The Bonds of Patrimony: Cervantes and the New World

For Andrea and Salvador


A STATUE of what historical figure, the Uruguayan essayist José Enrique Rodó (1871–1917) once asked, would best represent in Latin America the ties between Spain and the New World? After discarding Spanish kings (too reminiscent of the odious yoke thrown off by independence), Isabel la Católica (too feminine), and the conquistadores (too brutal), Rodó concludes, "No hay otra estatua que la de Cervantes para simbolizar en América la España del pasado común, la España del sol sin poniente. . . . [E]l sentimiento de la raza y de la filiación histórica, nunca se representarian mejor para la América de habla castellana que en la figura de Cervantes"1 ‘No statue other than one of Cervantes could symbolize in Latin America that Spain whose past we share, that Spain on whose dominions the sun never set. . . . [T]he sense of race, of historical filiation could never be better represented for Spanish-speaking America than by the figure of Cervantes’ (1211).1

These words, inscribing Cervantes and, more concretely, the Quixote within an inclusive Hispanic patrimonio of shared history, language, and culture, typify late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century attempts to heal the wounds between Spain and Spanish America, to close “Latin” ranks, in the face of the emergence of that formidable “enemy” to the north the United States. Written in 1915, on the occasion of the three-hundredth anniversary of Cervantes’s death, Rodó’s inclusive, appropriative gesture is not unique; in fact, many of the texts in the history of Latin America’s relation to, or appropriation of, Cervantes seem to cluster around similar anniversaries. Ricardo Palma’s “Sobre el Quijote en América” appeared in 1906, a year after the third centenary of the publication of part 1 of the Quixote. Eduardo Caballero Calderón’s Cervantes en Colombia was issued in 1948 by the Patronato del IV Centenario de Cervantes. Aurelio Miró Quesada’s Cervantes, Tirso y el Perú...
was also published in conjunction with the celebrations of the four-hundredth anniversary of Cervantes’s birth, as was, I suspect, Juan Uribe Echevarría’s *Cervantes en las letras hispanoamericanas*.

In the context of these titles and Rodó’s remarks, the copulative conjunction *and* in expressions such as my subtitle —“Cervantes and the New World”— or “Spain and the New World” seems to represent syntactically a one-way bridge across the Atlantic and, to a certain extent, across time. This bridge, crossed by the proverbial torchbearers carrying the flame of civilization —its institutions, its energy, its masterpieces, the “books of its brave”— is the bridge of patrimony.

There have been attempts to recognize two-way traffic between Cervantes and the New World. Jorge Campos’s “Presencia de América en la obra de Cervantes,” published in 1947, the fourth centennial of Cervantes’s birth, catalogs references to “lo indiano” in Cervantes’s works. Campos acknowledges his indebtedness to earlier scholars, such as Rudolph Schevill and Adolfo Bonilla, authors of a 1914 prologue to the *Obras completas* that points out the resonances in the *Persiles* of the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega’s *Comentarios reales* (ix–x). Other works in this tradition are Raúl Porras’s “Cervantes y el Perú,” Valentín de Pedro’s *América en las letras españolas del siglo de oro*, and José de Mesa’s “América en la obra de Cervantes.”

Despite occasional insights, most of the aforementioned works dealing with the presence of America in Cervantes are inventories. Some simply catalog words or objects of American origin mentioned by Cervantes. Others seek to identify allusions to New World texts in Cervantes, even though the validity of those claims hinges on unanswerable questions regarding his reading. More recently, however, critics have begun to explore subtler manifestations of America in Cervantes, which are traceable not to quotations or allusions or the books he read but rather to the air he breathed, especially during the several years he lived in Seville. That city’s port enjoyed an official monopoly on trade and transportation between Spain and the New World in Cervantes’s day, and as Daniel Testa
Left, announcement and advertisement of the erection of a monument to Cervantes in the Plaza de España, in Madrid. Part of a prospectus published in 1920, the announcement solicits contributions from citizens “of all Spanish-speaking countries” to finance the construction of the monument. The model shown in the prospectus (see the reproductions to the right) had been awarded first prize in a national contest held in 1916, undoubtedly as part of the celebrations of the three-hundredth anniversary of Cervantes’s death. The committee charged with raising the funds included the duke of Alba; Francisco Rodríguez Marin, a leading cervantista; and the Alvarez Quintero brothers, acclaimed playwrights. (Courtesy of Yale University Library.)

