

# Connecting Past and Present



# Connecting Past and Present:

*Exploring the Influence  
of the Spanish Golden Age  
in the Twentieth  
and Twenty-First Centuries*

Edited by

Aaron M. Kahn

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**To my grandfather**

**John Anthony Diehl**  
**27 July 1917 – 18 January 2015**

whose indomitable spirit, devout faith, humbling wisdom,  
and unconditional love for his family served as a true inspiration  
to me as an academic and as a man of this world



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	ix
Introduction .....	1
Connecting Past and Present	
Aaron M. Kahn	
Chapter One.....	11
The Man of La Mancha in Miniature: <i>Don Quijote</i> in Twenty-First-Century Spanish Microfiction	
Tyler Fisher	
Chapter Two.....	35
The Quixotic Detective: Golden Age Intertexts in Eduardo Mendoza's Crime Fiction	
Stacey Triplette	
Chapter Three.....	63
On Black-Gloved Fists and Pentagonal Sieges: Cervantes's <i>Numancia</i> and the Fight Against Imperialism in <i>Crónicas romanas</i> (1968)	
by Alfonso Sastre	
Aaron M. Kahn	
Chapter Four.....	85
The Sins of the Father are Redeemed by the Son (and Daughter): Determinism and Moral Autonomy in Cervantes's <i>Novelas ejemplares</i>	
Brian Brewer	
Chapter Five.....	109
Witnessing Crisis in Contemporary and Golden Age Spain	
Elvira Vilches	
Chapter Six.....	133
Mellifluent Influence: <i>Octavas reales</i> in Translation in the Royal Shakespeare Company's Golden Age Season	
Kathleen Jeffs	

Chapter Seven.....	159
A Twenty-First Century <i>Auto Sacramental</i> ?: Thomas Hürlimann's <i>Das Einsiedler Welttheater</i> (2007) and Calderón's <i>El gran teatro del mundo</i> Stephen Boyd	
Chapter Eight.....	187
A Silly Little Thing Called Love: Foolishness, Farce, and Fancy in Manuel Iborra's <i>La dama boba</i> (2006) Oliver Noble Wood	
Contributors.....	211
Index.....	215



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—AMK



# INTRODUCTION

## CONNECTING PAST AND PRESENT

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In order to establish properly a context for the study of literature or history in any given time period, one cannot always study the works, writers, or era in isolation; rather, by performing scholarly studies on these topics as a continuation of what has come before reveals that many thoughts, concepts, character types, criticisms, and social issues have been thoroughly explored by our literary ancestors. In Spain, the Golden Age is the era most frequently revisited by writers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and this is indicative of Spaniards' view of this epoch often called the Renaissance. According to Stephen Gilman, there is a debate about whether or not a Spanish Renaissance even existed, in reference to "the failure of Spaniards—or perhaps I should say the refusal of Spaniards—in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries to separate themselves ideologically or to divorce themselves axiologically from what now would be called their 'Middle Ages'. Unlike Italy and France and far more emphatically even than England, Spain was determining not just *not* to forget but actively continue her past" (1977, 37; original emphasis). Spain's twentieth and thus far twenty-first centuries have contained as much political and religious conflict as the days of the Habsburgs, and just as in previous centuries, today's Spaniards use the arts as a medium to comment, often critically, on contemporary times.

We refer to this era as the Golden Age not only because of the voluminous production of art, literature, drama and poetry, but also because writers such as Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616), Lope de Vega (1562-1635), and Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600-81), influenced by the re-birth of the Classical masters, presented the reading and viewing public with genuine human emotions and experiences in a more comprehensive manner than in previous eras. With the culmination of the *Reconquista* in recent memory, this is perhaps the first era of Spanish history that

resembles Spain of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The beginning of the twentieth century, just two short years after the disaster of the Spanish-American War (1898) and the end of the Spanish Empire, evolved into political crisis after political crisis. The great Spanish tragedy that was the Civil War (1936-39) and the relative stability of the Franco Dictatorship (1939-75), followed by the Transition and the concept of historical memory, have provided contemporary Spanish writers with the impetus and freedom to express their views. The natural source of inspiration, then, is the Golden Age, that epoch of history that produced such political and religious upheaval while also contributing to the formation of a Spanish national identity.

The concept of a Spanish national identity is admittedly problematic. During the Franco Dictatorship, the concept centralised into the notion of a Castilian and Catholic country, but the *caudillo* was still aware that he had to establish his regime and himself as Head of State by assuring the people that theirs represented another legitimate era in the history of the nation (Franco 1949, 96-97):

Historiography during the first two decades of the Franco era was largely intended to affirm the regime's morally correct role within Spanish history. The government therefore used strategies both to suppress and to engender the past, that is, to arrest dissonance in the discourse of history as well as to assert continuity between the glories of an imperial Catholic Spain and the illustrious present of the Franco era. (Herzberger 1991, 35)

During the time of the Habsburgs, the concept of *hispanitas*, the gradual construction of a Spanish national identity,<sup>1</sup> formed by looking into the past and identifying their monarchs, particularly Emperor Charles V (1519-58 (King Charles I of Spain (1516-56)), as a natural and moral continuation of the Roman Empire. The translation of empire from East to West (Persians, then Greeks, then Romans, then the Roman Catholic Church, now Spain) proved to the monarchy that their rule was God's will. Franco used the same rhetoric and looked to the Golden Age and the Reconquest of Iberia to legitimise his own crusade. Frequently he appropriated works and images from this era to connect his regime with the golden past of the nation he envisaged.

