

To See What Men Cannot: Teichoskopia in *Don Quijote I*

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OVER THE PAST DECADE, as I have worked on the implications of Cervantes' visual writing, I concentrated on the concept of ekphrasis, with its mnemonic implications and its many permutations.¹ By doing this, I left aside other important manifestations of writing for the eyes.² One in particular, teichoskopia, was closely associated with ekphrasis from its inception.³ The term teichoskopia or 'view from the wall,' is, as Norman Austin asserts, "the *locus classicus* for the

¹ "In terms of form and function, ekphrasis can be allegorical, emblematic, decorative, or veiled; and it can serve as a rhetorical or mnemonic device (or both)—the latter leading to the proliferation of occult or magical theaters of memory. In terms of pictorial models and how these are used, ekphrasis can be notional (based on an imagined work of art), or actual or true (based on a real work of art). It can also be combinatory (combining two or more works of art), transformative (changing some elements in the art work into others that can be connected to the original ones), metadescriptive (based on a textual description of a work of art which may or many not exist), or fragmented (using parts of a work). Ekphrasis can conform to the pause in the narrative to describe an object (descriptive ekphrasis), or it can tell the story depicted in the art work—and even expand on the incidents (narrative ekphrasis)" ("Simple Magic" 22).

² These include anamorphosis (carefully studied by David R. Castillo), cartography, metamorphosis, mirrors and mirroring techniques, paragone, theophany (as in the description of Marcela as a "maravillosa visión"), the book as visual object, the visual triggers of memory, and imagination and the many objects that permeate the text.

³ The term partially derives from the Greek *skopeo*, 'to look at.'

traditional Helen portrait" (17). It derives from the famous passage in the third book of the *Iliad* where Helen comes to the walls of Troy to view the deadly contest between her abductor and lover Paris and her husband Menelaus. Helen is sent to the city walls at a time when she is weaving "many battles of the horse-taming Trojans and the brazen-coated Achaeans" (Homer 3.125-27). Thus, ekphrasis (the tapestry) and teichoskopia are closely allied. Furthermore, as both Ann Bergren and Matthew Gumpert have shown, the words of Helen's messenger replicate those used to describe the weaving, thus implying a certain anachronism: Helen, as "author" of the poem/tapestry, has already depicted the events she is about to witness (Bergren 23; Gumpert 5).⁴ The two devices were later imitated by Virgil. As Aeneas arrives in Carthage, he is at first captivated by a series of murals concerning the Trojan War in Juno's temple, even before he is captivated by the appearance of the Queen. Although Dido here is not the author of the ekphrastic murals, she has ordered and led the building of Carthage and its temple, thus assuming a kind of authorial role. At the end of the episode, we find her at her tower, viewing Aeneas' departure and contemplating her own suicide. While Helen speaks to the elders at the wall and is viewed and judged by them, but not by those below, Dido curses Aeneas and his people as they depart, her words carrying her despair across the waves. In spite of the differences, both epic poems move from ekphrasis to teichoskopia and in both, woman has an authorial role and looks down from above.⁵

4 Iris, disguised as Laodice, daughter of Priam, echoes her weaving in her words: "Come hither, dear lady, that thou mayest behold the wondrous doings of the horse-taming Trojans and the brazen-coated Achaeans" (Homer, 3.131-32). If the weaving shows anachronism so does the teichoskopia, becoming "part of a design to show beginnings in ends and by that transcendence of linear time, to show simultaneously both something that happened once and what there is in that 'something' that ever 'recurs'" (Bergren 23).

5 Of course, the "view from the wall" is not absent from other literary forms. In Horace's *Odes* (3.2, 6-13), it appears in an epic moment when "the wife of a warring tyrant and her adult daughter [are] looking from battlements anxious for their prince"

In this essay, I would like to discuss this epic device in Part I of *Don Quijote*. Renaissance texts utilized teichoskopia as an element of *evidentia*, the Greek *hypotiposis*,⁶ which serves to achieve visualization, the impression that one is actually looking at things and events (Arenas Cruz 249). Cervantes' move from ekphrasis to teichoskopia can be seen as a heuristic imitation of the classical devices, thus imbuing his novel with new and enticing variations on epic episodes.⁷ Cervantes adds yet another layer of complexity by including two framing moments when a reverse teichoskopia takes place. The central scene or true teichoskopia is that of Marcela, where the text shows what a woman can see that men cannot.⁸ While the central scene combines pastoral and epic, the frame episodes intertwine chivalric and classical motifs in such a fashion that it is often difficult to separate one from the other.⁹

(Simpson 65). *Teichoskopia* is also found in classical theater, where we view it, for example, in Euripides' *The Phoenissiae*. Here, an old servant goes with Antigone to the highest point in the house and they watch together the army that threatens Thebes. Euripides follows the ascent with a dialogue where Antigone's many questions elicit detailed responses from the servant, answers that turn into a catalogue of warriors, a type of *enumeratio* which is also found in Helen's *teichoskopia* in the *Iliad*.

