



AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Megan E. Sauter for the degree of Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in English presented on May 4, 2009. Title: Backpacking through the Canon.

Abstract approved:

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Chris Anderson

During summer and fall 2007, I traveled across Europe and studied in Spain. My experiences abroad shaped my reading of certain literary texts as I gained insight into the cultures and settings in which they were produced. In my thesis, I recount some of these experiences and show how my understanding of the novel, *Don Quixote*, changed due to my contact with Spanish culture.

Through a series of rich images, my travel journal explores how wandering through Spain helped me identify with the characters in *Don Quixote*, as well as how being immersed in a foreign setting taught me to cope with fear and become a better traveler.

Although the majority of the material for my thesis is drawn from the journal that I kept while in Europe, I also read travel literature to gain outside perspective about how traveling affects one's worldview. For analyzing *Don Quixote*, I consulted the primary text and read literary criticism, which elaborated on the novel's significance and complexity. Hopefully, my readers will be able to relate to and benefit from my experience in a foreign setting and realize how traveling and literature are connected.

Key Words: travel, foreign, culture, literature, Spain

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Backpacking through the Canon

by

Megan E. Sauter

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, University Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

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Megan E. Sauter, Author

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I would also like to thank Professor Alan Kalter of Oregon State University's Spanish department for helping me amass a collection of Spanish proverbs and then checking my translations to make sure I conveyed their correct meaning. Additionally, I would like to thank the other two members of my evaluating committee, Eric Hill and Jennifer Ellefson, who both helped me focus my thesis and encouraged me that my stories were worth sharing.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow travelling companions: Sarah, Andee, Kaisa, Cayla, and Stephen. They helped me remember specific details about events and particular terms when I was either uncertain or had forgotten them. Though the following stories are filtered through my psyche, these experiences belong to all of us, and I am grateful that they gave me permission to share them.

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# BACKPACKING THROUGH THE CANON

## INTRODUCTION

He continued his journey, letting his horse choose the way,  
believing that in this consisted the true spirit of adventure.  
—Cervantes, *Don Quixote*<sup>1</sup>

In the following essays, I recount experiences that I had while studying abroad in Santander, Spain. The themes of disillusionment, physical blows, being trapped by conventions, encounters with strangers, and fear of the unknown are interwoven throughout my thesis. Although these themes appear in all of my essays, each essay focuses on a particular theme, and together they create a picture of the Spain I traveled through, showing impressive monuments and the average citizen's daily life, alike. My thesis focuses on my personal experiences, but I also analyze the novel, *Don Quixote*, connecting it to my own life and travels.

As an English major, I was very interested in literature while in Spain. Having read parts of *Don Quixote* before arriving, I was familiar with the novel's storyline and basic themes. However, after living and traveling in Spain for three months, I gained new insight into the novel, especially its landscape, humor, and characters. Traveling through Spain helped me relate to *Don Quixote*, and literature helped me become a better traveler by teaching me to become flexible and open to new cultural practices. Most importantly, though, it taught me the importance of questioning my surroundings. Being a careful reader of my environment meant that I never accepted anything blindly but rather filtered my experiences and interactions with others through my own worldview to form my own opinion about them.

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<sup>1</sup> Miguel Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, translated by Walter Starkie (New York: Signet Classic, 2001), 62.



My thesis is a nonfiction first-person narrative written in the form of collage essays, the transitions between scenes often being abrupt. After creating a vivid image, I break the narrative before reaching a conclusive ending and jump to a new scene. At first glance it may appear that the scenes are not related, but each emphasizes a different aspect of the overarching theme of a particular essay. Taken as a whole, the essay's theme becomes more clear. Additionally, the essays build on each other, creating a continuous atmosphere throughout the thesis, but this interconnectedness may not become apparent until the third or fourth essay.

Divided into three sections, my thesis does not progress chronologically, the scenes in each essay being related by theme not by time frame. "Blood in the Streets," "Getting Lost," "30 Weird Things about Spain," and "The Devil in Disguise" compose Part I: Reading the Landscape. Part II: Reading the Text is comprised solely of the essay, "Disillusionment," which analyzes *Don Quixote*. The final section, Part III: I Am Sancho Panza, includes "Locked in Mass," "40 Spanish Proverbs," and "Coming Home."