With Franco's death and the implementation of a democratic system of government, Spanish politicians and public figures, and to an extent the people as well, attempted to turn their collective backs on the past and

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<sup>1</sup> See Schmidt (1995) for a discussion of *hispanitas* in relation to sixteenth-century versions of the fall of Numancia.

look to a bright future. The *pacto de olvido* and the amnesty laws that followed proved a great asset to the relatively peaceful move from dictatorship to democracy; however, they did not leave history behind:

What made Spain's transition special was the lack of a clean break with the past. In essence, the transition was achieved by an unwritten, and for the most part unspoken, pact. The Francoist establishment acknowledged that the time had come for a change and undertook to wind up its operations on condition that reprisals were never taken against any of its members. (Hooper 2006, 83-84)

Describing this process as a transition accurately portrays its non-revolutionary nature, but it was not a forgive-and-forget transaction. With the dawn of the twenty-first century and the election of the first administration of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in 2004, there was a concerted effort to un-forget and reconcile the crimes of the past.<sup>2</sup>

Since the end of the dictatorship and with the subsequent attempt to recuperate historical memory in Spain, the concept of memory and the re-appropriation of history, and historiography, has been championed by modern Spanish writers and artists; thus, Spain has once again used the written word and visual arts to enter the past and relate to it through twenty-first century eyes. As Paul Julian Smith states, "if the past is a different country, then Spaniards are frequent visitors" (2006, 11). One example is the novel of memory, "those fictions that evoke past time through subjective remembering, most often through first-person narration. The past that each examines (the external referent of the text) is the past largely eschewed or appropriated by historiography under Franco, the lived past of the Civil War and the strains of dissent that anticipated the conflict and persisted in its aftermath" (Herzberger 1991, 35). Perhaps what we see, then, is an attempt to re-define the Spanish identity as being inclusive of the various cultures and languages spoken on the Iberian Peninsula, while distancing these distinct nations from the centralised

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<sup>2</sup> Hooper (2006) reminds us, though, that in Spanish schools, the Franco era is not emphasised or taught any differently than any other historical era: "And since the history taught in schools usually ends with the civil war, a lot of younger Spaniards have only the haziest idea of who he was. A number of schoolchildren interviewed on radio for a programme in 1992 to mark the centenary of his birth were under the impression Franco had belonged to the then governing party, the PSOE. Those who had grown up since the end of the dictatorship are baffled, and even annoyed, by the way foreigners continue to refer to the country in which they live as 'Post-Franco Spain' more than thirty years after his death" (80).

Francoist vision. The natural progression for this task is to use past symbols of Spanishness and make them contemporary.

The contribution of Cervantes's famous novel *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (1605 and 1615), perhaps the most enduring symbol in Spanish history, to the cultural, social, and literary history of not only Spain, but also the rest of the Western world, cannot be understated; perhaps more scholarly studies have been produced on this book than on any other single literary work in human history. Carroll B. Johnson refers to *Don Quijote* as the second-best-selling book of all time, calling it the centre of the history of the novel (2000, 19). It should be no surprise, then, that it has had a profound influence on literary production up to and including our own times. With the wide proliferation of quixotic characters and adaptations of the would-be knight-errant's adventures and misadventures, there has arisen in recent years a sub-genre of short-short stories, labelled microfiction. The sheer volume and diversity of episodes, characters, and settings, along with social criticism, have resulted in imitations that are just as numerous and varied. The *microcuentos* celebrate the art of economy of language in the attempt to pare down these episodes into a minimal number of words (see Chapter One).

On the opposite end of the genre spectrum from microfiction lies a series of detective novels with quixotic and picaresque structures, thus demonstrating further how contemporary Spanish authors have looked to the past of their nation with the aim of drawing parallels between eras. Post-Franco Spain, while providing a more moral form of governance with a liberal democracy and political pluralism, has also formed a breeding ground for poverty, crime, and corruption at a level unseen in the days of dictatorship. *Don Quijote* once again offers such a range of concepts and images that an author can exploit in the creation of a hero or anti-hero. A flawed protagonist whose experiences and interactions tap into a variety of literary genres most commonly related to Spain establishes a direct link to the famous *hidalgo* (see Chapter Two).

While *Don Quijote* has proved to be an ample source of material for subsequent generations of writers, the emergence of the professional theatre in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries produced a wealth of dramatic output. With the stage also comes a commentary on the political, social, and cultural scene of the era; theatrical works provide us with perhaps the most genuine depiction of daily life and the concerns that filled it. As most plays were written to be performed, they did not have to go through the same rigorous censoring process as published works, and as a result they could more quickly comment on current affairs. The theatre has a long history of social commentary, and writers such as Juan de la Cueva

(1543-1612),<sup>3</sup> Miguel de Cervantes, and other pre-Lopean contemporaries appear to have used the stage for these purposes. In Cervantes's case, *La destrucción de Numancia* (c. 1583), which was not published for the first time until 1784, has been studied as a piece of political rhetoric; in addition, in subsequent centuries, playwrights have used the story and Cervantes's version of it as a voice of those politically and militarily oppressed by imperial powers (see Chapter Three).

