric dilemma. While his plan might seem out of place or anachronistic considering the undeni-

ably abstract nature of the Micomicona fiction, in fact Sancho's comment foregrounds an often-overlooked feature of the Iberian chivalric romance. Like other narratives of conquest, the Iberian romance of chivalry engages in community building. Sancho's strategy for holding onto a new kingdom would be consistent not only with Machiavelli's advice in *The Prince* but with the actual practices cited in the Iberian romances. Machiavelli cautions that rulers of new principalities will face strong opposition, and that new subjects "are either to be caressed or destroyed, since they will seek revenge for minor hurts but will not be able to avenge major ones" (7). Enslavement, then, would be a definitive solution to the problem of rebellion. Sancho's addition to the chivalric motif of conquest through marriage is an interpretative gesture as well as an allusive one, as it expands on the latent colonial possibilities of the chivalric marriage. An examination of the fates of two foreign, pagan brides in the *Amadís* series may shed light on the political dimensions of the Micomicona episode. The first of these pagan women appears in the *Sergas de Esplandián*, Rodríguez de Montalvo's sequel to the first four books of the *Amadís*. The *Sergas* is a very likely place to look for Cervantes' models, as it merits several mentions throughout *Don Quijote*, including an ignominious place on the pyre during the scrutiny of the books. *Las Sergas de Esplandián* features, among various and sundry heathens, a tribe of Amazon-like warrior women who participate in the siege of Christian-held Constantinople. Montalvo exoticizes the armor-wearing, gryphon-riding Amazons, particularly their beautiful leader Calafia. This Amazon chieftain becomes an object of marvel and derision, admiration and criticism. One of the most striking aspects of the representation of Calafia is the insistence on her blackness: the text is determined to mark her out as other. In three separate places, Montalvo mentions that the Amazon leader is black as well as beautiful: "el rostro y las manos avía negras, mas de muy buena fación, y pareció assaz hermosa" (699). Many other women in *Las Sergas de Esplandián* are described as "assaz hermosa," but none of these other women deviates in the most minimal point from the white-skinned ideal of beauty. At the very least, Montalvo here notices an issue of racial difference that chivalric texts tend to ignore, elide, or whitewash. While in other places, including parts of the *Las Sergas de Esplandián* itself, blackness is reserved for evil, ugly, or monstrous characters, here the idea is attached to a marvelously beautiful woman. The Christian court is literally stunned by her appearance, and though most admire her and some men even cherish a wish to

serve her, Esplandián himself disapproves of Calafia so strongly that he refuses to speak one word to her. Montalvo takes a great deal of care to explain Esplandián's moral scruples:

comoquiera que por cosa extraña la mirasse y hermosa le pareciesse [...] viéndola puesta en armas, siguiendo el diverso estilo que siendo natural muger seguir devía, aviéndolo por muy desonesto que aquella que por boca de Dios le fue mandado que en sujeción del varón fuesse, procurasse ella lo contrario, en querer ser señora de todos los varones, no por discreción, mas por fuerza de armas. . . desvióse de se poner con ella en razones (760).

Esplandián's failure of courtesy marks out just how different Calafia is from other romance women. Perhaps predictably, she fails to dominate the Christian men by force of arms. Calafia faces Esplandián's father Amadís in single combat, and though she loses, the fact that she survives the encounter speaks well for her skill with weaponry. Her defeat leaves her with such a favorable impression of Christian prowess in war that she decides to overturn the social customs of her people, who use men only for breeding stock and do not allow them to reside on the island. Calafia announces a desire to convert to Christianity, preferring the "orden tan ordenada" of Christianity to the "gran desorden" of her pagan faith (800). It is important to note that she makes this declaration while clothed in appropriately modest feminine garb. At this point, Esplandián finally deigns to speak with her—she has earned that favor through her acceptance both of patriarchy (signified through her clothing) and of Christianity. Esplandián immediately finds a suitably Christian husband and master for her. Calafia, like Dorotea, stands on the outside of normal Christian society when she is introduced—despite their poignant beauty, both are outcasts. Both women are eventually brought to accept subordinate social roles; just as one might justifiably wonder whether Dorotea's marriage to Fernando would be any sort of improvement on her former status as a cross-dressed shepherd, a reader might also question the benefits of Calafia's trading kingdom and autonomy for the dubious delights of womanly clothing and a Christian husband. The mention of *discreción* as opposed to military prowess is quite interesting in this passage as a precursor for the figure of Micomicona; as embodied by the clever Dorotea, Micomicona's weapon is in fact her *discreción*.