The literary analysis of *Don Quixote* does not appear until halfway through my thesis. Part I: Reading the Landscape comes before it so that I can recreate some of my experiences for my readers before relating them to *Don Quixote*. The primary theme in my essay, "Blood in the Streets," is physical blows. It explores three experiences I had witnessing physical violence and bloodshed while in Barcelona, Santander, and Santillana del Mar. "Getting Lost" recounts three times where I got lost in Granada, Bilbao, and Madrid as the direct result of following the instructions in my guidebook, the essay's primary theme being disillusionment. "30 Weird Things about Spain" is a list detailing unusual and foreign Spanish cultural practices. The scenes in "The Devil in Disguise" take place in Santander, Salamanca, Malaga, and Madrid. Although

the primary theme in this essay is encounters with strangers, another prominent theme is the impact of Franco's reign on the Spanish people.

Part II: Reading the Text analyzes my experiences with Spanish culture and connects them to *Don Quixote*. As well as laying the necessary background for Part II, the previously mentioned essays are referenced in my longest essay, "Disillusionment," which encompasses all of my thesis's themes but concentrates on disillusionment, physical blows, and fear of the unknown. The personal experiences I recount are from Toledo, Santander, Barcelona, and Madrid.

In Part III: I Am Sancho Panza, I further the idea that literature and travel are connected. "Locked in Mass" recounts three experiences I had where I was trapped inside institutions, two of a religious nature, one secular. The primary theme being trapped by conventions, the locations for this essay are Santiago de Compostela, Altamira, and Santo Toribio de Liebana. "40 Spanish Proverbs" is a list of Spanish proverbs that both contribute to the humor of *Don Quixote* and also constitute an interesting part of Spanish culture. Sancho Panza subverts the traditional wisdom associated with these sayings by overusing them. The primary theme in "Coming Home" is fear of the unknown. Exploring how I was able to turn my initial fear into something productive and eventually assimilate to Spanish culture, this essay spans my entire time in Santander. I relay scenes from Santander, Segovia, and Portland International Airport, while also mentioning Zurich, Switzerland and Paris, France.

All the parts of my thesis fit together to show how my understanding of Spanish culture and literature changed due to my immersion in an unfamiliar setting.

**PART I:**  
**READING THE LANDSCAPE**

## BLOOD IN THE STREETS

When I stepped off the train in Barcelona at 6 a.m., it was warm. The night train from Paris had been long and cramped. In a room no bigger than 6' by 8', they had stuck six of us passengers together. On both walls, three bunks were stacked one on top of each other, so that there was not even enough space to sit up completely on my bed.

I had learned by then that most European train stations didn't have plants or any sort of decoration; they were sterile. However, in Barcelona Mediterranean palm trees and pots of flowers lined the walkway leading into the hub. At least from my platform, I could look up and see blue sky.

After stashing our bags at the hostel, my friend Cayla and I began a tour of the city, starting with the Gothic section of the city in the middle of Barcelona and then making our way to see Gaudi's Sagrada Familia. Although la Sagrada Familia is not the official cathedral of the city, it surpasses the actual cathedral in size and is the city's largest tourist attraction. It is very tall and narrow, like Gaudi took a normal cathedral and stretched it upwards while leaving the base the same.

Influenced by Gothic architecture and nature, Gaudi combined the two to create a new style of architecture that would later be identified as Modernism. La Sagrada Familia is very vertical and organic, its height accentuated by its parabolic arches and its organic, sinuous lines, no rigid lines found anywhere in its design. It has five naves and sixteen towers, each with its own symbol.

I knew that Gaudi had died before this could be completed, but I was surprised to see that it still wasn't finished. Not all of the towers had been built, and only half of the decorations,

which consisted of berries and flowers, had been colored, the bright reds and blues popping against the rest of the cold, gray stone.

We ended our day at the harbor. Although there were several pre-colonial buildings, my eye was immediately drawn to the large statue of Christopher Columbus, which marked the center of the boardwalk. His figure stood on the top of a tall, thin column, the base of which was decorated with sculptures of mythological and historical figures. I think Neptune, a couple sea nymphs, and some saints were depicted.