As Spain of the early twenty-first century suffers through a harsh economic reality, resulting in a great deal of poverty and a high level of unemployment, we see that economic hardship is nothing new to the Iberian Peninsula. Economics as a topic and the concept of a credit crunch were well established in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and in fact contributed to the expansion of the Spanish Empire. Relying on the exemplarity of Cervantes's *novelas* as well as studying past circumstances of economic turmoil in the country, contemporary Spaniards are able to attain an ampler vision of their current situation (see Chapters Four and Five).

Most academic scholars of Golden Age Spanish drama study the works and the playwrights more as literature than as performative works. However, we must not forget that most of the works were composed to be viewed by an audience rather than read in print. Even when studied in translation, the approach tends to fall more in line with literary theory than drama theory. When one combines a study of performance and translation, we see the works and their creators from an alternative perspective. The forms of verse employed by the original writers contained meaning, and often were used in specific situations and for types of characters. The question for the translator and dramaturge, then, is how to treat the rhyme, rhythm, and versification when translating from one language to another, four hundred years later. Study of performance carries with it a wider significance when analysing adaptations in translation, but perhaps the role of verses and verse changes is not as straightforward as is sometimes stated (see Chapter Six).

Our scholarly approach differs, though, when the adaptation is not only performed in a context and a language not traditionally associated with Golden Age Spain or Spanish academic studies, but also when it is a radical re-writing of the text. In Spain, perhaps more so than any other Western European country, theatrical works were collected and printed,

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<sup>3</sup> There exists some disagreement among scholars about Cueva's dates. Here I follow Reyes Cano's conclusions based on baptismal and death records he has found (1981).

thus ensuring a wider dissemination of the texts, and with the presence of Spain branching out over much of the continent in one form or another, so too travelled peninsular drama and literature. While more often than not the most famous of playwrights were the ones whose works were printed and distributed, these writers were no less influential; their impact has trickled down to the twenty-first century. In particular, the German Romantics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries sparked a renewed interest in the works of Lope de Vega, Miguel de Cervantes, and Pedro Calderón de la Barca. We see now a “re-discovery” of classical Spanish drama in the German-speaking theatrical tradition (see Chapter Seven).

Adaptations of theatrical works in Spain have also appeared in cinemas, and throughout the twentieth century these productions have taken on various meanings. The evolution of the medium of film has also allowed its exploitation, and while two-thirds of Spanish films that appear on television or in cinemas are based on literary texts (Wheeler 2012, 135), the significance of specifically Golden Age plays adapted to the silver screen has political roots in terms of national identity.<sup>4</sup> During the Franco regime, the dictator appropriated the texts and images of the Spanish Golden Age in order to promote his personal brand of Spanish nationalism and to feed into his own cult of personality as Generalissimo. In fact, Pilar Miró’s film production of *El perro del hortelano* (1996) represented the first time in nearly twenty years that a Lope de Vega play had been adapted to the screen, directly because “in the transition period, Golden Age drama was often construed as a reactionary art form that had enjoyed special treatment under Franco” (Smith 2006, 166-67). However, Miró’s film and Manuel Iborra’s *La dama boba* (2006) offer political and social commentary to a contemporary audience in a way that could not have been possible during the Franco era (see Chapter Eight).

In this volume, experts on the Spanish Golden Age from the United Kingdom, Ireland and the United States offer analyses of contemporary works that have been influenced by the classics from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Part of the formation of a sense of national identity is founded on the recognition and appreciation of what has come beforehand, and no other era in the history of Spanish literature and drama represents the talent and fascination that Spaniards and non-Spaniards alike possess with the artistic legacy of this country.

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<sup>4</sup> “A nation is nothing without the stories it tells itself about itself. Since nations are intimately tied up with narrative acts, it seems inevitable that cinema, the most powerful narrative machine of the twentieth century, has had something to say in the formation of national identities, Spanish included” (Triana Toribio 2003, 6).



Tyler Fisher opens this collection by studying the adaptations of Cervantes's masterpiece *Don Quijote* in the form of short-short stories, or *microcuentos*. In contemporary Spain, microfictional re-visions of the original novel have proliferated. This study examines relevant microfiction from the first twelve years of the twenty-first century. Drawing on the Spanish government's database *Libros editados en España* ([www.mcu.es](http://www.mcu.es)), it establishes a corpus of quixotic *microcuentos* and charts the most significant trends in their techniques of articulation. The essay principally addresses the question of what the abbreviated form permits that other forms do not, in terms of intertextual exploitation. In an apparent paradox, the *microcuentos* offer ample scope for imagining Don Quixote's extradiegetic existences, for challenging Cervantes's theoretical assertions, and for following up narrative loose ends in the original text. They invite innovative re-readings of *Don Quijote* under a more microscopic lens.

Stacey Triplette's chapter explores Golden Age intertexts in Eduardo Mendoza's four detective novels: *El misterio de la cripta embrujada* (1979), *El laberinto de las aceitunas* (1982), *La aventura del tocador de señoras* (2001), and *El enredo de la bolsa y la vida* (2012). Mendoza mentions the *picaresca*, the *esperpento*, *Don Quijote*, and Charles Dickens as four touchstone influences on his detective fiction. Mendoza adapts motifs from the *picaresque*, *Don Quijote*, and the *comedia* in order to draw parallels between Post-Franco Spain and the Golden Age. Numerous overt and subtle borrowings serve as an exemplary purpose; they warn readers that Spain of the *Transición* risks repeating the mistakes of the imperial age. Mendoza represents a world in which, despite the reforms of democracy, widespread poverty persists, a traditional aristocracy maintains control, and restrictive notions of what it means to be Spanish exclude many from full participation in society.

