

Research Article

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Cervantes, Lizardi, and the Literary Construction of The Mexican Rogue in *Don Catrín de la fachenda*

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Abstract: This study explores the socio-economic legacies and critique of nation-building found in the work of José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi (1776-1827). In the nineteenth century, the Latin American elite struggled to disassociate itself from a suffocating colonial machine; they sought their own identity, and writing became a way to express their frustration. As in other parts of Latin America, Mexican intellectuals protested fossilisation via Cervantes's *Don Quijote*. Using the Spanish author's text as a blueprint, Lizardi's *Don Catrín de la fachenda* depicted a turbulent society that was in the process of abandoning a decaying colonial order. *Don Quijote*'s characters engaged in power struggles and were involved in a variety of forms of social antagonism. Lizardi juxtaposed and superimposed these on an American geographical and socio-economic space where there was much dissension around the nation's direction. The social and economic rules of Mexico (and Latin America) today can be said to be already present in the social exchanges in *Don Catrín*. It was in this context that *Don Quijote* was "Mexicanised" by Lizardi and thereby made to participate in local reflections on liberty, patriotism, capitalism, and citizenship. Cervantes's text thus took on a socio-political meaning in the narrative of Latin America's past and present.

Keywords: *Don Quijote*, Mexico, nation, materialism, social class.

Néstor García Canclini has observed that twenty-first-century Latin American nations have become porous, unable to contain what is produced from within or filter things from the outside (72-4). Doris Sommer has established how the authors of the twentieth-century Latin American Boom resisted what they considered a nineteenth-century lineal, historical, writing. Boom authors, for the most part, refused to be associated with the past, yet their desire for separation suggested resemblance and emulation of a certain kind (73). Latin American authors of the twentieth century battled to separate themselves from their precursors, as Harold Bloom has argued (50). In the nineteenth century, the Latin American elite struggled to extricate itself from a suffocating colonial machine; they sought their own identity, and writing became a way to express their frustration. As they did in other parts of Latin America, intellectuals in Mexico protested the socio-political fossilisation of the Old Order by associating with Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quijote* (1605; 1615).

In Canclini's words, the *criollo* elite strove futilely to contain what emanated from the Crown. Transatlantic influences pervaded local cultural expressions and, therefore, a discursive reality about America was constructed (Badía and Gasior 17). This study explores the socio-economic legacies and projections of nationhood found in the work of José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi (1776-1827)—known as *El pensador mexicano* [Mexican Thinker]—specifically, in *Vida y hechos del famoso caballero Don Catrín de la fachenda* (published posthumously in 1832). Using Cervantes's text as a blueprint, Lizardi depicted a turbulent society that was in the process of abandoning a decaying colonial order, one without the laws

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necessary to protect its citizens from “materialistic, laic, and bourgeois codes” (Mudrovic xvii).¹ In this context, *Don Quijote* was “Mexicanised” by Lizardi and thereby implicated in local reflections on liberty, patriotism, capitalism, and citizenship. Cervantes’s text thus took on a socio-political meaning in the narrative of Latin America’s past and present.

Cervantes and the Critique of Nation-Building in Mexico

According to Benedict Anderson, a nation is defined by the “style” in which a community is imagined (6). As Lizardi constructed Mexico’s social environment in *Don Catrín de la fachenda*, a nascent nation emerged that was fundamentally troubled. A *catrín* was a vacuous individual, a type of dandy, who liked to dress to the nines and put himself on display in the city streets. Written when colonial rule was on its last legs, the text reproduced a tableau of decadent members of society along with a pastiche of men of the cloth (who followed Rousseau) and aristocratic *criollos* (who exalted not the nobility of birth but of virtue) (Mudrovic xv). In this, Lizardi showed the contradictions of his own political philosophy: pitting the desire for freedom against fidelity to Fernando VII (xii). In *Don Quijote*, by contrast, Cervantes used the mode of disguise as a device that would allow him to unleash “the power of literature” to criticise society, a move that was made necessary by the novel’s perilous “political environment” (Cascardi 241). Using *Don Quijote* as a framework, Lizardi’s novel used social exchanges as a means to protest against the inadequacies of Mexican society.

Don Quijote’s characters engaged in power struggles and were involved in a variety of forms of social antagonism. Lizardi juxtaposed and superimposed these on an American geographical and socio-economic space where there was much dissension on the direction of the nation. Don Catrín’s exchanges were subject to social and economic rules that remain very much in place in twenty-first-century Mexico (and Latin America). Vagrancy and delinquency as forms of social marginalisation were prevalent in Lizardi. Such social realities were also witnessed and discussed by Cervantes, and they became a topic of debate during the first decade of the seventeenth-century in Spain (Colás Gil 219). The *catrín* in the nineteenth century sought to become, as Nobel laureate Octavio Paz observed in his *Laberinto de la soledad* (1959), the “Gran Chingón, in business, in politics, in crime, and with women” (69). Bribes, and underground collaboration between government and outlaws—also found in Lizardi’s text—continue to define the tough realities to which the marginalised are subjected in twenty-first-century Mexico.

Don Catrín provided a historical, cultural and literary vision of the consequences and by-products of Spanish colonialism (Old Order). It envisaged the denunciations of Sarmiento in his *Facundo* (1845) and also illustrated the influence of proto-capitalism, of the Enlightenment, American Independence, and the recent Mexican Independence (New Order) on civic ideas. In Cervantes’s time, the Church and secular power aimed at imposing control through religion; within this context, fictional and nonfictional accounts associated delinquents with images of transgression. To homogenise the state, delinquents were per force “socially excluded from [it]” and thereby came to be essentially defined by the act of “leaving” or “abandoning” civil and religious law (Colás Gil 222). Carroll Johnson has lamented that critics have avoided the business of everyday life when analysing *Don Quijote* and preferred instead to focus on issues such as spirituality versus materialism (*Cervantes* 15). Shifting the lens to socio-political confrontations between the feudal and the proto-capitalist, however, one can see how Cervantes’s texts narrated a history of delinquency in Spain. Latin Americans saw this, and they zeroed in on *Don Quijote*’s socio-political context. To them, in the nineteenth century, the text represented hope and higher ideals, but it was also an emblem of what their nations could become; the ideals, morals, and actions of don Quijote, in fact, became synonymous with freedom from an oppressive society.