Above right, frontal view of the model of the monument. Below right, rear view of the model. The caption of the rear view in the prospectus reads, “La fuente del idioma castellano. Cuya taza irá orlada con los escudos de las naciones de habla castellana” ‘The fountain of the Castilian language. The edges of the fountain’s basin will be adorned with the shields of Spanish-speaking countries.’ After describing how the fountain’s water will flow over the shields and into another basin, the authors add, “The artists have thus attempted to express with perfect clarity the historical fact of the invasion of the New World by our language. The relation between the fountain and the monument is the following: since Cervantes is the culminating figure of our Literature and the sovereign of the Castilian language, his works should appear as the principal disseminators of that language. The monument is crowned by a group of five figures, representing the different parts of the globe, around which they are seated; these allude to the universal diffusion of the Quixote.” (Courtesy of Yale University Library.)
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remarks, "los años en que [Cervantes] vivió [en Sevilla] le colocaron dentro de los íntimos ambientes humanos más afectados por el gran tráfico y comercio entre España y las colonias de ultramar" 'the years that [Cervantes] lived [in Seville] gave him a close, inside look at the human situations most affected by the great traffic and trade between Spain and the overseas colonies' (63). Following José Antonio Maravall and Harry Levin, Testa notes that the discovery of the New World charged the air around Cervantes with the energies and the mirages of utopias, producing a pervasive atmosphere not easily locatable in a single textual point but nonetheless essential for understanding Don Quixote's—and Cervantes's—world and aspirations.

In this kind of inquiry, the two-way and the expressions "Cervantes and the New World," "Spain and the Indies," and even "Europe and America" stands not only for the exchange of objects and products (and of the lexicons corresponding to them) but also for a fundamental change in the grammar and syntax by which both self and other were perceived and represented, by the inhabitants of the New World and the Old World alike. This new emphasis can be seen in the works of, among many others, Mary Gaylord, George Mariscal, Diana de Armas Wilson, and Roland Greene. Mary Louise Pratt exemplifies this tendency:

How are metropolitan modes received and appropriated on the periphery? That question engenders another perhaps more heretical one: with respect to representation, how does one speak of transculturation from the colonies to the metropolis? The fruits of empire, we know, were pervasive in shaping European domestic society, culture and history. . . . Borders and all, the entity called Europe was constructed from the outside in as much as from the inside out.

Pratt's words were published in 1992, the year of the Columbian quincentenary. Despite the unproductive posturing that occurred then, that anniversary, and in a more general sense the intellectual and political climate of the late 1980s and early 1990s, is a milestone in the recognition of the dialectical relation between colonies and metropolises. Edward Said's monumental Culture and Imperialism, probably the most lucid example of this tendency, returns again and again to a neglected but nearly obvious premise: in the European imperial powers, the colonial experience played an essential role in the constitution of national, domestic identities; in the colonies, contact with the metropolis almost always led to the formation (and triumph) of nationalist movements of resistance. Clearly, the relation between colonies and metropolises can no longer be thought of as unidirectional, as one of patrimonio traveling ineluctably and solely, like the imperial sun, east to west. Said's insights have been used frequently by scholars of Latin American literatures but insufficiently by students of the literatures of the Iberian peninsula.

One of the main goals of this essay is to explore possible effects on Spain of the discovery of the New World. More concretely, I want to examine how some of the central concerns of the European Renaissance—and, therefore, of Cervantes—must have been inflected by the colonial experience. To this end, I develop what might be called a New World reading of one of the most popular tales in Cervantes's Novelas ejemplares, "El celoso extremeno"—a reading that attempts to come to terms with the novella's numerous New World allusions. Written between 1602 and 1613, Cervantes's collection of twelve novellas has been overshadowed by the monumental achievement of the Quixote, even though most specialists would agree with Ruth El Saffar's assertion that some of the tales "rank among the best fiction Cervantes ever wrote" (9). Despite the "exemplarity" referred to in the collection's title, these tales are in no way facile or moralistic; most of them, in fact, seem designed to depict situations where the "exemplarity of the type advocated by humanism has become impossible" (Hampton 294).

"El celoso extremeno" is, among other things, a complex investigation of the issues of freedom, subjection, seduction, and resistance in matrimony and other relationships of subordination. Felipe de Carrizales, the jealous Extremaduran, is of noble heritage, and like Don Juan, another Spanish aristocrat of extreme passions, he leads a life of libertinage, squandering his youth and
wealth while adventuring throughout Italy, France, and the Low Countries. But if Don Juan loses and recovers his fortune several times without leaving Europe, Carrizales decides to travel to that land of legendary promise the Indies to regain his inheritance. During the voyage, he undergoes a double conversion of sorts, vowing to be more prudent in his dealings with both money and women. His twenty years in Peru are glossed over in three lines of text, which state that he amassed a considerable fortune. On returning to Spain at age sixty-eight, he decides to settle not in his native Extremadura, where, he reasons, his poor neighbors would pester him, but rather in the bustling metropolis of Seville. He is at a loss about what to do with his wealth; he has no living relatives, and while he would like to leave his patrimony to a descendent, the thought of matrimony terrifies him. "Porque de su natural condición era el más celoso hombre del mundo" ‘For he was, by nature, the most jealous man in the world’ (58; 204).