6 See Quintilian 9.2.40.

7 For Greene, heuristic imitation involves a "double process of discovery: on the one hand through a tentative and experimental groping for the subtext in its specificity and otherness, and on the other hand through a groping for the modern poet's own appropriate voice and idiom" (42). In Cervantes, the second element predominates; he is not as interested in reaching out to the classics as in giving them a new voice.

8 There may be other moments related to teichoskopia in the novel, but they involve doing rather than viewing. I am thinking first of all of the Captive's Tale, in which a Moorish woman sends messages to the captive through a hole in a window. A similar hole is used in a comic episode by Maritornes to trap Don Quijote's hand and keep him suspended. Both episodes use the term "agujero." At the same time, a case can be made for teichoskopia since Zoraida does say that she has been observing the captive's conduct.

9 Michael McGaha has stated: "the parody of the novels of chivalry was in reality only a smokescreen intended to mask Cervantes' primary intention in *Don Quijote*, which was to imitate and improve upon Virgil's *Aeneid*" ("Cervantes and Virgil" 34).

In the first framing *teichoskopia* in the novel, as the knight searches for his first adventure in Chapter Two, he comes across an inn, which in his imagination becomes a castle. As he approaches, he waits for a typical event in the novels of chivalry, for a dwarf, who standing upon the ramparts would announce the knight's arrival with his trumpet (I, 2; 82).¹⁰ In the end, he takes a swineherd for a dwarf and is satisfied. Although the imaginative elements of the event derive from the romances of chivalry, there are faint echoes here of the device as used in classical texts. First of all, the reader is not presented with a true *teichoskopia*, since this would require a narrative of the dwarf looking down upon the knight. Instead, it is the knight who looks up at the imaginary ramparts in search of the trumpeter. Studying Horace's *Odes*, Charles Simpson asserts that these poems contain a number of playful inversions of the rhetorical device. In what he labels as a "reverse *teichoskopia*," a character looks at the walls and the people upon them (66). The most famous instance occurs when the goddess Juno imagines that Troy and its walls are rebuilt. She reacts with anger, returning to her epic role, and vowing to destroy them over and over again. Indeed this reverse *teichoskopia* shares with the Cervantine episode the fact that the walls (be it of a castle or city) are a product of the imagination. Of course, the characters have opposite reactions: while don Quijote wants to be welcomed, the goddess wishes to show

My own view is that *Don Quijote* serves, among many things, as an apprenticeship to epic. This apprenticeship derives from Cervantes' desire to imitate Virgil's literary career. Like Virgil, he begins with eclogue (pastoral) and ends with epic (a work that imitates Heliodorus). But Cervantes differed from Virgil in that he wanted to follow the genres in prose rather than in verse. (De Armas "Cervantes and the Virgilian Wheel"). It is ironic that the experimental *Don Quijote* became the canonized text, while his own pick for the canon, his Heliodoran epic *Persiles y Sigismunda* has never been fully acclaimed by critics.

10 For the importance of benefic and malignant dwarves, who bring out elements of the marvelous and the grotesque in *Don Quijote*, see Eduardo Urbina. He shows that while in Chrétien de Troyes the dwarf opposes the hero, in the romances of chivalry they tend to be more positive figures, serving as messengers and mediators. Thus we find him WHO IS "HIM"? in this episode of Cervantes' novel.

her displeasure. Although the threads of classical imitation are almost invisible in Cervantes, I will argue that its presence is reinforced once the reader understands it as one of two frames for the main teichoskopia in the novel.

