

Don Quijote and Travel Culture: Aesthetics of Everyday Life and Mobility

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1. Ortega y Gasset's 'Quijotismo' and the Aesthetics of Everyday Life

A walk at the Madrid Escorial inspired José Ortega y Gasset to write his first philosophical essay *Meditaciones del Quijote* (1914/2022). It is striking that Ortega y Gasset chose *Don Quijote*, a work that the Spanish proudly believe to have a larger circulation than the Bible itself.

In *Meditaciones del Quijote* Ortega y Gasset maintains that latin mediterraneans live their life for *the now* of the sensuous details. The sensuousness of the details overwhelm the life of the mediterranean soul. The tenacious germanic European, on the other hand, lives in gloomy transalpine profundity. With this premise, Ortega y Gasset scrutinizes *Don Quijote*.

Es frecuente en los cuadros de Rembrandt que un humilde lienzo blanco o gris, un grosero utensilio de menaje se halle envuelto en una atmósfera lumínica e irradiante que otros pintores vierten sólo en torno a las testas de los santos. Y es como si nos dijera en delicada amonestación: ¡Santificadas sean las cosas!

Ortega y Gasset notices the luminous aura surrounding ordinary objects and utensils in paintings by Rembrandt—in other masters this luminous aura is only reserved for depicting saints—and exclaims that things should be considered sacred in themselves.

Further : he points out that it is through the full consciousness of his circumstances that man communicates with the universe: 'El hombre rinde el máximo de su capacidad cuando adquiere la plena conciencia de sus circunstancias. Por ellas comunica con el universo.'

Ortega y Gasset goes on to discuss the worldview in Miguel Cervantes Saavedra's *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* and its sequel *El ingenioso caballero don Quijote de la Mancha*. Ortega y Gasset names this worldview as 'quijotismo' : 'En las Meditaciones del Quijote intento hacer un estudio del quijotismo'.

En torno mío abre sus hondos flancos el bosque. En mi mano está un libro: Don Quijote, una selva ideal. He aquí otro caso de profundidad: la de un libro, la de este libro máximo. Don Quijote es el libro-escorzo por excelencia.

For Ortega y Gasset, the 'quijotismo' in *Don Quijote* is *the text* which offers a reading in a clear-cut perspective of the ideal jungle of sensuous details that is the world.

Ortega y Gasset senses in Cervantes's narrative a certain disillusionment with the Renaissance harmony: doubtless Cervantes was immersed in the instability of the asymmetrical sensibility experienced, order outhinged, in the Reformation, Counter-Reformation and the Navigator Era, which found visual expressions in the baroque style. Cervantes also astutely intuited the collapse of a certain ideal order. Cervantes as a valorous soldier at the Battle of Lepanto, as an abductee incarcerated many years in Algeria, as an unsuccessful enlistee for *Nueva Espagna*, would have very well known the despondent anger of unrealized ambitions, ideals, so well expressed in *Don Quijote's* narrative.

The author believes that in applying a reading from the viewpoint of aesthetics of everyday life to a picaresque roman like *Don Quijote*, which was written at a time when mankind's mobility entered a new, colonial phase, a deeper understanding of human migratory instincts and motivations is possible.

In this sense, *Don Quijote*, the knight errant, is a model for the modern day traveller, and Cervantes has laid in *Don Quijote* one of the foundations for travel literature and travel and tourist culture.

In this analysis, the author of the present article refers extensively to the first volume (1605) of *Don Quijote*.

2. The Search for Resources and Spiritual Power:

Like a Meandering Lover, Drifting across the Seas

The sensuousness of the details, overwhelms us still. The modern traveler is on a quest for fulfilment of their dreams, nobody knows exactly where or how. In Cervantes's narrative, don Quijote meets don Luis disguised as a shepherd and searching the highways for his love doña Clara (who surprisingly, happens to stay at the same inn as don Quijote), who will accompany her father the judge to *Nueva Espagna*. Don Luis sings the following song, tending to his flocks, comparing himself to the hopeless meandering lover, wandering on the seas:

— Marinero soy de amor
y en su piélago profundo
navego sin esperanza
de llegar a puerto alguno. (cuarta parte, capítulo XLIII 1605)

Here Cervantes mirrors adeptly the rambling ventures of the individual, such as that of the protagonist don Quijote, in search of his real identity, the knight errant.