One day, while strolling about Seville, Carrizales happens to look up at a window and catch sight of a lovely girl, some thirteen or fourteen years old. Lovestruck, he quickly comes to a resolution: "casarme he con ella, encerraréla y harela a mis mafias, y con esto no tendra otra condición que aquella que yo le enseñare" ‘I shall wed her, shut her up, and mold her to my ways, and thus she will conform completely to my teachings’ (58; 204). He puts his plan into effect, constructing an elaborate, windowless fortress in the middle of Seville and acquiring a group of black and white female slaves, as well as a black eunuch, Luis, to live with Leonora and serve her. The women, or, rather, girls, lead an apparently happy, childlike existence locked up inside the house, playing with dolls and enjoying sweets, while Luis lives enclosed in the casapuerta, a kind of vestibule between the street entrance and the turnstile that allows access into the house. Carrizales is happy to cater to the innocent, infantile whims of his inmates and is delighted with the arrangement. He remains wary, nonetheless, and sleeps with the master key to the fortress beneath his pillow or between his mattresses.

Enter Loaysa, a local adventurer and rake, who decides to take on the challenge of seducing Leonora, piqued by the tales of her beauty and by Carrizales’s extravagant precautions. He manages to enter the casapuerta by promising guitar lessons to Luis: "tal es la inclinación que los negros tienen a ser músicos" ‘for Negroes have a great fondness for music’ (63; 211). Next, Loaysa gains access to the house by telling the women that he aims only to serve them and entertain them with his music. He provides the women with a soporific ointment, which allows Leonora to get the key from between her husband’s mattresses without disturbing his sleep.

Until this point, the tale most likely seems familiar to readers of early modern European short fiction, but thereafter it disappoints one generic expectation after another. When Loaysa finally manages to be alone with Leonora, she resists his advances with such resolve that he fails, as does the novel of cuckoldry readers may have expected. Nonetheless, the couple falls asleep locked in an embrace, and when Carrizales awakes and sees the sleeping pair, he imagines the worst. He considers taking a dagger to "sacar las manchas de su honra con sangre" ‘cleans[e] the blot on his honor with . . . blood’ (83; 234) but decides not to do so, thus swerving from the conventional outcome of the honor play. Rather, just before dying he doubles Leonora’s dowry, gives her permission to marry Loaysa, and leaves generous inheritances to his servants. Instead of marrying Loaysa and thus satisfying the generic requirements of the romance, Leonora enters one of the strictest convents of the city. Loaysa, spurned, goes off to the Indies. As several critics point out, this tale about the complexity of human freedom and personal autonomy seems to declare its own independence from fossilized genres and denouements. Even the narrator expresses bafflement at the end.

This insistent proposing and eventual disrupting of established genres in “El celoso extremeño” recalls one of Cervantes’s main tactics in the Quijote. As Fredric Jameson puts it:

*Don Quixote* emblematically demonstrates that [the] processing operation called narrative mimesis or realistic representation has as its historic function the systematic undermining and demystification, the
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secular “decoding” of those preexisting inherited traditional or sacred narrative paradigms which are its initial givens. (152)

Seville in “El celoso extremeño” and Barcelona in the Quixote are, it seems, modern, “novelistic” spaces that highlight the archaic, anachronistic nature of both Carrizales’s and Don Quixote’s premodern, prenovelistic “plots.” And yet, before Barcelona and Seville are equated in this way, it might be worthwhile to ask, Why do the manchego’s adventures end in Spain’s commercial, Mediterranean gateway, whereas the extremeño’s peripeties take place in the nation’s colonial, Atlantic port of Seville? Why, moreover, would Cervantes choose to begin and end his tale with a character’s departure for the Indies?

In discussing a trip to the colony of Antigua taken by a character in Jane Austen’s Mansfield Park, Said notes:

Since Austen refers to and uses Antigua as she does, there needs to be a commensurate effort on the part of her readers to understand concretely the historical valences in the reference. To put it differently, we should try to understand what she referred to, why she gave it the role she did, and why, in a certain sense, did she not avoid the choice, keeping in mind that she might not have made use of Antigua. (*Jane Austen* 158)

The comment has a certain irony for the student of “El celoso extremeño” because while Carrizales and Loaysa go off to the Indies in the definitive version of the novella, Cañizares, Carrizales’s homologue in Cervantes’s bawdy farce El viejo celoso, does not travel to the New World, and the Loaysa of a primitive manuscript version of “El celoso extremeño” leaves in the end for the East, to the wars against the infidels, where he is killed when his gun backfires.8