The other side of the framing is a doubling of teichoskopia which occurs in Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen of Part I, while the main teichoskopia will be found in between. Both framing moments evince a teichoskopia that is freed from its original meaning, an orphaned term that wanders through time acquiring new and even opposite meanings. We have seen how in the first instance, although don Quijote wishes to experience for himself the epic grandeur of a teichoskopie moment, in reality he is the one who is looking up, reversing the direction of sight. In Chapter Seventeen the same situation occurs, and again, it is sound that triggers teichoskopia. Having departed from an inn, which he again considers a castle, the knight had left behind his squire, who is tossed in a blanket. On hearing his cries, don Quijote turns around and attempts to re-enter, only to find the gates locked. As he circles the walls he can see Sancho rise and fall, but there seems nothing he can do. This teichoskopia is different from the first one in that the knight is unable to enter the castle/inn, but this particular one resembles the previous one because it uses a similar type of character. Instead of a dwarf, we have a squire. In romances of chivalry, these two types often had one job in common, the carrying of messages. Indeed, later in the novel, don Quijote speaks of “escuderos, doncellas o enanos que les llevan nuevas” (I, 31; 384). And both of these figures appear in carnivalesque situations. Thus, this is a purely comic reverse teichoskopia with no epic pretensions: “Viole bajar y subir por el aire, con tanta gracia y presteza, que, si la cólera le dejara, tengo para mí que se riera” (I, 17; 214).

On being released, Sancho, of course, is not at all pleased with his master, who did not display the same fury and determination as he had shown in previous battles. Don Quijote excuses himself using the recurring theme of enchantment—these “fantasmas y gente del otro mundo”

(I, 18; 216) had contrived to keep him stuck to his horse, but Sancho refuses to believe him. The knight must find a way to redeem himself in the eyes of his squire and again inspire him with an epic-chivalric vision. When don Quijote perceives “una grande y espesa polvareda,” he concludes that it is a “copiosísimo ejército” (I, 18; 218). The very term “copiosísimo” call forth the rhetorical term *copia*, which refers to imitation through abundance. And this is exactly what happens in this episode. Teichoskopia and several other devices are abundantly developed. The one cloud of dust becomes two, leading the knight to conclude that he is in the presence of two large armies convening to do battle.

In order to “right” the reverse and comical teichoskopia, the knight tells Sancho that they must climb a hill in order to better observe the events. Although lacking the wall, this is still a view from above. In addition, what don Quijote is doing in the narrative is part of what Cicero and Quintilian label *evidentia*, giving the impression that one is actually looking at events: “a quality which makes us seem not so much to be talking about something as exhibiting it” (Quintilian 6.2.32; 3.61). While in a speech it would be the speaker who envisions events, in a work of fiction, a character or narrative voice may pose as the one who sees and thus provides evidence of the event. Cervantes, in his clever use of rhetorical *evidentia*, provides the sounds and sights that may confirm the presence of two armies. Quintilian asserts: “It is proper that the student should be moved by his subject and imagine it to be real” (6.2.36; 3.63). Don Quijote certainly does so, and as such he can be considered a good student of rhetoric—albeit one who believes in his own imaginings. But rhetoric does not necessarily search for truth. It can be at odds with the historical account as conceived by the ancients.

Classical histories would often use *authopatehia* or autopsy, the eyewitness account, since it was believed to be more reliable than the hearing of an event (Simpson 66–67).¹¹ While Cervantes’ episode shows an

¹¹ The term derives from the Greek *autoptēs* or eyewitness. The later Latin term *autopsia* can also mean personal inspection.

impressive use of rhetoric, as historical account it evinces how both sight and hearing serve only to deceive don Quijote. As he listens and looks, his imagination turns dust and sound into the armies of Pentapolín and Alifanfarón, something which he conveys as historical autopsy. The knight struggles to win over Sancho and the listener or reader through his vivid but imagined rhetorical *evidentia*. What furthers his claim is that teichoskopic moments are usually tied to a type of *enumeratio* typical of the classical epic, and later of the Italian romances and the romances of chivalry—the catalogue of heroes before a battle. The knight’s lengthy description of the many combatants and their armies is a masterpiece of *copia*, but one that amuses through its whimsical depictions rather than convincing through details. As an apparent connoisseur of the epic, the knight even names the different peoples engaged in war defining them through the main river that traverses their land, a type of catalogue found frequently in Homer and Virgil, although also present in some chivalric romances. But Sancho (and the readers of the novel) will not believe in this copious imitation. In spite of don Quijote’s *evidentia*, the squire claims that the sounds are: “balidos de ovejas y carneros” (I, 18; 223). But the knight further presses his point replying that Sancho is neither seeing nor hearing correctly: “porque uno de los efectos del miedo es turbar los sentidos y hacer que las cosas no parezcan lo que son” (I, 18; 223). This partial teichoskopia thus becomes a meditation on what constitutes a “factual” history. It also serves to question the reliability of the senses, showing how an eyewitness can truthfully provide a false account.¹²