3. The Search for Resources and Spiritual Power:

the Cycle of Deception and the Cycle of Benefits

In his narrative Cervantes reveals the cycle of deception and exploitations that make life function: to realize a way of life, two adult runaways (imaginary knight and squire) escape a

sleepy village without taking leave of their families and friends; the knight don Quijote keeps dangling promises of an island governorship before his squire Sancho Panza. The knight insists that a knight errant may unilaterally, on grounds of principle, declare a duel or incite to war, or appropriate from a barber a barber's basin (because it is Mambrino's helmet), both knight and squire exempt themselves from paying the innkeeper (i.e., as the hosting lord of castle) their fees; a squire in need may strip a vanquished enemy (for example, a franciscan friar) of his clothes, or sequester well-provisioned saddlebags, pilfer 100 *escudos* from an abandoned suitcase, and moreover retain it, and bestow it to his wife. Even after the owner is identified and present, he would not be obliged to surrender the precious coins.

The other characters ridicule them, the readers enjoy their preposterous actions and reactions. In the end however, we come to realize that the 'evil' cycles of deception and exploitations that make life function are as important and vital as the 'good' cycles of gifts and benefits; and that the one is the reflection of the other: the one presupposes the other.

Tres días y tres noches estuvo don Quijote con Roque, y si estuviera trescientos años, no le faltara qué mirar y admirar en el modo de su vida: aquí amanecían, acullá comían; unas veces huían, sin saber de quién, y otras esperaban, sin saber a quién; dormían en pie, interrumpiendo el sueño, mudándose de un lugar a otro. (capítulo LXI 1615)

In the passage above don Quijote expresses his perplexity, bewilderment and at the same time admiration of the 'mode of life' that highway robber Roque Guinart leads with his band. This strongly suggests that harsh procedures of colonialisation and exploration, migration were evaluated 'neutrally', from Cervantes's detached vantage point.

4. Liberation from Repetitive Time Use Activities

In its essence, travelling consists in the same procedure as the transfer from one territoriality to another. While travelling, for a tourist on his trail, mobility is a priority. Travel has the potential then to become a procedure enabling escape from everyday reality. Everyday reality is a repetition of time use patterns; people in general, need diversion and recuperation by setting up special purposes and objectives.

Don Quijote, for his part, had to fulfill a quota of special principles, expedite salvation of needy victims, in order to consummate marriage with his non-existent ideal lady, Dulcinea del Toboso the dove, and acquire the domains needed for their and his squire's subsistence. The collapse of this 'archaic vision' is reflected in the derision and deceptive artifices that welcome him wherever he ventures. In this sense, the migratory urges of the knight errant whereby he never finds his rival counterpart are his expressions of territorial ambitions, be it spiritual or material.

Cervantes's narrative reminds us with plentiful and painful details that don Quijote's journey

of sublime intentions is accentuated by the fulfilment of mundane, but important physiological needs: eating, vomiting, urinating, evacuating the bowels, sexual desires, confronting thirst, fear, searching for cover, self-defense; sleeping, having breakfast, lunch, dinner, and performing other necessary activities. Obligatory time use activities, are activities required for social co-existence; these obligatory activities tend to become indistinguishable from free time use activities, when experiencing a high surge of volition: such as resolving imaginary territorial strifes, or fighting for professed principles or, fighting for dominating domains of the spiritual spheres.

Travelling from one place to another, may already be included in necessary and obligatory time use activities themselves; nevertheless they lead us to new encounters, departures, new places of encounter. The roadside, a crossing, a river, a casual encounter at the entrance of an inn, all afford assemblages of gestures and stories with which to enrich our world view.