5 Harry Velez Quiñones writes of Dorotea's acumen that "her phenomenal interpretation as the African queen Micomicona, as well as her many interventions in favor of

Against genre expectations, Calafia's story does not end with her marriage; Montalvo gives us instead a rare glimpse of the colonial implications of a cross-cultural union. Calafia's loss is, of course, her husband's gain. Talanque, an illegitimate son of Amadís' brother and a former nobody, suddenly becomes the king of an extremely desirable country. Montalvo explains that California, vaguely located "a diestra mano de las Indias," is a magical place with strange creatures and strange riches (727). Gold grows on trees, and the Amazons use it for all their weapons and armor, as they lack other metals. The creation of California clearly has its origins in folklore, and its features are not entirely unique in the romances. However, what stands out in the discussion of this seeming utopia is the description of Talanque's colonial ambitions that follows the celebration of his marriage. Montalvo mentions in an aside to the reader that the next book in the series, which was never written, will be about Talanque's struggle to take over full control of California. A vicious civil war erupts as Talanque attempts to Christianize the island and marry off the Amazons to Christian knights, but Montalvo indicates that the Christians and their more civilized way of life will eventually triumph (814). Montalvo, writing in the last years of the fifteenth century or the first years of the sixteenth, seems to grasp some of the possibilities of the colonial plot—the detail about the gold, for example, might have made Colón or Cortés salivate. Moreover, the struggle to Christianize the native population of California seems particularly appropriate for post-Reconquest Spain. As Judith Whitenack explains, conversions to Christianity are quite common in chivalric romance, particularly in the medieval French tradition. Mass conversions, however, are not entirely motivated by religious revelation: "For the vanquished it finally comes down to power and intimidation: their armies have been defeated, their gods have proven inferior, and their land is in the possession of the enemy. Thus the decision to convert has less to do with wanting to enter European society than simply casting one's lot with the winners, to say nothing of opting for survival" ("Conversion to Christianity" 16). Moreover, according to Whitenack, the conversion of a leader usually implies the conversion of the entire society. Whitenack's words echo Calafia's reasons for converting to Christianity, but Calafia's people do not follow her example. In Montalvo, we can see the seed of the idea that the native populace might not cheerfully acquiesce to a defeated

Cardenio, Sancho, Luscinda, Zoraida, doña Clara, and don Luis, surely could earn her the Homeric epithet *polymetis* ('of the many counsels')" (290).

leader's choices. From that idea, a plan of enslavement like Sancho's might logically follow.

In the second example I would like to introduce, the colonial relationship between conqueror and conquered becomes even more clear. Feliciano de Silva's *Florisel de Niquea* Part IV features a Christian prince, Rogel de Grecia, who falls in love with Archisidea, named both the ruler of Gaza and Princesa Oriental. In this volume, we literally have a case of East meets West, and even though both young lovers are quite willing to marry, religious differences cause problems for Christians and pagans alike. This cultural conflict suggests the episode as a possible analogue for the Micomicona story. Archisidea herself, unlike Calafia, is persistently described as white and blonde despite her Near Eastern origin. However, she is no less monstrous than Montalvo's beautiful Amazon: Archisidea is quite literally a dangerous beauty. At her birth, an Eastern enchanter cursed her, ensuring that any man who looked upon her beautiful face would die. The Princesa Oriental's basilisk gaze threatens those who would marvel at her, and she must wear a series of masks and veils to separate herself from the world. The image of a veiled woman in a text written in the first half of the sixteenth century might very possibly be meant to recall ethnic differences in dress on the Iberian Peninsula. The use of traditional Muslim attire was an area of anxiety for both secular and religious authorities in Early Modern Spain. Not just once, but several times in the sixteenth century, statutes were issued banning the most typical items of *morisco* clothing, including the veil, presumably as a means of encouraging cultural integration. As an example of such sumptuary laws, Harvey cites a 1513 proclamation issued in Granada that declares "within two years, no newly converted woman may wear the *almalafa* [the all-enveloping female outer garment]"⁶ (213). Laws also existed to prohibit Christians from adopting Moorish fashions, and the fact that such statutes were necessary implies fascination as well as repulsion on the part of Christian adopters. Another proclamation of 1513, issued in the name of Queen Juana, expressly forbid Old Christian women to wear the veil, saying that to do so jeopardized their honor (Harvey 72-73). Barbara Fuchs points out that such sumptuary laws were "insufficient to contain the mobility that clothing could afford" and that Moorish dress continued to be a "part of daily attire" at least through the reign of Charles V (5-7). Archisidea's veil takes

6 All translations of the proclamations are Harvey's.

its cue from Morisco headdresses and, like Calafia's dark skin, serves as a visible reminder of her difference. Like Calafia, she is other but *beautiful*; the veil exoticizes her and attracts the Western gaze as much as it repels it.