My contribution explores Alfonso Sastre's play *Crónicas romanas* (1968), a loose adaptation of Cervantes's *Numancia*. The latter has produced conflicting readings by academics, some arguing that the play promotes Spanish imperialism in the sixteenth century and others championing an interpretation of the drama as being negatively critical of Spain's expansion. However, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the play has repeatedly been used as a voice against repression in various adaptations. Sastre's work draws upon the tradition of *Numancia* representing a criticism of the repression of individuals by commenting on various political topics of the mid-to-late twentieth century, including Che Guevara, the Viet Nam War, and the Franco Dictatorship.

Returning to Cervantine prose, Brian Brewer offers a study on determinism and moral autonomy in Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares*

(1613). Parent-child relationships figure prominently in most of the twelve short stories that make up Cervantes's collection of *Novelas ejemplares*, and together they form one of the major thematic motifs of the work. An exploration of this theme throughout the volume reveals an intricate depiction of the values of parent-child relationships that bring the collection into a new light. From within the tradition of an established code of moral conduct Cervantes demonstrates a striking modernity by denying the primacy of blood and the determinism of class and gender to celebrate the freedom and spiritual independence of the morally autonomous individual.

With the massive minting of worthless copper and its frequent oscillations value, seventeenth-century Spaniards complained that money was no longer a source of income, but rather the cause of shock and emotional strain. The vagaries of *vellón* inspired reflections about a world upside down, deceit, and delusion in both economic writings and literary discourse. Elvira Vilches explores how these Baroque concerns are central to understanding the reactions to the financial meltdown that followed the collapse of Bankia in the summer of 2012. She argues that these parallels between the past and the present suggest that crisis brings about similar feelings of dejection and confusion through which the self sees itself poor and the world empty. Her essay establishes a dialogue between mercantilist discourse, Baroque writers, journalist writing for the *New Yorker* and *El País*, and Antonio Muñoz Molina's *Todo lo que era sólido* (2013).

Kathleen Jeffs draws upon her experiences as a translator and dramaturge to discuss the practical applications of translation for modern productions of Spanish Golden Age plays in English. How might looking at the occurrence of microsequences featuring one verse form be of use to translators and acting companies? The answer to that question is in the transferability of analytical methods employed by scholars such as Vitse and Güell to the translation and rehearsal processes. Jeffs isolates *octavas reales* in three plays used in the 2004 Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) season of Spanish Golden Age plays in order to demonstrate how this verse form, native to Italy but adopted by writers of the *comedia*, can provide the translator and theatrical ensemble with clues to the structure and characterisation of the *comedia*. She focuses on the *octavas reales* in Lope de Vega's *El perro del hortelano* (1618), Cervantes's *Pedro de Urdemalas* (1615), and *La venganza de Tamar* (1621-24) by Tirso de Molina (1579-1648).

Staying with drama, Stephen Boyd studies contemporary adaptations of the Calderón's work in the German-speaking world. *Das Einsiedler*

*Welttheater* (2000) and *Das Einsiedler Welttheater* (2007) by the contemporary Swiss dramatist, Thomas, are radical (the second even more so than the first) re-writings of Calderón de la Barca's famous *auto sacramental*, *El gran teatro del mundo* (c. 1636). Boyd's chapter locates Hürlimann's play in the contexts of the German Romantic "re-discovery" of Calderón and of the Einsiedeln theatre festival tradition, before going on to ponder the ways in which it contrasts with the Spanish source text, and some of the ways in which Hürlimann is, paradoxically, faithful to Calderón.

Concluding the volume, Oliver Noble Wood's chapter focuses on film adaptations of Lopean plays. The two most recent adaptations of works by Lope are Pilar Miró's *El perro del hortelano* and Manuel Iborra's *La dama boba*. The 1613 play on which the latter is based raises questions about the position of women in Golden Age Spain, and passes comment on social and cultural conventions of the day. Combining imitation and invention, Iborra's adaptation brings the play to life for a twenty-first century audience more accustomed to Hollywood romantic comedy than Lope's *comedia nueva*. This chapter discusses the significance of some of the changes made to the original play, paying special attention to the role and function of farce in Iborra's film.

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## CHAPTER ONE

# THE MAN OF LA MANCHA IN MINIATURE: *DON QUIJOTE* IN TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY SPANISH MICROFICTION

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At the close of Part I of *Don Quijote*, Miguel de Cervantes issues his famous challenge for another author to take up the writing of Don Quixote's adventures where he had left off. After hinting at a third sally for the self-proclaimed knight and his squire, Cervantes defers an account of this expedition and ends his novel with an epigraph, a line slightly misquoted from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (1516): "Forsi altro canterà con miglior plectio"—perhaps someone else will sing with a better plectrum (I.52). Whether intended ironically or not, this challenge was, notoriously, taken up by the pseudonymous Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda, whose *Segundo tomo* (1614) had profound repercussions for Cervantes's own sequel. And though Cervantes undertook to leave his protagonist sound of mind and soundly buried at the end of Part II, literary resurrections have never ceased in the centuries since; the Italian epigraph has proved far more prescient than Sansón Carrasco's epitaph.

Among continuations and adaptations of *Don Quijote*, the turn of the twenty-first century has seen a conspicuous vogue for microfiction that engages with Cervantes's novel.<sup>1</sup> In deliberately and artfully brief narrative texts (*microcuentos*),<sup>2</sup> ranging from only two dozen words to

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Dr Inmaculada Murcia Serrano and Professor Antonio Molina Flores for the *estancia de investigación* they provided me at the Universidad de Sevilla's Departamento de Estética e Historia de la Filosofía in June 2012, during which I gathered many of the materials that form the basis for this study.