Beyond the statue and perpendicular to the boardwalk lay a floating platform that stretched out into the Mediterranean Sea, bordered by large steel strips cut to resemble waves and attached to poles at various heights. The entire platform rose up and down with the water beneath it, giving me the feeling that it could detach itself from the harbor and float away at any moment.

At the end of the floating platform was a large shopping center. On the third floor, Cayla and I discovered a Starbucks, one of the few in Spain. The tall double chocolate-chip frappuccino I had tasted different from those in the U.S. The chocolate flavor tasted richer, and the whip cream was not as dense, nor did it leave a slimy sensation on the roof of my mouth.

As we walked back along the floating platform, our eyes were fixed on the statue of Christopher Columbus. Deciding that our day would not be complete without a visit to its observation deck, we bought tickets and waited in line for the elevator. When it was finally our turn, sixteen of us crammed inside the small space no bigger than my cabin the night before. Although the ride felt interminable, it could not have lasted for more than two minutes. I stood on my tip-toes to catch a breath of clean air above the others' heads but almost fell over when a

large man to my left bumped me. I caught the elevator operator's eye; he looked as though he might laugh.

When the doors finally opened, we all rushed to get out, but our exit was made difficult by the hoards of people trying to get in. After being shoved and pushed, Cayla and I finally stepped out onto the observation deck. I could now see that the entire floating platform was shaped like a sound wave, accentuated by the hovering steel strips of the same shape.

We walked around the observation deck several times, waiting for the crowd to thin before submitting ourselves to the elevator ride again. When we were one of the few people remaining, we agreed it was time to descend. This time we were the only ones in the elevator with the operator. Since he looked no more than twenty-five, we practiced our Spanish on him. Cayla, who is fluent, started the conversation, and I tried to follow her lead. The operator commented that it was much more comfortable than it had been on the ride up.

“Sí,” I agreed, “es muy mejor.”

The operator looked at me, pursed his lips, and hit me sharply on the arm with his rolled up program. “No,” he said, “es *mucho* mejor. *Mucho* not muy.”

I took a step backwards as the skin on my arm started to turn red. I hadn't realized that the Spanish were so particular about grammar, especially in Cataluña, where they speak Catalan, a mixture of French and Spanish. “Lo siento, es mucho mejor,” I amended.

Spanish cities are built around central plazas. These large, open, cobble-stone or cement squares are bordered by tall buildings on every side and a couple small trees. My second weekend in Santander I visited the central plaza with my friends Stephen, Andee, and Sarah.

Everyone between the ages of eighteen and thirty went to the central plaza on Friday and Saturday nights. When we were still a block away, I began to hear the noise of a large crowd. Half a block away, I could smell the sangria and beer.

We saw some of the other students in our program on the opposite side of the plaza. Picking our way carefully through the broken bottles and general street garbage, we made our way over to them. However, before we reached them, everyone around us began to cheer. I glanced around, trying to figure out what was going on, and saw some French men, whose faces were painted like mimes, pulling a large stage-like cart upon which a guy who was dressed in drag and his friend sat.

“They’re fans from the rival football [soccer] team!” an Australian standing near us shouted out. It looked more like a bachelor party to me, but I didn’t contradict him.

The French men, who were all drunk, made their way into the center of the plaza and began to pull their cart around in circles. Everyone cheered for them. They pulled it faster and in tighter circles; the cheers intensified.

This continued for five minutes until the crowd lost interest, but I kept watching. They continued to pull the cart tighter and faster until the guy not dressed in drag went flying off the cart and passed out, his head hitting the ground with a loud crack. The noise in the plaza died. The man’s friends stopped pulling the cart and crowded around him, blocking him from our vision.

Stephen went over to see if he could help, but with the man no longer in sight, the crowd forgot about him. Soon even the man’s own friends abandoned him and walked into one of local bars, singing as they went.

Finally, an ambulance appeared. Apparently, the man had cracked his skull and was bleeding to death out of the back of his head. When Stephen arrived on the scene, the French men were kicking their wounded friend, telling him to get up. Stephen was the one who called the ambulance.

A sick, empty feeling settled in my stomach as I looked around the plaza. Nobody seemed to care that a man had almost died or even paused from their drinking. After a while, the French returned and began to pull their cart again. The blood on the ground was still wet.