Text and author are so intimately related in Latin America that literary critics have transmuted Cervantes’s frustrated arrival in the New World into a nostalgic quest for the author in an American space. Accordingly, Cervantistas have endeavoured to glimpse a *historia verdadera* beyond the narrative wherein they are capable of imposing a fixed identity on its elusive author. The text has also served as a

¹ Translation mine. All translations from Spanish to English are mine unless otherwise indicated.

political refuge, as Juan Montalvo's has demonstrated in *Capítulos que se le olvidaron a Cervantes* (1895). A strong desire to sever ties with Spain or repair the ills of Latin America's budding nations, therefore, did not connote a break from the Spanish author or his *Don Quijote*. In the 1960s, during a time that saw the emergence of revolutionary figures, Cervantistas continued to fuse the man and his fiction, even contending that Cervantes, who had endured much before earning his well-deserved recognition, had become immune to suffering and tears (Oruesagasti xxi). In 1999, Roberto González Echevarría asked how one could read *Don Quijote* without monumentalising it (*Ciberletras*).

Paz remarked in the late 1950s that social class had superseded individuals and turned them into a mushy generic form in Mexico (61). In *Don Catrín*, Lizardi described the rise and fall of individuals in a Mexican society where people existed together but did not necessarily share the same passion for patria. In 1931, Jefferson R. Spell examined Lizardi's historiographical status as a journalist and writer, affirming that the pamphlets and literary texts of *El pensador mexicano* strove to depict a stark, realistic, iconoclastic and ideological vision of his city (*The Life and Works* 73). If we borrow Johnson's perspective on Cervantes's time, we discover that nationalistic codes were embedded in Lizardi's text and left open to interpretation. These revealed a notion of nation whose identity was validated by social class alone; hence, he felt compelled to create civic engagement that would foster a formal education on citizens. The socio-historical clues found in *Don Catrín* thus illustrate the deterritorialization of many in nineteenth-century Mexico.

Cervantes and His Itinerant Text

In the late 1970s, Guillermo Díaz-Plaja lamented that Cervantes had sustained one failure after another and wondered why life had proven hostile to the author (23). In the twenty-first century, William Egginton has also reflected on the type of understanding Cervantes developed of those marginalised by society, having endured his own share of misfortune (573). For the contemporary Spanish cinematographer and author Nicolás Melini,

Cervantes and *Don Quijote* are riding their horses . . . Cervantes is a mine that produces, with its mere symbolic inference, quantities of economic resources for some and others. Through Cervantes, large amounts of private and public money circulate and . . . Cervantes is, means, or implies, in the economic terms of the capitalist society in which we live, the nation's "value proposition." That is: the nation is worth more because of Cervantes and *Don Quijote* (76).

This total fascination with the Spanish author and his text completely permeated nineteenth-century Latin American culture. Don Catrín took care to recount with pride that he had read an entire encyclopaedia, a plethora of erudite texts, and *Don Quijote*. Of course, Lizardi made sure that everything his protagonist read was put into question. One thing was certain: the character read Cervantes's novel as a Mexican subject. In spite of the historical moment of transition in which he lived, he clearly made don Catrín a Mexican subject. Recounting his experience in a prison in Habana, for example, the protagonist exclaimed: "[t]he two years passed at last, I was given my freedom, and I returned to Mexico, my homeland" [Pasaron por fin los dos años, se me dio mi libertad, y me volví a México, mi patria] (Lizardi 11; 66). In the words of Spell, the author was intensely criticized for developing archetypes and not true characters (*The Life and Works* 82). At times, however, he freed himself from preaching and moralising and allowed himself humorous turns, following the Cervantes model.

A few months after *Don Quijote*'s publication, the text's success was proven by the number of pirated editions that appeared not only in many cities in Spain but also as far as London (Egginton 131). Several editions crossed the Atlantic from 1605 onwards; as soon as they arrived in the New World, don Quijote and Sancho Panza became widely read by a *criollo* audience, even appearing as Carnival figures in Peru as early as 1607 (Riley 30). The work became a commercial success in the New World just as it had been in Spain. In *Cervantes y América*, published in the 1950s, Emilio Carilla examined how readers perceived the contestatory nature of the text, elaborating on the multi-faceted reinventions of *Don Quijote* by Latin American authors and rightfully emphasising the rapport between author and text: What Cervantes "did

not accomplish in person (that is, go to America and succeed there), he would quickly achieve through his books, in particular one of his books . . . *Don Quijote*" (14).

The great triumph of *Don Quijote* in the Indies became juxtaposed with the categorical rejection of Cervantes's attempts to emigrate to the New World, around 1580 and in 1590 (Wilson 207). Like his contemporaries, Cervantes applied to go to the Indies for a better life, one that had been promised by the Indianos, many of whom returned prosperous from the New Continent. People's desire to emigrate only increased after the spectacular defeat of the Invincible Catholic Armada by the English Protestant forces in 1588. Cervantes's objectives for emigrating find echo nowadays in Latin Americans' reasons for fleeing their own nations. Discussing the displacement of Latin Americans, García Canclini has described a reverse immigration from Argentina and Uruguay toward Spain undertaken by seventy-two young soldiers in the early years of the twenty-first century (39-40). For his part, Cervantes aimed high and applied for relatively prestigious positions. His goal was to provide material comfort for his family, since the expectations of steady work in Spain were virtually non-existent (Wilson 207).