<sup>2</sup> *Microcuento* is the prevailing term in Spanish usage, though it contends with alternatives such as *microrrelato*, *minificción*, and *cuento brevísimo*. My basic

several hundred, Spanish and Spanish American authors have, with increasing frequency, cultivated micro-literary allusions to Cervantes's text. With varying degrees of success and sophistication, they articulate a dialogue with *Don Quijote*—a dialogue which, as I will discuss, has precedents in the microfictions of Rubén Darío, Ernest Hemingway, and Franz Kafka. Such precedents, however, are not the focal point of this essay. In order to maintain a manageable scope, my selection of texts for analysis is limited to those by Spanish authors,<sup>3</sup> published within the last fourteen years—that is to say, Peninsular *microcuentos quijotescos* of the twenty-first century thus far. Within these parameters, I have attempted to make an exhaustive survey of relevant texts by combing through the most likely sources (mostly anthologies) recorded in *Libros Editados en España*, an electronic database which Spain's Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte maintains.<sup>4</sup> My trawling succeeded in identifying thirteen such *microcuentos*, though some have no doubt slipped through my net. These thirteen constitute the corpus of texts, arranged chronologically by date of their first publication, which appears as an appendix to this essay.

Mine is certainly not the first collection of this kind to be assembled. The fourth centenary of *Don Quijote*, Part I, gave rise to a spate of anthologizing. Several projects, in print and on the World Wide Web, attempted to bring together brief, *Quijote*-inspired texts as a means of registering the novel's legacy in the short fiction and poetry of successive centuries. Major works such as Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742), Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856), Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot* (1869), and Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) are widely known and widely recognized to have drawn inspiration from Cervantes's masterpiece (Mancing 2006, 160–64), but what of the scattered, shorter texts—poems, fragments, songs, adages, *microcuentos*, and other ephemera—based on the *Quijote*? Joaquín María Aguirre's virtual library, the *Biblioteca quijotesca*, stands as the forerunner in collecting such texts. Initiated in 1997 and hosted on the virtual pages of *Espéculo*, the Universidad Complutense's electronic journal of literary studies, Aguirre's web-

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definition of *microcuentos* here follows the general characterization that José María Merino formulates in “De relatos mínimos” (*Ficción continua* 2004, 229–37).

<sup>3</sup> Andrés Neuman is something of an exception within these Peninsular parameters. Born in Argentina, he has resided in Spain since childhood and possesses both Argentine and Spanish nationality.

<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing, this database is accessible via <<http://www.mcu.es/webISBN/>>.

anthology casts a wide net. Over the course of nine years, he solicited readers' recommendations of passages from international literature that make reference to the *Quijote*. The resulting miscellany includes eighty-one brief texts, ranging from genuine *microcuentos* in their entirety, such as Juan José Arreola's "Teoría de Dulcinea," to excerpts that feature more fleeting references, such as the instance in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) when Tom Sawyer explicitly adopts Don Quixote's rhetoric and reasoning. In the wake of Aguirre's *Biblioteca*, but with a specific focus on microfiction, Ramón Fabián Vique compiled fourteen "minificiones cuyo tema es el clásico cervantino" for *El cuento en red* (2004, 1). The following year Ignacio Arellano, in a special issue of the *Príncipe de Viana* journal of arts and letters, assembled four of the most well known "microcuentos quijotescos", alongside several poems (2005, 1041-43). Also on the occasion of the quadricentennial, Juan Armando Epple published the most notable anthology of this kind to date; his *MicroQuijotes* comprises fifty texts by Spanish and Spanish American authors, ranging from Darío's "D.Q." and Borges's quixotic speculations in miniature, to Pía Barros's previously unpublished "Reencarnación."

These compilations constitute the principal efforts to bring together micro-narrative responses to Cervantes's novel from roughly the last hundred years. The present study, rather than retreading their ground, brings these efforts up to date by adding twenty-first-century *microcuentos* from Spain. Moreover, it supplements their descriptive, taxonomic approach by offering closer, critical examinations of particular texts. To anchor these examinations, I outline a general poetics for allusive *microcuentos*. The outline, in the shape of a schematic formula, is at once descriptive, insofar as it accounts for the basic *modus operandi* of such texts, and prescriptive. Instead of merely surveying and cataloguing the *microcuentos* of the corpus, this approach affords an analytical overview—a measure against which to articulate their relative merits and deficiencies, proprieties and disproportions, felicities and faults. Ultimately, I address the broader question of what constitutes an effective allusion in microfiction. Standard definitions of *allusion*, as we will see, prove inadequate in the light of microfictional practice and poetics.

### Three Early Sallies in the Field of Quixotic Microfiction

The earliest specimens of *microcuentos quijotescos* are found beyond Spain's borders. Darío, Hemingway, and Kafka initiated this manner of engaging with Cervantes's novel by means of brief, narrative texts. At just over 1,000 words in length, Darío's "D.Q." (1899) might well be the first

piece of microfiction to take the Man of La Mancha as its subject. Epple, appropriately, begins his volume of *MicroQuijotes* with this text, which adopts the form of military field notes from the Cuban front in the Spanish-American War. A soldier deployed against the *yanquis* recounts how Don Quixote mysteriously appears as the standard-bearer among a troop of reinforcements from Spain, and, just as the news of Spain's ultimate defeat arrives, Don Quixote hurls himself into a nearby abyss. The narrator, who until the apparition's final act of despair has felt only a vague recollection concerning the man's identity, then recognizes him in the description from Cervantes's first chapter. The basic technique here—that of moving the original protagonist(s) to a more contemporary setting—becomes a frequent mode of transposition in subsequent microfiction.