There are three lies in the name of Santillana del Mar: no saint is buried in the town, it's not flat, and it's not on the coast. This saying replayed in the back of my mind as I stared at Gregorio Fernández's famous icon, *Cristo yacente*, which is housed in El Colegiata de Santa Juliana, the Romanesque church in Santillana del Mar.

The life-size icon, which depicts Christ at the moment of his death, was reclining on a bed covered with a silk sheet. Although dead, he is shown to be in extreme physical anguish, muscles and veins strained, the body covered in blood.

Since I get nauseous when I see blood, I was only able to look at the statue for a moment before I had to get fresh air, moving out of the cold, dark sanctuary into the columned courtyard of the church, which was several centuries older than the icon inside.

The capitals of the columns were covered in intricate yet simplistic carvings of interwoven leaves, animals, and Celtic designs. Some depicted scenes of dragons or saints with large heads and comparatively small bodies. Others showed demons or sinners suffering in hell's fire.



## GETTING LOST

“The train station doesn’t have lockers. What now?”

The success of our trip to Granada hinged on our being able to store our backpacks at the train station. There was no way we would be able to hike up the hill to la Alhambra with them weighing us down. My guidebook had promised lockers; it had lied.

Juanito, an elderly gentleman whom we had met the night before on the train, came up and offered to let us leave our bags at his house for the day. Not yet accustomed to Spanish hospitality, I was wary of his offer, but we had no other choice.

Four hours later, Cayla and I were standing in el Patio de los Leones (Patio of the Lions) in la Alhambra.

The south of Spain, Andalusia, was under Muslim rule for 700 years. Granada was the capital of the final Muslim kingdom in Spain, the palace of la Alhambra being the last Muslim stronghold to fall during the Spanish Reconquista. Legend describes how Boabdil, the last caliph of Granada, fled from la Alhambra as the Christians advanced on the city. He paused on a hill, now called la Cuesta de las Lagrimas (the Hill of Tears), for a final look at his beautiful palace and shed a few tears, but his mother scolded him saying, “Don’t cry for like a woman what you would not fight for like a man.”

La Alhambra is composed of four sections: la Alcazaba (the red citadel), el Palacios Nazaríes (the central palace), el Generalife (the gardens), and el Palacio de Carlos V (the Palace of Charles V). El Palacio de Carlos V was added after the Reconquista, but the other three sections are unadulterated examples of hispano-musulmán architecture.

From the outside, el Palacios Nazaríes was not impressive, but after entering through a series of partially hidden gates shaded by a canopy of wisteria-like vines and then through a dark, narrow tunnel that led straight through the middle of a building, Cayla and I emerged into the bright sunlight of a columned courtyard that dispelled any misgivings about the palace's splendor. My eye was immediately drawn to the slender, white columns, intricately carved and decorated with a deep sapphire blue paint and gold leaf. Almost every inch of the La Alhambra's structure was covered in decoration.

The palace was built around a series of open-air patios, all of which had fountains and running water or pools, surrounded by palm trees and exotic flowers. The water kept the palace cool in the intense, dry heat of Granada. Covered walkways lined the edges of the patios, and horseshoe arches marked the entrances to the various rooms of the palace, where inside, there were bovedas (domed ceilings).

El Patio de los Leones was different from all the other courtyards. In its middle lay a shallow fountain surrounded and supported by twelve lion statues. A thin line of water shot up into the air from the center of the fountain and from each of the lions' mouth.

“Where's the bus stop?”

The plan for the day was simple: visit el Castillo de Butrón, a castle located on the outskirts of Bilbao. All that lay between us and our destination was finding the bus stop. We had followed the instructions in my guidebook to the indicated address, where there was an apartment building but no bus stop in sight.

Since it was Sunday, most of the cafés and shops were closed, but we finally found one that was open and went in to ask for directions.

Bilboa is located in El País Vasco, a region of Spain known as Basque Country. The language spoken there is éuskera, a dialect completely unrelated to Spanish. No one knows the base of éuskera, but it's not a Romance or Germanic language. However, despite the language barrier, we were able to convey that we were looking for the bus stop. We only addressed the serving woman of the café, but soon all the customers jumped in to help, one man going so far as to walk us to the stop.