Although Cervantes himself never made the crossing to Latin America, one of his biographers has proposed exhuming an original first-edition text that had been sent to the viceroyalties of Mexico and Peru (McCrorry). Because Cervantes's influence in Latin America was so foundational, and the fusion of text and author so closely made in the public's mind, the intellectual value of this enterprise was grounded in the sense that it might lead to a greater discovery about the man. In some way, one could hope that the remains of Cervantes himself might have been found. In a Cervantesque twist, however, the reality of this proposed exhumation cannot be confirmed with one-hundred percent certainty by researchers. Nonetheless, it is possible that a scientific team may have actually found Cervantes's remains in the Convento de las Trinitarias in Madrid, together with those of his family. The team had to work within a very tight budget, however, and reminded themselves of the hardships of Cervantes's own life even as they were becoming aware that Shakespeare, who also died in 1616, was being commemorated by Great Britain with much more substantial governmental support (Fonseca, *El País* 2016).

Don Quijote and Sancho Panza interacted within a framework of historical materialism, raising issues from the "socio-economic-political problematics of [Cervantes's] times" (Johnson, Introduction xvii). In this regard, Américo Castro has examined Cervantes as a Christian convert in this same context; Fernand Braudel has put "emphasis on commerce in spite of national antagonisms"; and José Antonio Maravall has focused on the "Spanish experience" (Introduction xvii). Changes effected by the modes of production exemplified acute class conflicts in early seventeenth-century Spain.² For his part, Egginton has discussed how monarchic power and policies of the nation-state were legitimated via print culture and public theatres. During Cervantes's time, these methods were even more effective than repressive measures at controlling people (52). Looking at Mexico in the twentieth-century, Paz has inferred that propaganda and political totalitarianism employed the same system of terror and repression, one that made individuals react favourably to absolutes (62). As a public-servant, Cervantes was well aware of the Spanish monarchy's severe religious and economic measures. Later, these exposed themselves as expressions of senseless xenophobia and cultural isolation from the rest of Europe. For these reasons, Cervantes proceeded in a disguised manner, highly conscious of "what could and could not be said" (Cascardi 12). Through a variety of diversions, Cervantes's texts emblemized how the political processes of Christian imperialism had traumatised the Spanish realm.

The Figures of don Catrín and don Quijote

It is not the purpose of this essay to trace forced parallels between *Don Quijote* and *Don Catrín*. Rather, it is to interrogate Lizardi's use of themes and narrative techniques from Cervantes to strike an ironic tone in his presentation of a character angered by a poor upbringing but convinced of his fundamental worthiness. Don Catrín pursued all that was wrong to make a name for himself in Mexican society. As he himself proclaims:

² Maravall states that the socio-political elements of Cervantes's text should not be looked for in isolated episodes in *Don Quijote*, but on the contrary, the whole quixotic enterprise should be considered within historical circumstances, p. 37.

I assure you with my faith as gentleman don Catrín that I am noble, illustrious and distinguished, actively, passively and impersonally.

[Os aseguro a fe de caballero don Catrín que soy noble, ilustre y distinguido, por activa, por pasiva y por impersonal (Lizardi, 1; 2).]

Lizardi purposefully matched his title to Cervantes's. In addition, the Mexican author cleverly interconnected, for example, a key episode where the narrative is interrupted in *Don Catrín*, just at the moment when two *catrines* held their swords up in the air (3; 18), to establish a dialogue with Cervantes's episode of the choleric Basque (I, 8). Lizardi's protagonist not only participated in a fictitious life—unmoved by his crude reality—but was eager to take numerous shortcuts to elevate his standing in society. However, don Catrín did not possess don Quijote's sensibility; he wanted to acquire goods quickly and easily. This prompted him to seek targets among the gullible, choosing victims from all social classes. Lizardi depicted a stiff, archaic Mexican aristocracy—no longer *criollo*—struggling against a nouvelle bourgeoisie class. The protagonist tilted at veritable windmills. The belief that his lifestyle, his lack of formal education, and disdain for family values, would provide a stable future evinced a kind of personal delusion or folly. A drive for material goals and a desire to win left don Catrín with only two possible outcomes in his life: he could “chingar” or be “chingado” (Paz 71).

In the prologue to the first part of *Don Quijote*, Cervantes described his project in terms that intimated a kind of political-social pragmatism.³ Emphasizing the alterity of his text, Cervantes alluded to the literary activity of his time and expressed that he did not intend to follow contemporary literary customs (3) [p. 19]. He meticulously decried the trite authorial traditions of the day. Fully aware of his originality, he proposed new norms:

I wanted only to offer it to you plain and bare, unadorned by a prologue or the endless catalogue of sonnets, epigrams, and laudatory poems that are usually placed at the beginning of books (I, prologue; 4).

[sólo quisiera dártele monda y desnuda, sin el ornato de prólogo, ni de la innumerabilidad y catálogo de los acostumbrados sonetos, epigramas y elogios que al principio de los libros suelen ponerse (p. 20).]

As Machiavelli did in *The Prince* (published in 1532), Cervantes also described a proto-capitalist market economy punctuated by the cruelty of the leisure classes. In Machiavelli's case, Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), founder of the Italian Communist party, saw the rebelliousness woven into Machiavelli's text and thus included *The Prince* in his *Prison Notes* (1948). Cervantes created a plethora of characters who endured the hardships of imperial and commercial life where some became very rich but others very poor. Bartering appeared throughout the text, for example, notably in struggles between lord and servants, soldiers and letrados, or nobles and plebeians—in other words, in the lives of the characters encountered by knight and squire. Various levels of narration were used to muddle the different social judgments; the novel's voice was always astute and it limited what the narration could say, sometimes simply alluding to something that everyone supposedly already knew. The text was at the same time a treasure trove of picturesque details that nonetheless escaped the chroniclers of the time (Del Arco 76).

From the beginning, matters were complicated by the fact that the text's protagonist, Alonso Quijano (Quijada, Quesada, etc.), lived in a rural world but also participated in a rich humanistic tradition, one best represented by a personal library with a wide selection of books. Like Machiavelli's library in San Casciano, and later, Sor Juana's in New Spain, Quijano's library eased the difficulty of his daily existence as he both gradually neglected his duties in administering his farm and willed himself into don Quijote de la Mancha. As the hidalgo executed his transformation into a person of adventure and fame, he rid himself of his lands to buy books, making himself poorer, something the author reflected in his character's daily meals. To be sure, when Quijano sat to eat, he often pondered what he was denied and what he desired, with this duality permeating the *raison d'être* of don Quijote and other characters throughout the text:

[a]n occasional stew, beef more often than lamb, hash most nights, eggs and abstinence on Saturday, lentils on Friday, sometimes squab as a treat on Sundays—these consumed three-fourths of his income (I, 1; 19).