Rogel de Grecia, for his part, pursues the Eastern princess knowing that her subjects will not approve: "pareciéndole que sus súbditos, querrían para su emperatriz marido sujeto al apellido, y successión Oriental, y que no saliese del Imperio, ni la llevase a otra parte, de si mirava la diversidad de las leyes" (67v). Archisidea's people will certainly object to becoming colonial subjects of the Christian empire. Rogel must realize that once he takes power in the East, he will likely face rebellion and conflict on the order of Talanque's civil war in California. However, for Rogel, the risks are worth the potential reward. There is no open territory left for him in Christendom; although he is the heir to Constantinople, Gaul, England, and Trebizond, Rogel's male ancestors have an unfortunate habit of living forever. Feliciano de Silva mentions, with a great deal of humor, that the original Amadís, though now white-haired, looks just as handsome as ever and is fully capable of administering his kingdom and even going out on the occasional chivalric errand. Rogel, Amadís' great-great-grandson, cannot simply wait to inherit. If he wishes to be a sovereign, he will have to win entirely new territory, and that means carving out a swath of pagandom. Archisidea seems to dimly recognize Rogel's ambitions, declaring out loud that she and her future husband are a poor match politically because they are not "de una ley" (45v). The word "ley," in the romances of chivalry, refers not to secular law but to religious custom. Archisidea plans to assuage her people by asking Rogel de Grecia to convert to the pagan religion, which seems, from de Silva's description, to be a miscellany of Greco-Roman practices. However, the Eastern empress eventually capitulates to the pressure to convert; in fact, it is her future husband (in disguise as her most valued counselor) who persuades her to do so. In order to force her people to accept the marriage and her conversion to a foreign faith, Archisidea threatens that if she is not allowed to marry Rogel, she will never marry or produce an heir to her throne. In response, her uncle moves to overthrow her, but the romance ends before the reader learns whether he succeeded. Archisidea is baptized immediately before her marriage, and at the wedding ceremony, she wears a special jewel that once belonged to an idol of Jupiter as an ornament. The carbuncle she wears, stripped of its purpose as a religious icon, marks her out as different, foreign, other, just as her veil did. At the close of the volume, Archisidea and

Rogel return to the East to rule jointly, perhaps in the style of Ferdinand and Isabella. However, it is implied that through their Christian heirs, the Eastern Empire—and by extension its pagan populace—will eventually be absorbed by the West. The Eastern Empire will become a colony, rather than an allied territory of the West, because its rulers (Rogel and his sons) plan to reside there and enforce cultural change on the indigenous population through their presence.

Calafia and Archisidea offer provocative analogues for the Micomicón story. Just like Calafia's California, Micomicón cannot be found on any map, but that does not mean that it has no implied place in global politics. Sancho, for his part, assumes that it is a real place with inhabitants who differ enough from their Christian conquerors to be considered potential slaves. Sancho's blatant racial prejudice is quite jarring for the reader, as it is utterly inconsistent with the playful tone of the rest of the episode. Cervantes deliberately alludes to the human cost of the narrative of Christian conquest. African slaves were first transported to the Americas early in the sixteenth century, and by the first decade of the seventeenth century, they were a significant part of the labor force in many territories. Moreover, some African slaves were present in Spain; after all, Cervantes even mentions a black slave, Luis, in his exemplary novel "El celoso extremeño," which takes place in Spain. However, there were no Spanish slave traders or open slave markets, as the treaties of Alcaçova and Tordesillas gave the Portuguese an exclusive right to the slave trade in West Africa (Redondo 365). Sancho's substitution of "Ethiopia" for "Guinea" as Micomicón's point of origin might even be meant to work around the Portuguese problem, carving out a new territory for the slave trade, though the text is vague on this point. It is certain, however, that Sancho's ambitions are both illegal and morally reprehensible.

Though Sancho's plan would not have actually been feasible in seventeenth century Spain, it nonetheless has a cold practicality that cuts two ways. The chivalric intertexts suggest that if Sancho intends to turn Micomicón into a true colony by residing there and ruling it personally (which his dream of governing his own island seems to support), he might expect a civil uprising. By enslaving the people, he would utterly defeat those who might oppose him. In addition, the currency that he could earn in exchange for slaves might be helpful for a larger imperial project—after all, Sancho imagines Don Quijote as an *emperador*, not merely a king, and that would mean, in the context of the seventeenth century, that Sancho