Once onboard the bus, we told the driver our destination and then took seats in the back. The bus filled with passengers and then partially emptied as we left the city and drove into the countryside, where there were cows and horses in the gently sloped green pastures.

After a couple minutes, the driver pulled over to the side of the road. "Chicas," she called out, "el castillo está allí. Seguid el camino," meaning, "Girls, the castle is over there. Follow the path."

"Muchas gracias," we thanked her as we scrambled off the bus.

We crossed the road and started out on the path she had outlined for us with the castle guiding us in the distance. It was a clear day: beautiful, sunny, but a little cold in the shade. The path was lined on both sides with deciduous trees, and the ground was covered with brightly colored leaves. It was the first hint of autumn I'd seen in Spain. Santander was still green with all its palm trees.

After walking through a small forest, we reached the castle grounds. Built of grey stone with pointed minarets and crenellated towers in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, el Castillo de Butrón was everything a castle should be, even having a moat. A mix of evergreens and palm trees lined the walkway to the front door. Although it was not the largest castle I'd seen in Europe, its seclusion lent it an intimate atmosphere.

When we returned to the road where we had been dropped off, the bus, with a new driver, pulled over to the side of the road and let us on. It was as though he had been expecting us.

After checking into my hostel in Madrid, I decided to go for a short walk before it got dark. Kaisa was going to meet me at the hostel, but she wasn't scheduled to arrive until 8 p.m. Studying the small map in my guidebook, I walked out to the plaza in front of the hostel. There were about six or eight streets feeding into it. I picked the path my guidebook named as leading to el Palacio Real (the Royal Palace).

Once the sun started to set, the temperature plummeted. Even though I was wearing my winter coat, hat, scarf, and gloves, I still had to walk briskly to stay warm. After about ten minutes, I found myself in the largest plaza I'd come across in Spain. There were twelve or more streets feeding into it. I glanced down them as I made my way around the plaza. Some were lined with tourist shops, small bakeries, or just normal businesses. The largest offshoot was a pedestrian-only street that was lined with clothing stores like Bershka, H&M, and Zara.

I scanned the plaza once more before concluding that I was lost since this was clearly not el Palacio Real. I walked over to the nearest metro stop and read the sign above it, identifying it as "La Puerta del Sol" (Door of the Sun).

I consulted my guidebook. La Puerta del Sol lay in the complete opposite direction of el Palacio Real. Feeling an intense dislike for my misleading guidebook, I threw it in the next available trashcan.

As I began retracing my steps to the hostel, I noticed a Starbucks in the bottom of one of the buildings in the plaza. Pushing the door of the coffee shop open, I was met with the familiar

smell of roasted coffee and steamed milk. Christmas decorations covered the shop. Even though everything was written in Spanish, it reminded me of home.

I looked at their seasonal drinks. Since my favorite, peppermint hot chocolate, was missing from the list, I ordered a plain hot chocolate instead. With my snowflake-covered cup in hand, I left the heated coffee shop, stepping out into the freezing streets of Madrid once more.

Now that I had my hot chocolate, I didn't feel as bad. I wasn't as cold, and I no longer thought of my wrong turn as a waste of time. I even felt a twinge of regret for throwing away my guidebook. It had been almost three months since I had gone to a Starbucks, and at this point in my traveling through Europe, I was almost more excited to run across one of them than a castle or palace.

Feeling content and at peace, the second time down this street I walked a little slower. Christmas decorations, hanging from the second or third stories of buildings, were strung across the streets. There were large wreaths and Christmas lights, both small ones and huge stars. I wished that I could have seen these displays lit, but the official lighting ceremony was not scheduled until the first of December, the very day I was flying home from Spain.

I finally reached el Palacio Real, but since Kaisa and I were planning to go on a tour of it the next morning, I only took a cursory look at its cultivated grounds. It had a lot of shrubs that were cut into figures and hedges that were sculpted into mazes.

I was most interested in visiting el Templo de Debod (the Temple of Debod), an authentic Egyptian temple that had been shipped block by block to Spain. Even though it was getting dark, I started walking in the direction of the temple.