³ Cervantes coincided with Machiavelli, who emphasised in *The Prince* that nothing was dearer to him than the wisdom he had acquired about the great deeds of great men, p. 29.

[Una olla de algo más vaca que carnero, salpicón las más noches, duelos y quebrantos los sábados, lantejas los viernes, algún palomino de añadidura los domingos, consumían las tres partes de su hacienda (p. 35).]

The gentleman's frugal diet had social ramifications that reverberated against the insidiousness of a nascent capitalism. Like others, the hidalgo belonged to a class that had lost economic stability and social status and so he adjusted by pursuing the life of the mind in his precious library. The symbolic juxtaposition of the humble food pot, the "salpicón," "lentejas," and the "duelo," and "abstinence," during the weekend, signalled a life of tremendous willpower—and this extended to the lives of the others in his house.⁴ In addition, his eating habits exalted and contrasted the glorious past of *caballería* and feudalism with the meagre food of the inhabitants of the dwelling. In this way, the hacienda of Alonso Quijano followed a system of micro-economic barter. As don Quijote—in his madness and erudition—desired a return to a gloried feudal age, the obsolescence of his behaviour at once distinguished and exposed a nascent capitalist, and multi-ethnic, socio-economic infrastructure for the text's other characters. In this context, the nation-state sought to eradicate otherness, as can be seen in the expulsion of Jews and Muslims and the subsequent tensions arising between *cristianos viejos* and *cristianos nuevos* or *conversos* and *moriscos* (Johnson, *Cervantes* 3).

Written around 1820, but unpublished until five years after his death, Lizardi's text was in a state of coming together as the colonial system was falling apart, giving way to the process of independence. Like Cervantes, the Mexican author endured economic challenges and became a writer partly to earn a living, and then also ate badly, as Spell has described (*The Life and Works* 16). Two of his well-known works, *El periquillo sarniento* and *Don Catrín*, followed the tradition of the Spanish picaresque novel, showing and underscoring *El pensador mexicano's* level of education. Like picaresque authors on the peninsula, he knew that the best way to reach the letrado / elite world was through acerbic criticism. Because of his rebelliousness, he suffered the same fate as Cervantes, spending a portion of his life in prison. Lizardi was jailed for supporting a liberal constitution. This provoked an impious reaction in the viceroy who imposed censorship and imprisoned the insurgents, most of them intellectuals (Spell, Prologue vii-viii).

In the words of Paz, the *catrín* "can only *be* in solitude" [solamente en la soledad se atreve a *ser*, emphasis mine] (64). The prologue to *Don Catrín* interweaved self-delusion with unsound aspirations for wealth and notions of national identity. The protagonist, a libertine and a self-absorbed citizen, boasted of his many gifts and virtues. At the same time, events mercilessly revealed his cowardice and lack of heroism:

[y]es, my dear *catrines* and companions: this famous work will run . . . I misspoke, it will fly on the wings of its fame all over the inhabited and even uninhabited lands; it will be printed in Spanish, English, French, German, Italian, Arabic, Tartar, etc., and every son of Adam, without an exception, when hearing the sonorous and gentle name of don Catrín, his only, his erudite author, will bow humbly and confess his commendable merit.

[Sí, amigos *catrines* y compañeros míos: esta obra famosa correrá . . . Dije mal, volará en las alas de su fama por todas partes de la tierra habitada y aun de la inhabitada; se imprimirá en los idiomas español, inglés, francés, alemán, italiano, arábigo, tártaro, etc., y todo hijo de Adán, sin exceptuar uno solo, al oír el sonoro y apacible nombre de don Catrín, su único, su eruditísimo autor, rendirá la cerviz y confesará su mérito recomendable (Lizardi 1; 1).]

Don Catrín related to his peers exclusively through economic transactions that he hoped would favour him. Lizardi's ironic description connected irreconcilable elements in the *catrín*; he portrayed himself as an "illustrious knight by birth, highly knowledgeable by his letters, opulent by his riches" [caballero ilustre por su cuna, sapientísimo por sus letras, opulento por sus riquezas (Lizardi 1; 2)]; instead, he was obstinate, lazy, and suffered from social inertia, losing society's respect. He reproduced himself in complete opposition to the *historia verdadera* of the lives of the *catrines*. They conducted themselves grotesquely, with bad friendships, bad living and a lack of patriotic values. As an anti-gentleman, don Catrín was don Quijote's antithesis. In his own town of La Mancha, the impoverished hidalgo became so immersed in his reading that he believed himself to be a knight, thinking and representing himself as a literary figure. As don Quijote, the character championed what he considered just causes. His idealistic actions were charming but

⁴ María del Carmen Artigas observes that "quebrantos" denoted that "On the Sabbath Don Quixote broke the law, thus, he mourned." See "Was Cervantes a Faithful Jew?"

they could also at the same time be decoded as “messages between lines, irony as a trope and as a fact of life,” filled with a richness and complexity that make Cervantes’s text resonate “in the twenty-first century” (Friedman 51). Don Catrín had likewise gone mad, but Lizardi’s character was created to arouse antipathy. In fact, throughout his misadventures, he never sought the sympathy of anyone; his unbecoming conduct, negative demeanour towards his parents, and absence of ideals paved his path to perdition. Fashioning an absolutely irresponsible citizen, Lizardi thereby exposed a society that required the provision of formal education, religious formation, and respect for order (Mudrovic xxiv).