But these are not the only original features of the use of the device. As the knight sallies forth to fight goats and sheep, the learned reader would recall that this is precisely an event imitated from classical litera-

¹² “In his highly readable and quite amusing *How to Write History*, 29, Lucian of Samosata makes a self-styled historian from Corinth assert that: ‘ears are less trustworthy than eyes. I write then what I have seen, not what I have heard.’ (The joke here, of course, is that the person lampooned by Lucian had not even set foot outside Corinth and, thus, could not credibly make the claim of being an eye-witness)” (Simpson 67).

ture, in which Ajax goes mad and starts attacking sheep as if they were human foes.¹³ The novel, then, is pointing to classical *auctoritas* and diverting it through the imaginative whimsies of a hero who re-configures the classics by transforming *evidentia* into an indictment on the reliability of the senses and into a ludic game in which autopsy and *teichoskopia* are emptied of their historical accuracy and epic grandeur. Indeed, this new *teichoskopia* is now fluid, without walls, existing as a way to wall-in the previous comic *teichoskopia*, thus preventing it from shattering the epic-chivalric vision of the knight.¹⁴

13 This episode is found in Sophocles' *Ajax* and in Apuleius' *Golden Ass*. For a discussion of Cervantes' imitation of this battle see Selig and McGaha ("Intertextuality"). The latter asserts that Sophocles' tragedy "was not translated into Spanish until long after Cervantes' time; the first translation into a modern language was the Italian one published in Venice in 1603" ("Intertextuality" 158). Consequently, Cervantes was indebted to Apuleius and not to Sophocles. Apuleius takes it for granted that the reader knows that Ajax went mad when Achilles' arms were given to Ulysses and not to him. He compares Ajax's madness with that of Lucius: "So you boldly drew your sword, armed like mad Ajax: he turned his anger against live sheep and slaughtered whole flocks, but you were much braver and drove life's breath out of three inflated goatskins" (3.18; 1.159–61).

14 María Elena Arenas Cruz, Javier J. González Martínez and Santiago Fernández-Mosquera have found evidence of *evidentia* and particularly of *teichoskopia* in plays by Rojas Zorrilla, Vélez de Guevara and Calderón, in which the device is used to narrate major battles or the siege of cities and fortresses that would be difficult to stage, thus adding epic grandeur and a sense of witnessing to these works. *Teichoskopia* may simply occur when characters are viewing events from the first or second balcony constructed in back of the stage. And, many of these *teichoskopie* moments simply involve the view from a hilltop (the balcony). María Elena Arenas Cruz discusses instances where: "La batalla sucede en el presente y es contada por un personaje que la está viendo desde lejos (desde un monte, desde un muro, desde una torre o incluso escondido). Se corresponde con lo que la Retórica llamaba *teichoskopia*" (250). She analyses, for example, the scene where the *gracioso* Caimán narrates the battle from the top of a hill in Rojas Zorrilla's *Los aspides de Cleopatra* (253). Santiago Fernández-Mosquera notes that even in Calderón's late plays where battles do take place on stage, *teichoskopia* remains an important device. Magón's harangue to the Carthaginian soldiers, for example, includes a *teichoskopia*, as he tells them of the advancing Roman army he is viewing as he speaks

The episode of the swineherd/dwarf takes place in the first part of the 1605 novel, while that of the squire followed by the army of sheep appears in the third. In between is part two, which begins with the discovery of Cide Hamete's manuscript which contains an ekphrasis of the battle between the knight and the Biscayan. Although there is conflicting evidence as to the skillfulness of the illustration, as William Worden has shown,¹⁵ what links it to the two epics is the fact that they emerge from a fictional character who is an outsider. Next to Helen and Dido, we must now include the Arabic historian. Indeed, if we accept the second meaning of ekphrasis, the description of any object, then we can add that the Arabic manuscript itself is an ekphrasis. Having begun this section of the novel with an emphasis on ekphrasis, it should end with a teichoskopia.

In Chapter Fourteen, at the very end of Part Two, Marcela appears upon a hill as she looks down on the funeral of Grisóstomo, who is said to have died of love for her. As opposed to the previous uses of the device, when a dwarf, a carnivalesque squire and a crazed knight are situated above, here it is a woman, Marcela, who is on top. This recalls that the best-known examples of teichoskopia in ancient literature have a woman as observer: Helen in the *Iliad*, Dido in the *Aeneid*, Antigone in the *Phoenissiae*, and Juno in the *Odes*. Although coming closer through gender to the classical device, there still appears to be something missing—there is no wall, just a hill upon which Marcela stands.¹⁶ This leaves Marcela wide-open to attack, and that is precisely what happens. Ambrosio

(269). Finally, for Javier J. González Martínez, the tourney in the plays of Luis Vélez de Guevara serves to evoke teichoskopia, since the ladies who comment on the spectacle are found in the balcony above the stage). This is particularly the case in *El amor en vizcaíno* (78–79).