Although to my knowledge no sustained reflection on the novella’s New World references has been published, the substantial literature on the text contains many remarks that I can recontextualize and use in my New World reading. For example, without alluding to the Americas, Juan Bautista Avalle-Arce remarks, “Carrizales comienza por fabricarse un isote en plena ciudad del Guadalquivir” ‘Carrizales’s first move is to build a little island right in the middle of Seville’ (199). Peter Dunn, with yet other purposes, writes that “El celoso extremeño” is “la tragedia de un hombre que intenta crear un paraíso artificial” ‘the tragedy of a man who attempts to create an artificial paradise’ (91).9 Once inscribed in a New World reading, these kinds of observations lead to a provocative conclusion: if Carrizales’s house is a harem and a convent, it is also a colony or, if you prefer, an insula.

This association engenders the more disturbing idea that the inhabitants of the house are not just members of a harem or inmates of a prison, they are also “natives.” If the word “natives” is substituted for “women” throughout the novella as a heuristic maneuver, the pieces of a New World reading begin to fall into place. Carrizales’s house can be viewed as an insula inhabited by a racially diverse group of natives, who are maintained in perpetual childhood—reinforced through the candy and dolls—not by any innate incapacity but by the zealous, jealous, and extremist precautions of the indiano governor Carrizales.10 Moreover, the text seems to invite an interpretation of the household as an exotic colony by invoking the practice that horrified and fascinated virtually all early chroniclers of the New World: cannibalism. I refer to a hilarious scene in which the servants, laying their eyes for the first time on the young and handsome Loaysa, poetically and collectively dissect him and cook him up. The scene not only humorously hints at the practice of (rhetorical) cannibalism among these natives, it also defamiliarizes or parodies the dismembering of the (female) beloved’s body in the traditional European masculine love lyric. The servants surround the young man, and as one of them approaches him with a torch to illuminate his figure, they begin a kind of litany:

[Y] una decia: “¡Ay que copete que tiene, tan lindo y tan rizado!” Otra: “¡Ay qué blancura de dientes . . . !” Otra: “¡Ay qué ojos tan grandes y tan rasgados; y por el siglo de mi madre que son verdes, que no parecen sino que son esmeraldas!” Esta
alababa la boca, aquella los pies, y todas juntas hicieron del una menuda anatomia y pepitoria.

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“Look at his top-knot, so pretty and so curly.” said one of the maids. “What white teeth!” . . . “Oh, what big bright eyes! And bless my soul if they are not green; you’d think they were emeralds,” another added. This one praised his mouth, the other his feet, and between them all they dissected him into little parts and cooked him up into a stew. (228)

The false utopian island founded by Carrizales comes under siege almost as soon as it is constructed. Though in many ways a double for Carrizales, Loaysa, the attacker, also represents a radically different concept of power. Edwin Williamson writes, “Estos personajes representan dos maneras de ejercer el poder sobre los demás: Carrizales emplea un discurso autoritario de promesas, juramentos y prohibiciones; Loaysa un discurso engañoso lleno de burlas, ironías y disfraces” ‘These characters represent two different ways of exercising power over others: Carrizales uses an authoritarian discourse based on promises, oaths, and prohibitions, Loaysa a tricky discourse full of mockery, irony, and masquerade’ (798).

Carrizales’s strategy for controlling the behavior of the natives may seem foolproof, but, like his fortress, it is vulnerable. Relying on walls, doors, and locks, Carrizales is uninterested in educating or indoctrinating his subjects, in having them internalize his voice of authority and thus police themselves. The song that the duenna requests of Loaysa, which the narrator says was very popular in Seville at the time, clearly states the principle that Carrizales overlooks and that is one of the novella’s central ideas:

Madre, la mi madre guardas me ponéis, que si yo no me guardo no me guardaréis. . . . Si la voluntad por si no se guarda no la harán guarda miedo o calidad. (79)

Mother, oh my mother, Guards you set o'er me But if I guard not myself, Yours are all in vain. . . . If the inclination Does not guard itself There's no guard will do it Fear or rank, or station. (228)

When Cervantes’s natives acquire the sleep-inducing ointment, they realize that they no longer need to copy the master’s master key: the master is the key, and if they can control his wakefulness, his vigilance, the walls of his jail will tumble down. Moreover, the repeated association of Carrizales’s induced sleep with death brings up the issue of the transmission of his brand of power.12 If his impotence makes it impossible for him to transmit his patrimony to another generation, his omnipotence, concentrated in his head, makes the transmission of his authority impossible. His model of power, condensed into a single wealthy but heirless individual, who rules from above and without, allows for only one form of change: substitution. In an economic context, the substitution would be called robbery; in a political context, regicide or revolution; in a marital context, adultery. Carrizales’s awareness that his authority is precarious and all-or-nothing fuels his extraordinary jealousy.