Lizardi passionately condemned the malaise of his contemporary society time and felt compelled to confront his detractors directly. In doing so, the Mexican iconoclast stated that he modelled himself after *Don Quijote* every time he was criticized for putting vulgar language in the mouths of his characters (Vogeley 75). Spell has found that *El pensador mexicano* was already a good narrator of life in his early poems, where he vividly sketched picturesque characters that would swarm the Plaza Mayor in Mexico City (*The Life and Works* 73). For Nancy Vogeley, don Catrín’s comportment and words surpass the ambiguity or cunning civility of colonial discourse that Homi Bhabha has discussed (238). Moral decay in the *catrín* came to be represented increasingly through attacks on his person and body. Not only was he berated, but also physically mistreated, punished with frequent beatings and stabbings. Towards the end, when taken to hospital with grave stab wounds, he confessed that the treatment and healing process had become even worse punishment (10; 59). The irrepressible protagonist was as ill as the society in which he lived. As a whole, don Catrín’s tragic ending was fully expected and predictable. He became a picture of human degradation, an individual spiritually and physically ill, lacking the moral character necessary to end his life well. Death took him before he could finish his story, which was completed by Cándido, a nurse practitioner at the hospital where don Catrín passed. For Vogeley, these two conflicting testimonies, when intertwined, symbolise the crisis of faith in Mexican society, which had become dominated by religious creed and rigid political indoctrination (238). The infamous *catrín* did not repent or plead for mercy, as would have been expected. He simply ceased to exist, dispossessed of all material goods.

One of the most outstanding aspects of don Quijote was his “self-promotion” from hidalgo—a member of a social class that could not attain the title of “don”—to a gentleman; he immediately rose in the social echelon, as Johnson has remarked (*Cervantes* 15). In his manner, he shed this difficult condition and took possession of one that fulfilled his purposes—to live according to his books as a knight who conquered lands and the hand of princesses. Becoming a knight “for the sake of his honour and as service to the nation” (I, 1; 21) [para el aumento de su honra como para el servicio de su república (p. 38)], he rode his Rocinante, displaying himself as an anachronistic figure who surprised anybody he encountered. Since he ascended the social strata of his time through reading, the muleteers or scullery maids he encountered at the beginning of his adventures could not understand his words. Right from the start, the brand-new caballero’s fantasy was threatened by the real world, when he was told that even knights errant needed money to survive in society. Don Quijote told an innkeeper that he had never read that caballeros andantes were supposed to carry valuables. Accordingly, he did not have “a copper blanca” (I, 3; 31) [no tenía blanca (p. 49)]. To this, the astute innkeeper replied that, of course, knights carried money but books of chivalry did not bother to relate such mundane and obvious things (I, 3; 31).

Don Quijote’s social climbing resembled the rise of another literary character, Lazarillo. On a rapid and adventurous path, Lazarillo went from beggar to squire, arming himself as a means of dealing with his new socio-economic status (Johnson, *Cervantes* 16). In the opinion of José de Armas, a Cuban intellectual from the early part of the twentieth century, Lazarillo and don Quijote represented a “sad and sombre Spain” where “the poverty and even the hunger that Quevedo also painted in admirable traits reigned tyrannically in the vast territory of the Peninsula” (79-80). Lazarillo convinced himself that he should conceal his role as a deceived husband in order to maintain the decorum, and more important, the material sustenance provided by his wife’s rumoured lover, the *fraile de la merced*. Power struggles in a changing Spanish social environment forced don Quijote and Lazarillo to cope with their circumstances in determined ways. The Spanish realm had become xenophobic, but its rural class was strong, and it fought for domination against a progressively less wealthy aristocracy. Labour disputes and attempts to invert the social pyramid showed just how far the Spanish rural class had become commercialized. Rigid social conventions revealed

themselves clearly over and against this hostile environment in Cervantes's text. The episode of Dorotea and Fernando in part one, for example, showed how feminine virtue was viewed in tangible, materialistic, terms within the social and economic space of the nation-state. Dorotea's parents warned her that Don Fernando was after one thing only. Her feminine virtue stood for their honour and well-being. It was also a kind of material good and, as such, could be traded for an assurance of a good marriage for their daughter. For this reason, it was important for her to heed the difference in social rank between her and the aristocrat (I, 28).

Cervantes contended that the text's main purpose was "to undermine the authority and wide acceptance that books of chivalry have in the world" (I, prologue; 8) [deshacer la autoridad y cabida que en el mundo y en el vulgo tienen los libros de caballerías (p. 25)]. At the same time, he showed a profound and radical awareness of being a writer, rejecting the literary presumptions and highly elaborate narrative techniques of the authors of his time, specifically Lope de Vega (Riley 30-31). Likewise, *Don Quijote*'s characters were conscious of the types of books that were likely to be best-sellers (like those of chivalry). Equally, in the print shop episode (II, 62), don Quijote engaged in conversation about the compilation and printing of books; the virtues and vices of translating a text; and the potential material gain and risks involved in the book market of his time.

As the author of *El periquillo sarniento*—with pamphlets published in 1816—Lizardi felt it was his mission to reproduce harsh truths about society. The Mexican author was primarily an essayist who was forced to fictionalise his philosophical and political thinking because he was "bound by the political circumstances of his time" (Alegría 16). For him, educating the nation became synonymous with restoring virtue among its citizens. He believed strongly that inaction and malleable positions did not bode well for society (18). Becoming a novelist thus offered Lizardi an effective vehicle for historicizing events. He wanted to frame a critical and axiomatic portrait of a turbulent period and make it unfold before the eyes of the reader. Going against the grain of other political figures of the time, and therefore mimicking Erasmus in sixteenth-century Europe, Lizardi hoped that a monarchic and constitutional reformism would allow New Spain to undergo a non-violent, but necessary political change and become healthy again (Mudrovic xiv). He represented a *criollo* middle class that was unwilling to embrace radical measures or a movement toward true independence (xi). In the novel, therefore, a dwindling colonial past lived together with an effervescent yet turbulent nation-in-the-making. In a sarcastic aside, don Catrín highlighted how, in spite of being ill-prepared, he managed to be accepted into military school:

[n]othing is difficult to achieve when one has money and nobility; I saw that with myself palpably. My father made his request for me, presenting my titles of aristocracy and nobility, and the commendable merits of my grandparents, who had been conquistadores, so that in no time at all here I am with the necessary requirements to join the military.
[Nada se dificulta conseguir en habiendo monedas y nobleza; yo lo vi conmigo palpablemente. Mi padre entabló su solicitud por mí, presentando mis ejecutorias de hidalguía y de nobleza, y los recomendables méritos de mis abuelos, que habían sido conquistadores, con lo que en dos por tres cátenme aquí con mis licencias necesarias para incorporarme en la milicia (Lizardi, 3; 13).]