Although known for his own laconic, journalistic style, Hemingway satirized extreme abbreviation in an essay, "Condensing the Classics," which appeared in *The Toronto Star Weekly*, 20 August 1921. The impulse to miniaturize Cervantes's *magnum opus*, to reduce a novel of more than 385,000 words—and more than a thousand pages—to a few lines, takes centre stage in this light-hearted satire. Hemingway pokes fun at a project, purportedly financed by Andrew Carnegie, that undertook to write précis of classics by William Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, and others for consumption by overworked businessmen. Instead of literary précis, Hemingway proposes, "there is a quicker way to present the matter to those who must run while reading: reduce all literature to newspaper headlines, with a short news dispatch following, to give the gist of the matter" (1985 [1921], 102). *Don Quijote* is his first candidate for such treatment. Applying the conventional form and diction of twentieth-century journalism to the novel's most famous episode produces the following:

CRAZED KNIGHT IN WEIRD TILT

MADRID, SPAIN (By Classic News Service) (Special).— War hysteria is blamed for the queer actions of "Don" Quixote, a local knight who was arrested early yesterday morning when engaged in the act of "tilting" with a windmill. Quixote could give no explanation of his actions. (1985 [1921], 103)<sup>5</sup>

Like Darío, Hemingway also transposes *Don Quijote* to the contemporary era. This transposition, however, is not a matter of inserting

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<sup>5</sup> The capitalization and punctuation here reproduces Hemingway's own.



the Don into current events, as Darío had done with the Spanish-American War, but of retelling an iconic episode in a contemporary manner, treating the episode as if it were a current event. The reportorial format and diction render a substantially altered protagonist. Instead of attributing this knight's madness to diet, insomnia, and reading, the narrator cites "war hysteria," an early twentieth-century term for the condition now called post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD. This opens up the possibility that Hemingway's protagonist has actually experienced real combat in the past, rather than simply donning "unas armas que habían sido de sus bisabuelos" (I.1). This "crazed knight," moreover, can offer "no explanation of his actions," while the original Quixote seldom refrains from drawing on his reading to explain his actions and inactions alike. Reticence is not one of his virtues. A lack of explanation, of course, enables the dispatch to remain brief, and with the elimination of Sancho Panza from the scenario, no further follow-up statement is necessary or available. As if in recognition of these essential differences, there is no acknowledgement of Cervantes's authorship; the by-line credits only the fictional press agency.

The report of an early morning arrest in Hemingway's version may serve to telescope the novel of 1605, for it recalls the detention of Don Quixote on the morning of his final departure from Juan Palomeque's inn (the *cuadrilleros*' attempts at arresting him, and the alternative form of detention that the priest contrives [I.45-46]). The dispatch from the Classic News Service, then, bridges the most well known episode among the early chapters and the arrest that initiates Part I's dénouement, roughly and schematically encapsulating the whole. Of course, it is not simply a matter of "condensing" this Classic, as the title of Hemingway's essay would suggest, but of excerpting the basic scenario of Cervantes's eighth chapter to create a condensed version that also offers an innovative treatment of the novel's principal character and motifs by means of reconfiguring its diction, form, and style. It points at once *back* to the original and *beyond* to further possibilities of permuting protagonists, plots, and modes of presentation. While lampooning the abridgement of literary classics, Hemingway formulates a piece of microfiction that reimagines the functions of a synopsis; his newspaper passage on an incident in Madrid gives "the gist of the matter," in his phrase, and also suggests alternative readings of the original. As we will see, this text stands as a fruitful precedent for several of the more accomplished Spanish *microcuentos* of recent years.

Finally we turn to the third of these earliest microfictions that feature the *Quijote*. Scholars have often identified Franz Kafka's brief retelling of

Cervantes's novel as the first of its kind (Vique 2004, 13), but it follows Dario's by date of composition, and Hemingway's by date of publication. The text began as an entry in notebook "G" of Kafka's *Octavhefte*, dated 21 October 1917 and untitled. Max Brod formulated the title by which the text is known when he published Kafka's notebook posthumously in 1931 (Gray et al. 2005, 290-91). "Die Wahrheit über Sancho Pansa" ("The Truth about Sancho Panza") recasts Sancho as the principal protagonist of the fiction:

Sancho Pansa, der sich übrigens dessen nie gerühmt hat, gelang es im Laufe der Jahre, durch Beistellung einer Menge Ritter—und Räuberromane in den Abend—und Nachtstunden seinen Teufel, dem er später den Namen Don Quixote gab, derart von sich abzulenken, daß dieser dann haltlos die verrücktesten Taten ausführte, die aber mangels eines vorbestimmten Gegenstandes, der eben Sancho Pansa hätte sein sollen, niemandem schaden. Sancho Pansa, ein freier Mann, folgte gleichmütig, vielleicht aus einem gewissen Verantwortlichkeitsgefühl, dem Don Quixote auf seinen Zügen und hatte davon eine große und nützliche Unterhaltung bis an sein Ende.<sup>6</sup>