Loaysa, in contrast, is a master of improvisation, which Stephen Greenblatt calls “a central Renaissance mode of behavior” (Renaissance 229). Greenblatt’s concept of improvisation describes equally well the modus operandi of both the seducer and the converter, or the missionary. “What is essential,” writes Greenblatt, “is the Europeans’ ability again and again to insinuate themselves into the preexisting political, religious, even psychic structures of the natives and to turn those structures to their advantage” (Renaissance 227). As opposed to Carrizales, whose authority is external, Loaysa works from the inside. He grants a degree of interiority to his interlocutors, learning or surmising what they desire and then using the knowledge to get what he wants. The scene in which Loaysa overcomes
the fort’s first barrier by taking advantage of Luis’s ardent desire to learn music has all the trappings of a seduction—the homosexual, interracial seduction of a eunuch:

Like Don Juan, Loaysa has the calculating nature of an accomplished hypocrite, and there is a striking disproportion between his power and the weakness of the people whom he exploits. The ruthlessness marking his manipulation of his victims is most evident in his treatment of [Luis], whom he cynically uses for his purposes while offering the temptations of music and wine and addressing him as friend and brother. There is something very disturbing in his reception of the devotion of this childlike person, and it is not unlike Don Juan’s openness to the infatuation of his most guileless victims. The brutal exploitation of the child’s affection is one of the characteristics that link Loaysa and Carrizales.

(Forcione 49)13

If the method Loaysa uses to overcome the first barrier likens him to Carrizales, as Alban Forcione asserts, the way Loaysa hurdles the second (the women within the fortress) creates a disquieting resemblance between him and Leonora: with wonderful ambiguity, the seducer swears to the women that if they let him in, he will do only what they want.14 Loaysa promises, in other words, to surrender his will, to become the prisoners’ prisoner, the inmates’ playmate, much as Leonora was to serve Carrizales as a lifeless, desireless wife. Before entering Carrizales’s house, Leonora had to swear “que ella no tenia otra voluntad que la de su esposo y señor” ‘that her only will was that of her husband and master’ (60; 208); before entering the women’s “reino,” or kingdom, Loaysa must solemnly promise to “no hacer mas de lo que [ellas] le ordenasen” ‘do no more than [they] order’ (76; 226). He applies to himself adjectives describing the qualities of Leonora most pleasing to Carrizales and even compares himself to a trained domestic animal:

Hombre soy yo, por vida de mi padre, tan sencillo, tan manso y de tan buena condición, y tan obediente, que no haré más de aquello que se me mandare; y sí cualquiera de vuesas mercedes dijere: “maestro, siéntese aquí; maestro, pásese allí, echaos acá, pásaos

acullá”, así lo haré, como el más doméstico y enseñado perro que salta por el rey de Francia.

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I am a man, by the life of my father, so mild, so gentle, and so affable, that I will do nothing but what you order me. If one of you ladies were to say: “Master, sit here, Master, go there, lie down here, go over there” I would do it like the most domesticated and trained dog who jumps at the mention of the King of France’s name. (221)

Like Don Juan, Loaysa is an expert manipulator of promises, of speech acts.15 He knows that any utterance claiming to eliminate or foreswear desire forever, any promise to subject oneself totally to another’s will, is meaningless, be it his oath, Leonora’s marriage vows, or the natives’ acceptance of the conditions of their hermetic contract with their employer-owner-governor, Carrizales. Loaysa does not break into the fortress; he incites a breakout, by recognizing and manipulating the inmates’ desires. Surely it is significant that he passes the lock-picking tools under the door to Luis, who then opens it from the inside, and that the women within the house open the main entrance to Loaysa.

In the novella’s primitive version, the adultery between Leonora and Loaysa is consummated, but in the definitive version, Loaysa’s plan, like Carrizales’s, is foiled. It is as if Cervantes were chastising both men in the revised narrative for misusing their power—Carrizales for wishing to maintain an unnatural state and Loaysa for entering the mental worlds of his interlocutors not to educate or convert to good but to deceive and seduce. Carrizales and Loaysa, furthermore, overlook or underestimate Leonora’s will, agency, and resistance; they both seem to assume that if the fortress walls are hurdled, adultery is inevitable. By juxtaposing two New World figures and two strategies for dominating subordinates, Cervantes intervenes in what is probably the central debate of modernity: how to create subjects—docile bodies—in the colonies and at home?