The conservatives and liberals appropriated specific chronological discourses. The former were intent on keeping the status quo and looked to the past for a solution, whereas the latter disagreed with the rigidity of the Church and cast aside any merit of Spanish domination, forging ahead to the future (Kuteischikova 2). Lizardi showed that the power struggle between conservatives and liberals was disastrous since it did not benefit civic institutions. Unlike the author's other works of fiction, *Don Catrín* did not moralise so much as it illustrated disarray with sarcasm and fine irony (Spell, Prologue xi). In this sense, new Latin American nations were created in the midst of conflictive social spaces and they looked for cues to follow from developed nations (Kuteischikova 2-3). Following Anderson, we know that "nations ... always loom out of an immemorial past . . . into a limitless future" (11). For Lizardi, a nation, in order to prosper, needed to eradicate perverse educational and religious practices. Spell has examined how *El pensador mexicano* directly engaged in a battle against what he considered a Catholic Church gone astray. Excommunication was a formidable weapon, and the church wielded it against Lizardi; this meant isolation from society, no communication with others or in print, no food and no place to live (*The Life and Works* 39).

In the same manner that don Quijote related to his fellow characters by using different, conflicting social codes, the *catrines* differed from others in their epicurean manner and in the way in which they conceived of their existence. Tormented by visions of his deceased uncle, the priest, the protagonist sought the advice of one of his friends, who told him to stop fearing the dead:

[l]ook, Catrín, life is no more than a game; our existence, short and troubled, without further rest or happiness once it is over; no dead person has returned to earth to bring proof of immortality

[Mira, Catrín, nuestra vida no es más que un juego; nuestra existencia, corta y sujeta a las molestias, sin que haya reposo ni felicidad más allá de su término; ningún muerto ha vuelto a la tierra a traernos prueba de la inmortalidad (Lizardi, 9; 53)]

Since the story is narrated in the first person and tells the events and adventures of a rogue, critics have traditionally viewed *Don Catrín* as rooted within the picaresque tradition.⁵ But, Lizardi did not only describe the life and experience of a rogue in nineteenth-century Mexico. He also put his finger on the literary, philosophical and social nuances, and the cultural heritage, of an emerging Mexico that was being torn apart by divergent political currents. Urban space was represented in ambiguous tones. The cultural edifices of the Spanish had become obsolete and grotesque but the new proposed ways were at best disconcerting. The *catrines*, thus, put a society's malfunction on dramatic display:

[t]hey honour society with their presence, they cheer the tables with their sayings, amuse the gatherings with their graces, indoctrinate the girls, teach the idiots with their erudition, circulate misers' money with their liveliness, [and] increase the population as soon as they can.

[honran las sociedades con su presencia, alegran las mesas con sus dichos, divierten las tertulias con sus gracias, edifican a las niñas, enseñan a los idiotas con su erudición, hacen circular el dinero de los avaros con su viveza, [y] aumentan la población en cuanto pueden (Lizardi, 8; 47).]

The *catrines* represented a generation of upstarts that had lost its civic purpose. Their egregious demeanour, unfortunately, prevented their contemporaries from formulating the right questions about Mexican subjectivity. Using surreptitious methods, the *catrines* benefited; this led upright citizens to believe that good behaviour did not pay. In the words of Paz, the *chingón* attitude of the *catrines* showed a Mexican character that encouraged suspicion, allegiance to power, and a hermetic stance. In fact, the exacerbating social circumstances of colonial Mexico were not addressed during independence. Paz has remarked that nothing was ever resolved in the nation, neither acute poverty nor "exasperating social differences, in spite of a century-and-a-half of struggle and constitutional experience" (64).

From his books, don Quijote understood he had to serve a lady, and so he created doña Dulcinea del Toboso. Always absent from the text, she turned in the mind of the Manchego like a maiden of stories and became a fascinating character in Western culture, as Mancing has discussed. The critic saw her truly come to life outside of the novel itself (55). Along with Dulcinea, the narration told of other "ethereal" damsels, such as Maritornes, who interceded in the chivalrous life of don Quijote. The young woman learned about don Quijote when the *ventera* interrogated Sancho Panza in an attempt to make sense of their unusual guests. As a practical woman, she rebuked Sancho for the little that he looked like a squire. As for Maritornes, she was herself stumped by don Quijote's appearance and demeanour:

['w]hat's this gentleman's name?' asked Maritornes the Asturian. 'Don Quixote of La Mancha,' replied Sancho Panza, 'and he is an adventuring knight, and one of the best and strongest the world has seen in a long time.' 'What's an adventuring knight?' the servant asked (I, 16; 110-11).

[¿Cómo se llama este caballero? —preguntó la asturiana Maritornes.

—Don Quijote de la Mancha—respondió Sancho Panza—; y es caballero aventurero, y de los mejores y más fuertes que de luengos tiempos acá se han visto en el mundo. / ¿Qué es caballero aventurero? —replicó la moza (p.144).]