Like Hemingway, Kafka alters the fundamental character of Cervantes's characters, but he does so more explicitly. He transposes traits proper to the original pair so that Sancho becomes the instigator, the name-giver, and principal manipulator. Admittedly, germs of these traits are already present in Sancho's character as construed by Cervantes. The squire is capable of inventing new names (coining *baciyelmo*, for instance, in I.44), of following along for the sake of diversion (II.52), and of manipulating his master through fictions (detaining him with storytelling in I.20, identifying a passing peasant girl as Dulcinea enchanted in II.10); but Sancho is now the source of the chivalric romances, not the second-hand recipient of his master's fantasies and code of conduct. Kafka's

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<sup>6</sup> Reinier van Straten of Magdalen College, Oxford, offers the following translation, which helpfully eschews the many liberties that render existing, published translations in English unsuitable for the present purposes:

Sancho Panza, who incidentally never boasted about it, was able over the years, in the evenings and at night, by supplying heaps of romances about knights and thieves, to distract himself in such a way from his devil, whom he later gave the name Don Quixote, that he then indiscriminately carried out the craziest of deeds, which however, lacking their predetermined object, which should have been Sancho Panza himself, caused no one any harm. Sancho Panza, a free man, followed Don Quixote with equanimity, perhaps out of a certain feeling of responsibility, on his campaigns, and was largely and usefully diverted by them right up to his end.

Sancho neutralizes the torments of his daemon-like Don by lavishing literature on him. In two sentences, “The Truth about Sancho Panza” turns Cervantes’s simple-minded recruit into a literary exorcist, assigning to him a quasi-authorial role as manipulative agent and catalyst, and a quasi-readerly role as spectator and diverted follower. Sancho’s name and his “Ende” enclose this transposition, which posits a revised explanation for the novel’s central conceit.

These three *Quijote*-inspired texts inaugurated a veritable sub-genre of microfiction on the topic, and in these three specimens we already encounter principal techniques that feature prominently in subsequent efforts: namely, transpositions of temporal, geographical settings and transpositions of roles and motives. Not merely brief or abbreviated narratives, these texts construct allusions that play with or against the original novel, inviting the reader to engage in speculative, alternative readings—to reimagine the genesis of the original text itself and the back stories of its characters, for instance, or to contemplate the implications of deploying particular elements of Cervantes’s work in different settings. This constitutes a hallmark of the most effective *microcuentos quijotescos*.

### **A Recipe for Microfictional Allusion: Theory and Application**

Indeed, in the light of these precedents, and with reference to the corpus of twenty-first-century *microcuentos quijotescos*, we can derive a basic, generalized formula for such texts—a poetics of microfictional allusion. One might schematically represent the essential, cooperative ingredients as follows:

echo(es) + transposition(s) + implications(s)

- a.** The echo(es) of situation, character(s), or lexis may be tacit or explicit. Allusion depends on the reader’s recognition of at least one echo.
- b.** The transpositions may entail alternative developments of the original characters, situations, point of view, or transpositions of context (geographical or temporal contexts).
- c.** The implications may be just that—implied, merely suggested—or the narrative may articulate certain implications, albeit with concisely economical expression; but the text will follow up the implications of the transposed elements or will prompt the reader to do so.

If any one of these three principal ingredients is deficient, the allusive *microcuento* will fall short. Deficiencies—or, of particular relevance to

microfiction, superfluities—in any of the three components, or in their coherence, will result in an impaired allusion. To clarify the outworking of this schema, we turn now to how it applies to specific examples—examples of varying efficacy—from the chronological corpus that forms the appendix to this essay.

José María Merino's "La cuarta salida" offers an aptly illustrative case.<sup>7</sup> The fourth sally of the title is that which the novel denies its protagonist with his death at the close of Part II. Merino takes up Cervantes's own game of refracting authorial personae, source texts, and redactions, thereby rejecting the original ending by having his bookish protagonist revisit documentation from the "alcaná de Toledo" to propound a victorious expedition for the hero. This *microcuento*'s echoes of Cervantes are both apparent and subtle. The apparent echoes link it unmistakably to the language of the original, reproducing verbatim various names and epithets ("el alcaná de Toledo," "doña Dulcinea del Toboso," "el ingenioso hidalgo") and a chapter title in its entirety (a salutary reminder that economy of language does not necessarily trump all other techniques in microfiction). Subtler is the use of quixotic language in the form of invective against despotic authorities. Don Quixote and Sancho use the now archaic form "hideputa" twenty-seven times in all throughout the two parts of the novel, and Merino's pairing of "follones" and "malandrines" echoes Don Quixote's own recurring rhetoric. To cite only three instances of the latter usage in the novel, Don Quixote berates Sancho as a "malandrín, follón, y vestiglo" when the squire asks for wages (II.28); in the episode of the enchanted boat, he boasts, "Mira qué de malandrines y follones me salen al encuentro" (II.29); and he later brags to the Duke of his exploits: "Gigantes he vencido, y follones y malandrines le he embiado [a Dulcinea]" (II.31).