¹⁵ "Keeping in mind don Quijote's twice-told tale of how untalented artists need to label their artwork, the reader may come to the conclusion that the names included in the illustration... could quite possibly be an indication not of clarity, but rather of artistic ineptness" (148).

¹⁶ "por cima de la pena por donde se cavaba la sepultura" (I, 14; 185).

lashes out against her, and he certainly has the upper hand—he has the *evidentia*. Quintilian observes: “Suppose I am complaining that someone has been murdered. Am I not to have before my eyes all the circumstances which one can believe to have happened during the event?... Will not the blood, the pallor, the groans, the last gasp of the dying be imprinted on my mind?” (6.2.31; 3.61). In this case, Cervantes presents the visual through narrative, so Ambrosio need not bring it to the mind’s eye. After all, the body of Grisóstomo is just below the hill where Marcela is standing. Indeed, as Roberto González Echevarría has explained, this scene as well as the whole episode, resembles a trial.¹⁷ What Ambrosio does not realize is that in asking: “si con tu presencia vierten sangre las heridas deste miserable a quien tu crueldad quitó la vida” (I, 14; 185), he is actually proving her innocence, since the corpse does not start bleeding, as was thought it should do in the presence of the killer.

Deceived in thinking that he has the body of evidence, that he has autopsy, what Ambrosio must now do is to use further techniques to blame Marcela.¹⁸ In order to arouse negative emotions in the spectators, Ambrosio becomes indignant that she would come to the burial. He then accusingly inquires of her: “¿O vienes a ufanarte en las crueles hazañas de tu condición, o a ver desde esa altura como otro despiadado Nero, el incendio de su abrasada Roma...?” (I, 14; 185). The anecdote of Nero,

17 “It is an episode in which love and the law are tightly intertwined and which culminates in a variation of the trial scene... The conflict, involving injury, restitution, possible revenge, accusations, defense, judgment, and release from culpability, unfolds and is resolved in a decidedly judicial manner” (78, 79).

18 In its medical context, the term autopsy (*autopsia*) was first recorded in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* in 1869. For Jonathan Sawday: “The period between (roughly 1540 and 1640, is, therefore, the period of the *discovery* of the Vesalian body... Guiding the followers of Vesalius was the belief that the human body expressed in miniature the divine workmanship of God, and that its form corresponded to the greater form of the macrocosm” (23). Sawday finds numerous references to these voyages into the body as related to the discovery of America; very much like the new continent, the body had to be mapped and “colonized” (28). Thus autopsy is still part of the eyewitness account that renders credible voyages to strange lands and body parts.

who was rumored to have set fire to Rome in order to rebuild it, and who watches the destruction from above, had become a commonplace in the early modern period, appearing in *Celestina*, and even in the 1615 *Quijote*. In both texts it is used as an analogy for the fires of love, which ravage the lover (Calisto and Altisidora).¹⁹ Ambrosio's question, then, includes a double analogy and a double condemnation. First, Marcela is Nero since they each observe with glee a lamentable event—the destruction of ancient Rome and the death of Grisóstomo. Secondly, the burning fires of Rome are analogous to the flames of passion experienced by Grisóstomo and to the actual flames burning his papers at his funeral. Again, like Nero, Marcela watches with satisfaction the destructive results of the flames of passion.

The Nero analogy seems to emphasize not only cruelty and destruction, but also the fact that teichoskopia has lost its walls; that the term no longer conforms to its original meaning. The hill upon which Nero was said to be standing, was, according to one legend, the Tarpeian rock. Both Fernando de Rojas and Cervantes in Part II of his novel allude to a Spanish *romance* in which Nero stands upon this particular hill to watch the fire. This rock was highly charged with meaning, since it was here that Tarpeia betrayed the city to the Sabines, either for love of gold or for love of the enemy general. It was subsequently used to hurl traitors and murderers to their death. Indeed, when Nero fled Rome after Galba's rebellion, he was terrified of what they would do to him: "he would be led naked through the streets with his neck in a yoke, he would be beaten with rods until he died, and his body would be thrown from the Tarpe-