dreams of establishing a global power with widespread territories and an ever-increasing need for cash. What seems a rather fanciful concern in Montalvo and de Silva takes on a more serious import in the context of the early seventeenth century. Spain's colonies in the New World and conflicts in the Mediterranean must have influenced Cervantes' creation of the Micomicón episode. Additionally, given both the uncertain geographic location of Micomicón and the possibility that the Micomicónans might be a race of giants, the question of religion ought to be raised. Would Sancho be so quick to enslave a Christian populace? If Micomicón, like the giantesses, Calafia, and Archisidea, is a "pagan," then she will have to convert in order to marry Quijote. For Montalvo and De Silva, conversion narratives have happy results, but the cross-cultural marriage acquires new meaning at the dawn of the seventeenth century with the expulsion of the *moriscos* on the horizon and the veracity of conversions to Christianity in doubt.

Sancho's plan for the colonization of Micomicón seems a darker version of the typical chivalric plot. His desire to physically displace the original inhabitants of Micomicón seems to echo the edicts of expulsion for Jews and *moriscos* in Early Modern Spain. However, it must be recognized that Cervantes' text quietly defeats Sancho's planned crimes against his future subjects. When Quijote rejects the idea of marriage to Micomicón, he also negates all the political consequences of such a step. It might seem strange that Quijote would refuse to look to his own financial interests, when it is he who taught Sancho in the first place about the conventions of chivalric marriages. However, Quijote's refusal becomes more understandable if one looks back to the fundamental identity of the *caballero andante*.

According to Don Quijote himself, knights exist to "defender las doncellas, amparar las viudas y socorrer a los huérfanos y a los menesterosos" (I, 11; 196). Quijote consistently interprets this task as one of liberation. Whether the object of his care is Andresillo, a servant boy tied to a tree, or the image of the Virgin Mary in the possession of the faithful, Quijote's primary aim is always to release those who are restrained, to free those who are enslaved. Nowhere is this impetus more clear than in the *galeotes* episode that precedes Quijote and Sancho's wanderings in Sierra Morena. Even though Sancho explains to his master that the prisoners have committed crimes, Quijote insists on freeing them because they are held against their will. As Quijote explains to the *galeotes'* keepers, "me parece duro caso hacer esclavos a los que Dios y naturaleza hizo libres" (I,

22; 314). It is Quijote himself who introduces the idea of the slave; elsewhere in the chapter, the *galeotes* are referred to as “gente forzada del rey” or “malaventurados”: Quijote correctly recognizes these terms as euphemisms (I, 22; 305-06). Anthony Close, in his analysis of the galley slaves episode, makes a connection to the American context, stating that Quijote’s plea for the prisoners’ freedom “invokes the principle of natural law which was cited in the famous mid-sixteenth century theological polemic about whether it was right to enslave the colonized Indians of Latin America” (20). Close’s comments hint at the famous public debate that took place in 1550 between Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda. Close hesitates, however, to characterize Cervantes as a champion of liberty, emphasizing rather the “fundamental ambivalence” of the *galeotes* episode (26).

Although Close is quite right in suggesting that one might read the *galeotes* episode as “a right-wing fable about the folly of doing good to the undeserving,” a conformist reading of the liberation trope is not necessarily supported by the rest of *Don Quijote* (Close 23). The romance of chivalry uses interlace to create meaning, and Cervantes exploits that technique to its fullest potential in the second half of *Don Quijote* Part I. The number of episodes that interplay the concepts of liberty and enslavement includes at the very least the *galeotes*, Sancho’s “enchantment” of Rocinante, Micomicona, the Captive’s Tale, and the caging of Don Quijote. Taken together, these episodes make a poignant argument for liberty. Even when liberation carries a high price, the side of freedom is the side of virtue. The violence and ingratitude of the *galeotes* does not necessarily undermine the virtue of Quijote’s act in freeing them. Perhaps, as Close maintains, Cervantes never articulates a truly subversive point of view, but neither does he advocate one that supports the status quo. All liberations seem to be imperfect; yet, they are far preferable to the alternative.

The fact that Sancho’s plan for enslavement disappears from the narrative might be a subtle social critique, but it is a critique nonetheless. Sancho’s ambition combines the American colonial system, in which the new rulers enslave the indigenous populace in order to suppress revolt, and the example of the Portuguese slave traders in Africa who abuse and displace human beings for profit. To defeat Sancho’s plan is also to argue against its models. Perhaps Quijote never directly reprimands Sancho for his cruelty or greed, but Cervantes’ text makes sure that Sancho’s dreams of becoming a slave trader will never be realized. When Quijote rejects Micomicona for Dulcinea, he makes the quiet statement that the aims of

colonialism and enslavement have no place in a narrative of virtue.

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