Maritornes was from the rural culture of La Mancha, unaware of the fancies of the caballero andante. She was described as a woman "with a broad face, a back of the head that was flat, a nose that was snubbed,

⁵ Regarding Cervantes, Ayala states that the Spanish author "felt the temptation of the picaresque novel," exemplified by Ginés de Pasamonte's opinion about his own book, pp. 129-30.

and one eye that was blind, while the other was not in very good condition" (I, 16; 109) [ancha de cara, llana de cogote, de nariz roma, del un ojo tuerta y del otro no muy sana" (p. 143)]. Seeing she had no hope of escaping her social condition, Sancho was reminded of his own audacity in following don Quijote's dream. Reacting to what he perceived to be aristocratic and bourgeois values ingrained in some Golden Age critics from the United States, Johnson has found himself "unable to isolate the specifically material practices from the sociocultural milieu" in which don Quijote's adventures took place and took on meaning (*Cervantes* 2). To be sure, don Quijote's encounter with Maritornes was wholly acted out by different social codes. He appropriated Maritornes's subjectivity and created her as a beautiful princess from whom he had to defend himself in order to maintain his physical and spiritual fidelity to Dulcinea. Looking at the various rebirths of Dulcinea after *Don Quijote*, Mancing has shown that, in the 1960s Musical about don Quijote, she became forever transformed: "From 'a growl' to 'gently'; from Aldonza to Dulcinea. Arguably, the transformational power of 'the impossible dream' is the central theme of *Man of La Mancha*," (54). Effectively, of course, don Quijote theatricalised and meshed the textbook lady, the ethereal princess that would validate him as a worthy knight errant with the crude reality of a female servant, in the midst of rural Spain. In the humorous and confusing exchange between Maritornes, don Quijote, Sancho, and the mule driver—which left the two heroes in a sorry state—two social contexts and two histories collided with each other.

In Cervantes's account, the young woman was purposely given a great sexual appetite. She was practical about life and emulated the shepherdess Marcela, also from part one, in how she exercised her free will (Piluso 47). Ironically, the vigorous Asturian girl's entanglement with don Quijote and the mule driver followed the script of a meeting between medieval knights and twelfth-century maidens and would-be lovers. In conceiving Dulcinea, don Quijote needed to know that she existed beyond his idealisation. For this, he would need an opposite, hence Maritornes who acted as the village neighbour Aldonza—the inspiration for Dulcinea. As for the Asturian servant, she acted with agency and "prided herself on being wellborn and did not consider it an affront to be a servant in the inn because, she said, misfortunes and bad luck had brought her to that state (I, 16; 112) [presumía de muy de hidalga, y no tenía afrenta estar en aquel ejercicio de servir en la venta, porque decía ella que desgracias y malos sucesos la habían traído a aquel estado (p. 146)]. She revealed, then, the social and material fissure of the society of La Mancha.

The confrontation with the irate mule driver reminded don Quijote and Sancho that social ascent was not achieved through magical stories, but through material and social capital, aspects of which can be seen on two levels in the Asturian maid. On a literal level, she exemplified the woman of action, one who did not hesitate to pursue what she wanted, as Joan Kelly has shown (23). On another, Maritornes symbolised the breakdown of the Old Order and the emergence of a new one. She intuitively perceived a fragmentation in don Quijote's identity, his wanting to be part of a world that was obsolete. The Asturian maid fed his fantasies, appearing in his humble abode at the inn when he fancied himself loved by the daughter of the innkeeper. For don Quijote, she represented a damsel who would test his fidelity for Dulcinea; likewise, the venta was no longer itself, but a castillo [castle]. Maritornes entered his febrile narration at a precise moment. Engaging in a sexual tryst with a muleteer would perhaps relieve the tediousness from the arid space of La Mancha; instead, as she approached the man, she emerged as a princess-temptress from the books of chivalry. Maritornes thus felt intuitively close to don Quijote. As she extended her arm to reach the mule driver, don Quijote took hold of her, and she became part of his archaic vision of the world. To an extent, Maritornes wanted to believe in don Quijote; she also saw a bit of herself in Sancho, both being peripheral beings in a neo-capitalist economy.

Lizardi translated the classic episode of Maritornes through an amalgam of women from various social classes in *Don Catrín*. Spell has remarked that Lizardi reproduced in detail the deep social abyss that separated the social classes in Mexico (*The Life and Works* 84). For the most part, if a woman was characterised as beautiful, she belonged to the lower class and lived in constant danger of losing her honour, prone to falling into the trap of a corrupt society. On the other hand, a woman's wealth was inversely proportional to her attractiveness. These women were described without any redeeming natural features, but they were rich. After his parents' death, don Catrín squandered every penny and found himself in a dire economic situation. For this reason, he was more than prepared to turn ugliness into beauty, if money was involved:

[i]n the midst of this consternation I saw on a balcony a girl about nineteen years old, skinny, discoloured, with two missing teeth, with a blunt nose and a wart near her left eye the size of a large chickpea.

[En medio de esta consternación vi en un balcón a una muchacha como de diez y nueve años, flaca, descolorida, con dos dientes menos, de nariz roma y con una verruga junto al ojo izquierdo del tamaño de un garbanzo grande (Lizardi, 5; 29).]

The girl, who went by the name of Sinforosa, was described by don Catrín in a manner similar to the Maritornes from the venta-castillo. Nonetheless, Lizardi's "Maritornes" did not enjoy any of the advantages of the Asturian girl. Due to her status in Mexican society, she was bound by prohibitions. As a good and obedient girl, Sinforosa was obliged to wait for a suitor. She was able neither to savour the things her material wealth could provide nor, like Maritornes, enjoy the agency of expressing herself sexually. Ugly and rich, she was bound to serve as a social facilitator to a man like don Catrín. She had a face that even don Abundo, her own father, found unattractive, "she is quite ugly, and I . . . who am her father recognize it" [es feisita, y . . . yo que soy su padre lo conozco] (5; 30). From the moment he looked at her, don Catrín knew that she was the solution to his misery. The protagonist was repulsed by her ugliness, but, once assured of the girl's solid fortune, he wrote to her and offered humble gifts: "I dedicated myself to woo her without scruples. My walks along her street were frequent, and she always complied to my greetings with likeability [Me dedicué a cortejarla sin recelo. Mis paseos por su calle eran frecuentes, y ella siempre correspondía mis saluciones con agrado] (5; 30). Like don Quijote and Sancho in the Maritornes episode, don Catrín ended badly in his sentimental relation with Sinforosa. Don Abundo initially took to the suitor but he encouraged patience, perhaps to give himself time to learn more about his future son-in-law. Inevitably, don Abundo learned the ways of her daughter's suitor, and a confrontation ensued. Don Catrín asked to be respected as a military cadet, but don Abundo knew that he was no caballero, but a rascal and a scoundrel (5; 32).