19 Historians date the fire as starting on 19 June of the year 64. It lasted nine days "and reduced three of the fourteen regions (regions) of the city to rubble" (Hornblower and Spawforth 491). In *Celestina*, Sempronio sings of Nero's fire thus alluding to the fires of passion experienced by his master, Calisto. Indeed, the latter declares: "Mayor es mi fuego, y menos la piedad de quien yo agora digo" (92). In the 1615 *Quijote* Altisidora feigns to be in love with the knight, and asks him not to look at the fires of love in her heart as Nero looked upon the fires of Rome: "No mires de tu Tarpeya / este incendio que me abraza / Nerón manchego del mundo" (II, 44; 373).

ian Rock" (Champlin 5). These possibilities led him to commit suicide. Thus, the hill upon which Nero stands evokes murder, betrayal and destruction, as well as visions of the Emperor's own demise for his crimes to Rome. And this confirms Ambrosio's negative intent in his depiction of Marcela—she has betrayed and killed Grisóstomo.

And yet, I will argue that this is a true *teichoskopia*, which in the manner of the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* follows a meta-authorial ekphrasis. What must be noted is that Ambrosio makes a rhetorical mistake by not mentioning the location from where Nero viewed the fire. Perhaps he has done this for the sake of brevity or lucidity. But unfortunately for him, this ellipsis, the withholding of place, opens up a new possibility. There were more canonical locations for Nero's viewing of the fire, and there was one in particular that stood out.²⁰ Pedro Mexía in his *Silva de varia lección*, a book often consulted by Cervantes, states that: "assí ardió siete días y noches la ciudad, gozando él [Nero] deste hermoso espectáculo desde una torre" (Part I, Chapter 34; 1: 474). Nero's tower is actually pinpointed by Suetonius: "Nero watched the fire from the tower of Maecenas, delighted with what he termed 'the beauty of the flames' and, dressed in his stage attire, he sang of 'the Fall of Troy'" (217).²¹ This alternate site provides Marcela with the walls that accompany the view from above in a full *teichoskopia*. Furthermore, the fact that Nero sings of the fall of Troy while watching the burning of Rome brings together the two key ancient epics with their respective *teichoskopia*: the *Iliad* with its battle for Troy and the *Aeneid*, which has as subtext the founding of Rome. In his biography of Nero, Edward Champlin makes it clear that the negative vision of this Emperor was not shared by all, and that

²⁰ According to Dio, Nero went to the roof of the palace or the highest point in the Palatine. Tacitus just has him go to a private stage instead of watching the fire (Champlin 49).

²¹ The tower was located in the Esquiline hill, in the gardens of Maecenas. A diplomat for Augustus and a patron of the arts, Maecenas left his gardens and magnificent home to the emperor upon his death.

many viewed him in a positive light. Indeed, his histrionics may only reveal his own sense of tragedy, “comparing current evils with ancient disasters” (Champlin 49). Marcela, like Nero, may be pointing to current evils, the fact that men will not allow her to live in peace. And like Nero she is truly bemoaning the fall of Troy in the sense that it had become a common metaphor for the conquest of a woman’s body (as in *El burlador de Sevilla*, for example).²²

The power of Marcela’s speech is further reinforced by yet another place. The tower where Nero stood belonged to Maecenas, the quintessential patron of the arts, who provided for the poets of the Augustan age. It inspired Nero to sing of the “Fall of Troy” and Marcela to respond to her accusers.²³ Maecenas was Virgil’s patron—a poet who sang of the *pax romana* and Golden Age established by the emperor Augustus. Indeed, this age was said to have been turned upside-down by Nero’s cruelty in the latter years of his rule. Now, Virgil, as I have argued elsewhere, was the poetic model for Grisóstomo—from the way he fashions his literary career, moving from pastoral to epic, to his final testament in which he orders that his poetry be destroyed at his death. In order to

22 In Tirso’s text, after don Juan dishonors Tisbea, she exclaims:

¡Fuego, fuego, que me quemó,
que mi cabaña se abrasa!
...Mi pobre edificio queda
hecho otra Troya en las llamas,
que después que faltan Troyas
quiere Amor quemar cabañas (vv. 986–87, 990–93).

As Helen Solterer has shown, the image of conquest which relates woman to city and vice versa was very common during the Middle Ages (107). Troy is mentioned repeatedly in Cervantes’ novel, although not in this context. See, for example,

I.49.58 and II.26.239; II.29.266; II.32.293; II.41.340.