To take it further: the narratives of *Don Quijote* reveal that the missions of the knight errant trapped in the Old Continent could be just as valid as the missionaries in the West Indies who expedited indigenous pagans to convert, colonial *conquistadori* who sought for resources and treasures in the New Continent, or dynamic merchants like Marco Polo. Or to put it another way: just as preposterous and vainglorious as they were reasonable and down-to-earth.

Don Quijote assures Sancho, of his fearless chivalry, which aims to revive the golden age —«Has de saber, ¡oh Sancho amigo!, que yo nací por querer del cielo en esta nuestra edad de hierro para resucitar en ella la dorada, o de oro.» (tercera parte, capítulo XX 1605)

5. The Eternal Return: Life and Death

You travel, but in the end you come back home. In this way things come full circle, at the end of the day, resting in your bed, a foretaste of serenity in death. For don Quijote, life is a repetition of the following: live, travel, return, conquer, save, dream, rest and die. It did not turn out to be as simple and clear-cut as the exploits of Julius Caesar: “I came, I saw, and I conquered.” (Vini,vedi,vinci.)

Thus, in chapter 52, almost at the end of the first half of the story completed 1605, the village priest Pero Pérez manages to retrieve don Quijote back home in a wooden cage put on a cart pulled by bullocks.

Cervantes at the end of the first half of *Don Quijote*, confides us with another discovery of an old doctor, who painstakingly deciphered eulogies inscribed on parchment, —hidden in a leaden casket—found by chance by after dismantling a certain chapel. These funereal eulogies do indeed forecast don Quijote’s death, and thus his forthcoming defeat and failure before the invisible enemy in the stories to follow in the second volume.

6. The Cycle of Life and the Cycle of Homecoming

Read, dream, travel, return, rest, (re-departures until death); goes the cycle in *Don Quijote*. This process of memory input: dream output can be described as follows.

Read: Dream presupposes a certain input or storage of narratives or imaginaries which activate desires: like hoarding the collection of books on knight errants in the library and steeping oneself in the imaginaries.

Dream: The traveller tries to acquire a new identity, through accomplishments on the metaphysical level, and release himself from the repetition of everyday. He manages the setup of spiritual goals, to finally give life a sense that it lacked; metamorphosis and moulting occur during mobility and migration, triggered through sequences of encounters, situations and events.

Depart: Departure is the moment of liberation and release from the repetitive chain of situations and access to another series of situation configuration.

Travel: Travelling is the ritualized process of distancing physically and spiritually from home and the everyday. You also travel to do business, as obligatory activities, shepherds leading their flock, a funeral procession bearing a hearse in *Don Quijote*, but the necessary activities of time use, such as the fulfillment of physiological needs are seen to. The ritualized fulfillment of possessing resources, insights, territorialities occur in the category of free activities of time use.

Return: The homecoming must be celebrated, because coming home, one realizes how much difference, awareness, arousal, the travels have bestowed on us: that is our new identity. Not being a nomad, you have a homebase, your home is not on your trails and travels. Being a nomad, you experience perpetual growth.

Home: The homecoming gives us the opportunity to rest and recuperate, review and formulate new plans.

Depart: Re-departure is the unbending will, to fulfill the further extended needs of spiritual, material resources and territorialities, and amplify and embellish the sphere of the *egos*.

Death: Death is another form of departure. The cyclic pattern of return-dream(rest)-departure is repeated until the death of the traveller: the urge for freedom of movement, the volition, meets the need to re-congregate, seen in '*der Vogelzug*', the wingtangling frenzy of birds in the midst of the migratory season.

The aesthetics of everyday craves for a release from routine and repetition, through play or foreplay, sensual fulfilment: there is a spiritual metabolism in function with needs for new narratives, informative, surveillance.