In *La Quijotita*, Lizardi had depicted shortcomings in females while at the same time portraying an ideal, utopian family, as Jean Franco has discussed (463). Following the tradition of Renaissance treatises on comportment such as Alberti's *Della Famiglia*—filtered mainly through Rousseau—Lizardi declared that women's weaker constitution made them naturally inferior to men. Reflecting the rigidity of the condition imposed upon women, in *La Quijotita* the main reason women were confined to the house had to do with their role as mothers (467). Sinforosa, nonetheless, was more the exception than the norm, however, among don Catrín's female acquaintances. He frequented the company of women of dubious reputation who had not pursued motherhood. The women whom don Catrín met as he descended the social scale were prone to inhabit the urban space and exist outside of authority. In this vein, Franco's study on the *ilusas* of New Spain, "practitioners of the marvelous" who neither qualified for marriage nor the nunnery (498), could be applied to the women who gravitated in don Catrín's sphere. He pursued sex or relations of convenience with these women, and increasingly turned himself into a gigolo. Such an attitude obviously turned the notion of the gentleman in pursuit of a lady on its head. In fact, the conduct of the men and the women with whom he associated brought to mind the circumstances of his own parents:

[m]y mother took with her, in dowry to my father, two boys and three thousand pesos: the two boys, clandestine children from a titled somebody; the three thousand pesos were also his offspring, because he gave them to her to maintain the children.

[Mi madre llevó en dote al lado de mi padre dos muchachos y tres mil pesos: los dos muchachos, hijos clandestinos de un título y los tres mil pesos hijos también suyos, pues se los regaló para que los mantuviera (Lizardi, 1; 2).

Female honour was flexible and elastic and it bowed before material wealth. In an eloquent way, the "high" birth of don Catrín was based on self-deception. Relating his life to the picaresque style of the Lazarillo, don Catrín could not condemn his father. Who would refuse to put on an act when money was at stake (1; 2) was the ultimate rationalising question.

Don Catrín's uncle, a pedantic priest, has often been associated with Lizardi himself. In a way, the character evinced the latent struggle of *El pensador mexicano*, a Catholic who was opposed to the ways of the religious establishment—a position that isolated him from liberals and conservatives alike. The character resembled the rigid prelate encountered by don Quijote at the ducal court, in part two. Enamoured of long discourses, he was loved by everybody, except don Catrín, who thought of him as his jailer. The prelate

offered good advice for rectifying his nephew's debauched ways, but it all fell on deaf ears. Don Catrín, who boasted of his exemplary conduct, had no interest in a career in the humanities, commerce or as a farmer (2; 11). Likewise, he was uninterested in Enlightenment ideas or intellectual engagement. He fled from any type of job or civic commitment; he acquired large debts, cheated at cards, and dressed to impress, which was the fashionable thing to do (Mudrovic xxii). He ended his days battling the windmills of his moral downfall without ever have been able to finish the shameful history of his life. He became exhausted by misery and such humiliations as working in a brothel, being imprisoned in the Morro de La Habana, losing his leg, and begging to keep himself and his companion Marcela afloat. Don Catrín died without repenting his fraud of a life. He perpetuated the follies of a materialistic society worn weary by the antagonistic, dogmatic, confrontations between the Old and New social orders.

Don Catrín was a paradox: a "gentleman without honour, rich without rent; poor without hunger; in love without a lady; brave without enemy; wise without books; Christian without religion, and fool-proof rogue" [caballero sin honor; rico sin renta; pobre sin hambre; enamorado sin una dama; valiente sin enemigo; sabio sin libros; cristiano sin religión, y tuno a toda prueba] (Lizardi 8; 49).⁶ A social parasite, his egoistic and degrading way of life pulled down the civic spirit of Mexican society. He boasted of possessing wisdom and material wealth that would propel him to the highest heights, where he would be admired by friends and society at large. Like a grotesque Caballero de los Espejos from *Don Quijote*, the *catrín* wanted everything for nothing and maintained a clearly anti-chivalric attitude. His pernicious ways were "a permanent state of self-indulgence" (Mudrovic xxiv). Poor or rich, he disobeyed all authority, conducting himself irrationally and with great affectation.

Since the first arrival of Cervantes's text in the two main viceroyalties in the New World, *Don Quijote* has influenced authors monumentally. Honouring the figure of the knight-errant by following Cervantes's novel, Lizardi created a man against don Quijote's type, one whose bad formal education cast a harsh light on a society that did not have the necessary moral structures to protect its citizens from licentiousness. Unlike the immortality of don Quijote, the *catrines* knew they only existed as moribund characters, ones that would last only as long as Mexico's painful transition to becoming its own nation (Mudrovic xx). In spite of his connection to representations of the past, don Quijote behaved on many occasions as a true revolutionary. On the other hand, the *catrines* were true reactionaries who performed acts of negation that were intended to deny the society that was unfolding in front of them. In this respect, Lizardi created a metaphorical zombie to perform his own version of Cervantes's novel as a means to underscore the political crisis and power struggles involved in the creation of Mexican national identity. Some of these ills remain today in twenty-first-century Mexico. Over time, don Quijote and Sancho Panza meandered stoically, becoming better persons as they endured their mishaps and hardships. Don Catrín, however, was stubborn and did not grow as a person. Surrounded by many at the beginning, the dissolute man became increasingly isolated as his life took a downward turn. He died virtually alone, except for the care of the charitable don Cándido, who blamed the protagonist's parents for an indifferent education which resulted in the creation of one of society's ingrates. Don Catrín was careless. He lacked gravitas. His life was an exemplum of psychological and moral loss and, therefore, an unworthy representative of the burgeoning Mexican nation.

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⁶ Vogeley explains that education in the colonial period, in imitation of what was taught at European universities, focused on scholasticism: "the educational curriculum based on Latin grammar and learning by heart contributed to a general exhaustion towards scholasticism," p. 240.

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