23 While many accused Nero of setting the fire, Tacitus asserts that there is no clear evidence for this. His contemporary biographer, Champlin, on the other hand, believes that the fire was set on purpose.

make sure the reader understands this link, Cervantes has Vivaldo state that Grisóstomo's poems should be saved against the instructions of his will very much like Virgil's *Aeneid* was saved against his orders: "Y no le tuviera bueno Augusto César si consintiera que se pusiere en ejecución lo que el divino Mantuano dejó en su testamento mandado... Antes haced, dando la vida a estos papeles, que la tenga siempre la crueldad de Marcela" (I, 13; 179). Vivaldo argues that Grisóstomo's poems are *evidentia* that will serve to keep alive Marcela's guilt. In spite of their written nature, they are visual objects that contain attacks against her. Furthermore, they can be considered "documents," a much-used proof in forensic rhetoric.²⁴ While the episode has much to do with classical rhetoric and its way of proving or disproving guilt, it is also grounded on a careful and playful imitation of the ancient epics and histories. While Grisóstomo's poems may emphasize Marcela's cruelty, she chooses a teichoskopik location to look down upon the men and give her reply. She is not silent and racked with guilt like Helen, but comes closer to the Virgilian Dido who curses her lover. She is "unwittingly" aided by Ambrosio's ellipsis, since she can claim that she stands not upon the Tarpeian rock but upon Maecenas' hill and tower, a place that was in many ways consecrated to Augustan poets such as Virgil.²⁵ Thus, she takes her place as the figure that competes with Grisóstomo to become a new—a female—Virgil.

In Virgil's poem, Aeneas is the trigger for a teichoskopia. Ordered by the gods not to remain in Carthage and to give up amorous pursuits

24 The episode of Marcela and Grisóstomo uses both "rumors" and "documents," which are "Nontechnical Proofs" as described by Quintilian (5.3 and 5.5).

25 One must wonder at Ambrosio's rhetorical mistakes. Could they be subtle artifices to exonerate Marcela? Much later in the novel, the tale of the "Curioso impertinente" will show two friends in love with the same woman. Could we discover in Ambrosio an incipient desire for Marcela? After all, most of the men present at her speech desire her. Thus Ambrosio's motivation can be questioned. He either unwittingly helps Marcela, or does so given his own feelings for her. There is also the possibility that we have here a first example of homoerotic friendship that will later be developed in the relation between Anselmo and Lotario in the "Curioso impertinente."

for epic-imperial ones, he abandons Dido. His hasty departure is viewed by the lovesick Dido from the top of a tower, in the form of a *teichoskopia*.²⁶ This cruel separation will lead her to curse the hero who is abandoning her and driving her to suicide. Arturo Marasso, one of the few critics who have noted Cervantes' imitation of the Dido episode in Virgil, states: "Dido murió por Eneas; Grisóstomo por Marcela. Una misma crueldad y una idéntica desventura arrastran al suicidio a los dos enamorados" (85). Thus, Cervantes' scene reverses the gender roles. While Aeneas was the cruel one, here Marcela is said to share this fault; and while Aeneas departs to become an epic hero, Marcela turns away to become a goddess of the forests, each embodying their own genre (epic and pastoral).

If we look at the Cervantine episode as a mere reversal of Virgil's, I think we are missing the point. We must keep in mind that Marcela's alleged cruelty is part of Grisóstomo's epic plan. He defames her in order to gain fame and fulfill his poetic career. But his poetry does not sing of a new empire, unless it is the territory of Marcela's body, which is denied to him. He is as cursed (and famous) as Aeneas.²⁷ Marcela stands upon the hill of Maecenas where she also sings her song. Without her words, the episode would not be as memorable. After all, she is the woman on top.²⁸

26 "And now early Dawn, leaving the saffron bed of Tithonous, was sprinkling her fresh rays upon the earth. Soon as the queen from her watch-tower saw the light within and the fleet move on with even sails, and knew the shores and harbours were void of oarsmen, thrice and four times she truck her comely breast with her hand, and tearing her golden hair..." (1. 435; 4.584 ff).

27 "If that accursed retch must needs touch his haven and float to shore—if thus Jove's doom demands, there his goal stands fixed—yet, beset in war by arms of a gallant race, driven from his borders, and torn from Iulus' embrace, let him sue for aid and see the cruel slaughter of his friends! Then, when he that yielded to the terms of an unjust peace, may he not enjoy his kingdom or the pleasant light, but let him fall before his time and lie unburied in the sand!" (4.612–20).