These lexical echoes, whether apparent or subtle, undergird the transpositions in this *microcuento*. The two chief transpositions here are the substitution of Cervantes's first-person authorial persona of I.9 with Merino's Profesor Souto, and the alternative ending which brings events up to our present day (signalled by the use of the present tense and the first person plural). The lexical echoes undergird the transpositions, then, because on them depends the reader's sense of the precision of the academic persona and the plausibility of the premise of long-lost documentation for the alternative ending. They lend a touch of veracity to

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<sup>7</sup> Irene Andres-Suárez, in *El microrrelato español*, highlights Merino's "La cuarta salida" as an example of intertextual "microtextos que establecen una relación estrecha con los [...] personajes [y] escenas paradigmáticas de la literatura universal, como *El Quijote* de Cervantes" (2010, 82-83). She paraphrases and summarizes "La cuarta salida" but does not offer an analysis of it.

the fanciful claim. Although Merino's *microcuento* reports the content of the documents indirectly, rather than quoting them directly, the archaism and glimpses of Golden Age diction convey an impression of authenticity and affinity with the original novel.

In this case, the reported account of the documents' content spells out the kinds of implications that might otherwise be left to inference and speculation: Don Quixote's "verdadero final" is to realize his chivalric ambitions; he marries Dulcinea and sires a line of successful knights errant. But in this *microcuento*, which enacts the very overthrow it recounts, the implications go beyond the explicit terms of Professor Souto's discovery. By aligning the "mago" with the recognizable "antiguo soldado manco," enchanter with author, Merino takes up and elaborates a fiction that Don Quixote constructs in the original: that an enchanter is altering the diegetic reality (on the basis, of course, of the ruse initially perpetrated by the priest, barber, and housekeeper in I.7). Vanquishing this authorial *mago* means restoring a "texto primitivo" and the traditions of chivalric romances, here embodied in Don Quixote's progeny. The prototypical romance of chivalry, *Amadís de Gaula*, which featured the knightly adventures of its eponymous hero, generated a string of sequels relating the exploits of Amadís's son Esplandián and of Esplandián's son in turn. Throughout the sixteenth century, imitations and further sequels abounded in this line. Thus, the victories of Don Quixote's and Dulcinea's "linaje de caballeros andantes," predicated on "La cuarta salida," represent the resumption of chivalric fiction, while the present tense conclusion with its use of the first-person plural manifests the Don's escape from the diegetic "interpolación" into an extradiegetic reality (an implication which Merino imagines more fully in "Un autor caprichoso"). Echoes, transpositions, and implications—the three interdependent components of allusive *microcuentos* closely cohere and cooperate in this example.

Textual echoes are by no means always as conspicuous as some of those we have seen in "La cuarta salida." Andrés Neuman's "Héroes" makes no explicit mention of Cervantes's masterpiece, but it offers at least three clues by which an alert reader can recognize this as a *microcuento quijotesco*, and Neuman's errant superhero is, in fact, inscribed within the *Quijote*'s points of reference. First, one recognizes the correspondence between this would-be hero's "acceso de lucidez" and Don Quixote's occasional lapses into sanity, "un entreverado loco," as one character describes him, "lleno de lúcidos intervalos" (II.18). Secondly, the reference to "una docena de malhechores" recalls the well known incident in Don Quixote's second sally, when he liberates a chain-gang of prisoners condemned to the galleys: "doce hombres a pie, ensartados como cuentas

en una gran cadena de hierro” (I.22). And thirdly, the original Don Quixote’s propensity for moralizing aphorisms is here echoed when the hero passes the time writing “tres o cuatro aforismos morales.” It is precisely in his lucid intervals when the Don is most disposed to offer ostensibly edifying speeches and aphorisms, which other characters take to be signs of sanity. What Neuman’s abbreviated artistry achieves is to suggest a clear link based on much less commonly noted characteristics and elements of the novel. As E. C. Riley cogently observes, Cervantes’s two main figures have attained a remarkable iconographic status, an “instant and almost unrivaled recognizability” although their overt characterization is minimal (1988, 105). But Neuman’s *microcuento* omits one half of the famous pair and demonstrates that other elements of the novel can combine to achieve a comparably recognizable allusion.

“Héroes” transposes this recognizably quixotic protagonist and his exploit to an unspecified present time and location. This transposition and the particular echoes that Neuman selectively deploys serve to maintain a focus on quixotic vigilantism (as opposed to reckless feats of other sorts in the seventeenth-century precedent). The superhero-vigilante type is part of today’s popular culture and today’s current events. Like the teenage protagonists in *Kick-Ass* (Matthew Vaughn’s 2010 film and its 2013 sequel based on a comic book of the same title), Neuman’s hero assumes the role of a self-made superhero. Nor are similar cases lacking in the daily press. To cite just two instances, a youth dressed as Superman foiled a shoplifter in Sheffield (Silverman 2013), while self-styled Phoenix Jones and Purple Reign, a husband and wife who work in finance and education by day, don masks and rubber bodysuits by night to fight crime on Seattle’s streets (Bolton 2013). These various analogues in fiction and contemporary society, alongside the plural “Héroes” of the *microcuento*’s title, imply that the lone vigilante is more broadly representative in some sense and invite the reader to seek other referents, to perceive a wider commentary. Likewise the open ending for this fable of misdirected ideals impels speculation about subsequent events. In the light of the original novel, will these liberated convicts, like Ginés de Pasamonte, alias Maese Pedro, re-emerge to prey upon their liberator? Will this “héroe,” an interloper in the processes of crime and punishment, succumb to unintended consequences, social control, and backfiring heroism? The text, essentially a prelude to potential after-effects, leaves these possibilities open. But an open ending does not allow untrammelled speculation. In addition to the echoes of *Don Quijote* that condition the reader’s selection of speculative outcomes, the text curtails attempts to draw a moral from this story. “Héroes” calls into question any confident