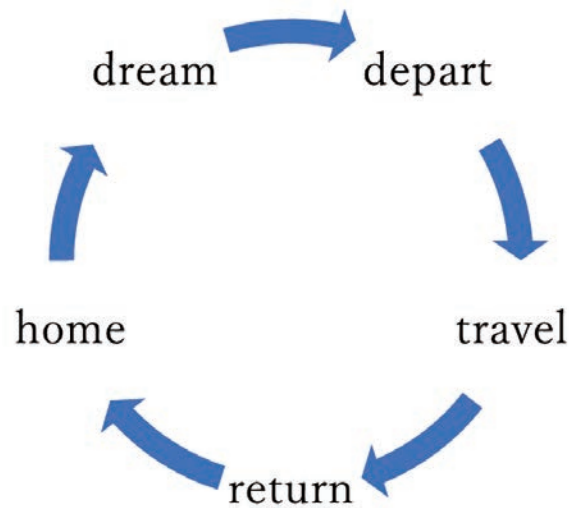


Figure 1. Travel and the Cycle of Mobility in *Don Quijote* (1605)

7. Conclusion: the Aestheticization of Everyday Life through Mobility

The aesthetics of everyday life dictates that at home one meditates, to steep in one's own stew, to plan, to develop strategies, one has free rein.

When the targets or goals are preposterous, not feasible, the travels do not bring contentment, the world is out of balance, as it always is in don Quijote's case.

Fulfilled necessary activities bring contentment, necessary activities of the day tending to be rewarded by climaxes of sensuous and picturesque enjoyment.

The fatigue of the voyage is well rewarded if occupational tasks are achieved, and in accomplishing successful arrival at destination points,.

From the physical, sensuous rhythms and levels, the aestheticization of the everyday takes place in the rehabilitation of routine repetition into creation of rhythm, which can then be sublimated to ritual; the physical is revamped into the metaphysical, so that the ego experiences a spiritual metamorphosis and moults a new identity, whereby awakening and energization during mobility is the decisive trigger.

In this article, the author has tapped the aesthetics of everyday as proposed in Ortega y Gasset's *Meditaciones del Quijote* (1914/2022) ; has proceeded to analyse Cervantes's attitudes toward travel in *Don Quijote* (1605/1615), using the main time use categories: necessary activities, obligatory activities and free activities. In *Don Quijote* (1605) the author has analysed the narrative and discerned 315 references, of which an outline is shown (Table 1). Necessary activities are referenced about 86 times in the narrative. The spheres of the obligatory activities and free activities tend to merge.

In the following chart the author displays the various elements of time use activity and their relationship to travel and the aesthetics of everyday life, explicated in the article (Table 1).

Table 1. Types of Time Use Activities in *Don Quijote* (1605)

ACTIVITY TYPE	SPECIFICS KEYWORDS		DOMAIN/CYCLE
necessary activity physiological needs	metabolism eat drink vomit evacuating bowels urinate sleep rest reproduction procreation recuperation from injuries cleanliness attire		everyday survival physical rhythm domain /metaphysical rhythm domain evil cycle of deception and exploitation /good cycle of gifts and benefits everyday breakthroughs of the everyday perceptions
obligatory activity social role	commoners shepherd, swineherd, innkeeper, farmer housewife pickpockets	work produce sell steal give pay fine judgments penalties	survival freedom imprisonment honour advancement exaltation deposition abasement physical domain/ metaphysical domain (amorous domain) evil cycle of deception and exploitation /good cycle of gifts and benefits acquisition, possession, consumption, disposal territoriality, resources, provisions symbols, news, information, truths perceptions, experiences
	nobility clergy	administration territoriality spirituality	
	knight errant	mission	
		imaginaries enchantment battles, conflicts exploration	
free activity escape /liberation from routine play creativity excursions	travel	territoriality migration exploration acquisition of resources and power	extraordinary transcendency physical domain/ metaphysical domain (amorous domain) evil cycle of deception and exploitation /good cycle of gifts and benefits metaphysical domain metamorphosis disposal of old ego acquisition of a new ego,
	dream	consumption, salvation, liberation	realization of ideal search for truth
	fantasy (deception)	missives, poems songs, music	expression persuasion
	deeds enactment	conversion, acquisition	fulfillment of wish possession, consumption