Writing on the prison, Foucault dates to the eighteenth century the shift from punishment to discipline, from violent, external control to re-
education, rehabilitation, self-surveillance. Foucault’s work calls into question the putatively philanthropic and liberatory force of Enlightenment reform, arguing that modern modes of vigilance and discipline, while often less spectacular than punishment in the ancien régime, constitute new, insidious, and violent forms of domination. The discovery and conquest of the New World are conspicuously absent from Foucault’s historical paradigms. But can there be any doubt that the problems involved in administering distant colonies and in controlling vast numbers of native peoples added to the urgency of humanist projects of self-cultivation and self-surveillance? As Jorge Klor de Alva shows in his Foucauldian study of the rise of penitential discipline in the New World, the relatively infrequent use of Inquisition brutalities against Mexican natives was offset by the intense ethnographic activity of the missionaries, who sought to exercise control not by brutal force but rather by the knowledge, penetration, and subsequent conversion of native belief systems. In this revisionist view, the humanist enterprise of Bartolomé de Las Casas, for example, who argued for the “humanness” or the “soulfulness” of the natives, would be seen no longer as disinterested philanthropy but as the first step in the implementation of a peculiarly modern form of subjection: subjectivity. Once the natives are granted interiority, once they are given souls, then a flood of confessional manuals and other such works will be produced, to define, direct, and discipline appetites and inclinations.

The zealous army of Spanish missionaries charged with policing, charting, and guiding the souls of the indigenous people of America and the Philippines could have echoed Othello’s bitter complaint about wives: “O... that we can call these delicate creatures ours and not their appetites!” (3.3.272-74). To readers of Juan Luis Vives, of Luis de León, or of other authors of early modern conduct books for women, the following words will sound familiar: “los... que supiesen leer, dándose a ellos (a los libros de entretenimiento) dejarán los libros de santa y buena doctrina, y, leyendo los de mentirosas historias, aprenderán en ellos malas costumbres y vicios” “those of them that know how to read will surrender themselves to the reading of books of entertainment and will abandon books of healthy and holy doctrine and, reading those other books of deceitful stories, they will acquire noxious habits and vices” (qtd. in Albistur 72). The hard-to-monitor reading habits of Native Americans, the hidden movements of their souls, inspired the same anxiety as women’s use of books in early modern Spain. Indeed, the warning quoted above is from a real cédula of 1534, and its “they” refers not to women but to “indios.” The interior space of inferior beings is a contested territory, susceptible to conquest and colonization by missionaries, seducers, and even novelists.

Natalie Z. Davis writes that “at the end of the Middle Ages and in early Modern Europe, the relation between the wife—or the potentially disorderly woman—[and] her husband was especially useful for expressing the relation of all subordinates to their superiors” (127). Woman became a handy, internal, European other, to be evoked and exported whenever necessary. Margarita Zamora and José Rabasa, among others, study the feminization or eroticization of American natives in Columbus’s earliest writings (Zamora) and in early cartographic representations of the New World (Rabasa). But the inverse process took place as well; Spanish women are “indianized” or “primitivized” in Vives’s and León’s conduct manuals, which liken the use of cosmetics and the cultivation of luxury to “barbaric” customs such as body painting, body piercing, and idolatry. The rhetoric of humanist critiques of feminine adornment is clearly inflected by Europeans’ contact with “primitive” others of both sexes. Perhaps the same can be said of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century discussions about the problems of governing and educating those domestic others known as wives. As Juliana Schiesari writes, “[D]omestication of the private sphere and imperialism abroad are conjoined in the early modern period by ideological practices that sought to restrict and dominate the various constructed others of European manhood: the feminine, the savage, the bestial” (70).

Mary Elizabeth Perry explains the interweaving of gender and colonialism in early modern
Seville. According to her, Andrea Navagero, the Venetian humanist and ambassador, remarked in 1525 that “so many men had left for the New World, . . . Seville had become a city ‘in the hands of women’” (140).18 The prominence of women in the public life of the city led to discussions about the need to enclose and monitor them. As Perry notes, “[G]ender beliefs that women required special protective enclosure seemed to be even more strongly invoked as men’s preoccupations with wars and colonizing required women to participate more actively in the life of the city. The emphasis on gender prescriptions reveals deep social ruptures in this period . . .” (9).19 Moreover, by the late sixteenth century, as Spain’s sole gateway to and from the New World, Seville had become the fourth largest city in Europe and the home of an astonishingly diverse population. Two important events of 1492—the fall of Granada, the last Muslim stronghold, and the expulsion of Jews from Spain—are often thought to mark the end of Spain’s cultural, racial, religious, and ethnic heterogeneity. This view is a misperception, particularly for Seville. After 1492 there were significant numbers of moriscos and conversos (outwardly converted Muslims and Jews) living in the city, and the other event of that momentous year, Columbus’s “discovery,” added a new set of interactions and influxes. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the city was praised and censured for its diversity and promiscuity. “A new Babylon” was a common epithet for Seville; Saint Teresa of Avila, among others, called the city an “infierno.” Early modern Seville is the arena for numerous literary and historical picaros and tricksters; it is most likely the backdrop for Murillo’s street urchins and waifs, as well as for Velázquez’s mulattoes. An important center for the European slave trade, Seville was also a key entry for cultural forms originating in, or returning from, the Americas. In several writings, including “El celoso extremeño,” Cervantes mentions the popularity in Spain of the zarabanda and the chacona, dance forms usually associated with New World blacks and considered dangerously lascivious on the peninsula.20 The site of constant and intense migration and contact between races and cultures, early modern Seville was, like many cosmopolitan cities or imperial capitals today, a focal point for discussions about how to create obedient citizens.