28 Another instance of *teichoskopia* can be compared and contrasted with the third example since once again it is a woman who looks down on men. But, in this case, death gives way to playfulness. Here, Maritornes and the Innkeeper's daughter look down on

The teichoskopik women of classical literature often suffer and often are unable to act—but they see the full picture, they see the scene below where men battle out of both desire and hatred. In this subtle imitation of the classics, Cervantes takes up teichoskopia in order to imitate and surpass the ancients. He shows Marcela as Helen, as Dido, as Nero;²⁹ but also as part of the song, as a key component of epic and pastoral, of a new and novel genre, in which these commingle with a trial scene, where Marcela, the accused, although framed, chooses her points of advantage to present her evidence.

Her speech shows her to be as well trained in rhetoric and poetics as Grisóstomo.³⁰ Her scene is as magnificent as that of Dido, but lacking the pathos of a victim. Helen is depicted in the *Iliad* as weaving a tapestry of the war in Troy, while Dido's murals in the *Aeneid* evoke loss but prepares the triumph of the defeated which will come about through her own defeat. Both women are then artificers of what is and what will be—a paradox since they do not control the action. Indeed, their reward for ekphrasis is guilt, suspicion, loss and suicide. Countering this epic move, Cervantes makes an Arab the artificer, while Marcela goes beyond witnessing in her teichoskopia. For some, her words may only carry the histrionic cruelty of Nero, but for most, her tone brings to fulfillment the epic majesty and exalted location of the teichoskopik women who

Don Quijote, as they are about to play a prank on him (I, 43; 527).

²⁹ All three are examples of legendary figures who went against what was considered lawful. Helen went against marital law, Dido went against what was expected of her as widow and Queen of Carthage, and Nero went against what was beneficial for Rome. To be free of society's marriage expectations, Marcela also removes herself from accepted societal practices.

³⁰ The problem is much more complex and worthy of further exploration. It would be interesting to compare the rhetoric of Marcela, Dido, Helen, Nero, Ambrosio and Grisóstomo. I have been discussing these and other problems in this interpolated tale with my graduate seminars on Cervantes, but in particular with my research assistant Benjamin J. Nelson. I thank him for his insights.

emerge from an ancient past.³¹

In conclusion, women of the epic are often shown as the impulse for ekphrasis,³² a device that is often conjoined with teichoskopia. While the view from above seems to provide them with a wide yet tragic comprehension of events, their agency is fictive: Helen witnesses war, while Dido's words are hurled into empty space. Cervantes takes up the epic challenge, foregrounding the unheard or the unbelieved. While the first teichoskopik scene in the novel is dwarfed by the realities of the inn, the Marcela episode achieves epic proportions within pastoral through the artistic duel between a man who would die for love and fame and a woman who would vanish after speaking to those who would not listen. While the third teichoskopik scene questions the trustworthiness of sight and hearing through the quixotic uses of *evidentia*, the Marcela episode amazes through the sheer number of classical allusions and metaphors, challenging the reader to seek evidence for Marcela's role in Grisóstomo's demise. For Cervantes' text has framed Marcela in the two senses of the word. She is accused of a "murder" she did not commit and she is placed as the central figure between two framing scenes. Paradoxically, it is the "prosecutor" Ambrosio who unwittingly gives evidence *against* Marcela's guilt, problematizing the autopsy of Grisóstomo's body. Thus, it is by way of Nero, by the route of cruelty, that we reach Maecenas and then

31 Cervantes will not forget the teichoskopik women evoked in this episode. Toward the very end of *Don Quijote II*, the text reminds the reader of the importance of the images of Helen and Dido through the description of two coarse tapestries that Don Quijote and Sancho find at an inn. While the first shows how Paris absconds with Helen, the second shows the precise moment of Dido's *teichoskopia*: "ella, sobre una alta torre, como que hacía señas con una media sabana al fugitivo huésped, que por el mar, sobre una fragata o bergantín, se iba huyendo" (II, 72; 575).

32 Although I am referring only to the episodes of the tapestry and the mural, the relation between women and ekphrasis can be found elsewhere. Even the two major shields that are crafted for Achilles and for Aeneas come about through the intercession of women who would save them from death: Thetis and Venus.

Virgil.³³ It is Virgil's cruel treatment of Dido that impels Cervantes to portray her anew as Marcela, a woman who can see what men cannot.

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33 A similar link between Virgil and Nero will be present in Part II of the novel. There, don Quijote's catabasis into the Cave of Montesinos recalls Aeneas's descent into the underworld to acquire knowledge. But, this cave can also be linked to the *Domus Aurea*, Nero's Golden Palace built in the midst of Rome, a space that opened up due to the fire that devastated the city. On this subject see my "Nero's Golden House."

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