The roles of Barcelona in Don Quixote and of Seville in “El celoso extremeño” can now be compared clearly. In the broadest perspective, Don Quixote is a novel about identity: the hidalgo’s essentialist project of restoration—“I am who I am”—ultimately unravels amid the mercantile hustle and bustle of Barcelona. “El celoso extremeño,” a tale about the difficult tasks of governing and educating “delicate creatures,” fittingly takes place in Seville. Cervantes’s isolation of a Spanish wife and a racially heterogeneous group of servants in a tale about the complexities of freedom and subjection, about the vagaries of domination and resistance, suggests that the colonial experience influenced and informed domestic social relations and vice versa.

This argument does not claim that colonialism or the critique of colonialism is Cervantes’s hidden agenda. “El celoso extremeño” is, after all, a tale of the dangers and the failures of containment. Carrizales goes wrong in believing that he can isolate a variable—gender—without doing violence to the system containing it, and critics must avoid his mistake. The appropriate argument is not that “El celoso extremeño” is exclusively about colonialism but rather that in early modern Spain it is impossible to disentangle the discourses of race and gender, the concerns of colonialism and humanism—the architecture of harem, convent, and island. Rodo’s Latin American statue of Cervantes should be fashioned out of New World bronze.21

Notes

1 Unattributed translations are my own.
2 The expression “Cervantes (or Don Quixote) and the New World” might puzzle or disturb Hispanists, who are accustomed to seeing these two elements in an either-or juxtaposition: had Miguel de Cervantes been granted permission to emigrate to the New World (something he solicited twice, in 1582 and 1590), there would be no Quixote. Curiously, Miguel Angel Asturias, the Nobel Prize–winning novelist from Guatemala, fantasizes about the work’s being written in Guate-
mala: “En esta época propicia para recordar al Obispo Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, cabría hojear el libro de los destinos y encontrar en sus páginas aquella posibilidad de Cervantes marchando hacia Chiapas, entonces parte de la Capitania General de Guatemala, y escribiendo allí El Quijote” ‘In this time most propitious for remembering Bishop Friar Bartolomé de Las Casas, it would be appropriate to leaf through the book of fate and to find among its pages the possibility of Cervantes’s leaving Spain for Chiapas, which was then part of the Capitania General of Guatemala, and there writing the Quixote’ (17).

1I allude to Irving A. Leonard’s Books of the Brave, a work that furthered understanding of the seventeenth-century reception of Cervantes in the New World and, more important, began to explain how certain texts influenced the perceptions and actions of the first Spaniards there.

2Following are examples of such questions. Did Cervantes read the Comentarios reales? Could a letter written by a Peruvian governor to his wife possibly have been, as Porras suggests, a model for Sancho Panza’s missive to Teresa? Is it feasible, as Bermejo García contends, that Bartolomé de Las Casas’s description of his failed attempt to stop a visitador from mercilessly whipping a native served Cervantes as a model for Don Quixote’s encounter with the young shepherd Andrés and the boy’s cruel master?

3I am less interested in the impact that the Old World exercised upon the new than I am in the transformation of traditional discourses that took place when confronted with the new data produced by the project of colonization” (Mariscal 97).

4Hampton speaks here of the Quixote, but the observation seems apt for several tales in the Novelas ejemplares as well.

5Américo Castro provides an orientalist reading of the novella featuring Ibn Hazm and a “viva tradición islámica” ‘living Islamic tradition.’ As evidence that the tale is of Arabic origin, Castro cites the novella’s “tono religioso profano, divino naturalista” ‘religious-profane and divine-naturalistic tone,’ its somewhat redundant use of poetry (song) to underscore what is stated in prose, and several other “rasgos menores” ‘minor traits’ (445–46). There are also lucid and learned “Europeanist” readings, such as Albán Forcione’s, highlighting Boccaccio, Erasmus, and the humanist tradition. Forcione reads the tale as an exploration of the complexity of human freedom and astutely points out that the reader’s situation at the end of the text closely resembles Leonora’s on the death of Carrizales (90).

6See also Molho: “En otros términos, más abstractos, la casa de Carrizales es una isla en Sevilla” ‘In other, more abstract terms, Carrizales’s house is an island in Seville’ (763). A remark by Perry also becomes curious in this context: “Women of Seville could live within religious rather than domestic enclosure, making their homes within the convents that formed quiet islets in the teeming urban landscape. A few nuns lived in the emparedamientos, or walled-up houses, that since the thirteenth century had provided absolute seclusion” (75).

7Hampton speaks here of the Quixote, but the observation seems apt for several tales in the Novelas ejemplares as well.

8En efecto, como mejor pudo, le acabó de untar todos los lugares que le dijeron ser necesarios, que fue lo mismo que haberle embalsamado para la sepultura” ‘In effect, she rubbed the ointment as best as she could on all the necessary places, and it was just as if she had embalmed him for the grave’: “. . . Carrizales duerme más que un muerto” ‘. . . Carrizales is sleeping like a dead man’ (74, 75; 224, 225).

9See also Molho’s remark: “Recuérdense las vihuelas, los clavicordios o las trombas de Vermeer, todos los instrumentos que en los lienzos operan una mediación—una vez un tanto perversa—entre hombres y mujeres. . . . Tal es, sin duda, la función órftica de Loaysa y de su música, ya que por ella se desmoranon las clausuras carrizalianas” ‘Recall Vermeer’s lutes, clavicords, and horns, all instruments that in his paintings mediate between men and women, at times perversely. Such is undoubtedly the orphic function of Loayza and his music, since that music destroys the walls of Carrizales’s enclosure’ (769).

10This conjunction of enclosure, toys, and kitchen confections reminds me of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’s “Respuesta a Sor Filotea,” in which the Mexican nun defends women’s right to education by arguing that curious women will seek out knowledge even if they are denied formal studies: they will learn the laws of perspective by observing the intersection of walls, floors, and ceilings in their houses; they will be introduced to chemistry by studying the properties of their kitchen substances; and the movement of their children’s spinning tops will initiate them in the science of astronomy and planetary motion.

11I have altered the final words of the de Onis translation, which read: “between them all they made an anatomical fricassee of him.” Anatomia in the seventeenth century meant “dissection” or “vivisection” (97), pepitoria was a stew made from the chopped-up parts of a bird. (See Covarruibilas Horozco.)

12A remark by Perry also becomes curious in this context: “Women of Seville could live within religious rather than domestic enclosure, making their homes within the convents that formed quiet islets in the teeming urban landscape. A few nuns lived in the emparedamientos, or walled-up houses, that since the thirteenth century had provided absolute seclusion” (75).
The history of the Philippines, where colonization was carried out predominantly by the church, is particularly interesting in this regard. In Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule, Vicente L. Rafael remarks, "Conversion, like conquest, can thus be a process of crossing over into the domain—territorial, emotional, religious or cultural—of someone else and claiming it as one's own. Such a claim can entail not only the annexation of the other's possessions but, equally significant, the restructuring of his or her desires as well" (ix).

Rafael examines insightfully the production and complicated reception of these manuals in the Philippines. For instance, he writes, "The idiom of religious conversion was crucial, then, for this reason: it shaped the terms of the native surrender just as it lent itself to the articulation of popular resistance to a colonizing power . . . " (7); "Tagalog responses seem to have been at odds with Spanish intentions. Their conversion to Christianity, like their learning of Castilian, occurred in ways not fully accountable in Spanish-Christian terms . . . " (110); "To the Spanish demand that converts make their bodies speak the language of God, the Tagalog converts responded by performing token payments designed to appease the figure of authority and deflect the force of hierarchy . . . Converting conversion and confusing confession, the Tagalogs submitted while at the same time hollowing out the Spanish call to submission" (135).

18 Perry's Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville sheds light on Cervantes's choice of Seville as the stage for "El celoso extremeno." "Seville had become the fourth largest city in Europe by the end of the sixteenth century, with a population of more than 100,000" (5). "Whether deviant or obedient, women became increasingly significant in this city of intensified change. As husbands and fathers left for the New World, women made decisions, raised children, and handled business at home" (50).

19 "Discussions at the Council of Trent of the sacrament of marriage and the cloistering of nuns underscored their gravity and developed an earlier trend toward enclosure that took on greater momentum under the impact of urban growth and social dislocation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" (Perry 69).

Ironically, by the eighteenth century the saraband and the chaconne would be incorporated into the classical European dance repertoire.

1I am indebted to Mary Gaylord and Carlos Alonso for helpful comments on this essay. A lecture by Eduardo Subirats on Bartolomé de Las Casas and subsequent conversations I had with him also strongly influenced my thought.

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