Ten minutes later, I came to the base of a platform about 100m wide with steps leading to its top. I walked to the top of the platform and stood completely still. About 20m in front of me

lay a shallow rectangular pool. In the middle of the pool was the Egyptian temple. It was not very large, the main part being only two stories, but it was lit so that the whole temple glowed a golden yellow against the black sky. My favorite part was its entrance: two wide archways extending out from the temple along a walkway into the water.

The temple was partially in ruins. If it had not been set apart from the street by its high platform, it would have looked anachronistic, clashing with the Spanish architecture. Secluded as it was, it looked like it had always been there.

I walked to the water's edge. Even though the perimeter of the pool was covered with a thin sheet of ice, it still produced a perfect reflection of the temple. I took a picture of the scene and looked at it on the screen of my digital camera, turning my camera upside down and then right side up again. It was hard to tell from the image which was the original and which was the reflection.

### 30 WEIRD THINGS ABOUT SPAIN

1. **The siesta is still enforced.** From 2:30-5:30 p.m. everything shuts down. People return from work for a long lunch and nap before returning later to finish their day.
2. **The mullet is still popular,** for men and women alike. Almost every Spanish boy (ages 10-30) I saw sported a nasty, greasy mullet.
3. **Deodorant is not considered a necessity.**
4. **On Sundays everything shuts down.** Stores and bakeries are only open a couple hours in the morning to allow enough time for people to grab the necessities.
5. **You visit the market every day to buy groceries.**
6. **All the food is really fresh.** My host mom bought some fish and then showed me how to debone and fillet it.
7. **Milk is packaged in cardboard boxes that can be stored in the cupboard.** Oh the joys and mysteries of flash-pasteurization!
8. **Breakfast is at 7 a.m.**
9. **Lunch, the main meal, is around 2:30 p.m.**
10. **Dinner is not served until 9 p.m.**
11. **Everyone stays out really late.** Midnight is early by Spanish standards. On my way home, usually between 11 p.m. and 1 a.m., I'd pass Spaniards my grandparents' age and families out with children as young as three.
12. **You never hang out at people's houses.** You meet at cafes instead. This is more expensive, but it keeps the home as a sacred place just for family. It also allows some

Spaniards who live in poverty to keep up the appearance of affluence, so that even their closest friends wouldn't guess that they are destitute.

13. **Most people live in the city in apartments.** They own instead of rent them.
14. **You walk everywhere!** Everyone walks, even little, tiny, old women. As a medieval city, it was built pre-cars. I walked about six miles every day.
15. **Everyone smokes.**
16. **The streets are filthy because everyone litters.** They have to be cleaned every night.  
When dogs use the sidewalk as a bathroom, their owners don't clean it up.
17. **The cathedral I attended in Santander was older than the United States of America.**
18. **No one wears insignias on their clothing or flies the Spanish flag.** During the reign of Franco they were forced to do so. Therefore, they now prefer to not identify themselves with any institution. For example, I really wanted to buy a sweatshirt that said "La Universidad de Cantabria," but they didn't sell them anywhere. Sometimes they might manufacture such products for tourists, but native Spaniards would never be caught wearing them.
19. **In Northern Spain there is a strong Celtic heritage.**
20. **Wooden shoes are still worn by milk maids in Northern Spain.** The trend is not unique to Holland.
21. **The topography of Spain is very diverse.** Normally when one thinks of Spain, one envisions an arid plateau, but Northern Spain, also called "Green Spain" looks a lot like Oregon. It's very lush, green, and rainy.
22. **Palm trees are native to the region.**
23. **Random people, young and old, will stop and talk to you on the street.**



24. **No conversation topic is taboo.** Whereas Americans care about being politically correct, the Spanish do not. Politics, religion, and sex were all topics of conversation in my classes.
25. **The Spanish talk loudly and exuberantly very close to you.** Their personal space bubble is much smaller than that of the average American. It may seem as though they are yelling at you or angry, but they're not. They are just loud, exuberant speakers.
26. **Squid cooked in its own ink is the most delicious dish ever!**
27. **After a couple weeks of the Spanish diet, you begin to crave plain, unsweetened yogurt.** BÍfidus is the best brand.
28. **Un bocadillo (sandwich) typically is a baguette cut in half with egg, cheese, and sometimes meat in the middle.**
29. **Most of their fruit juice medleys have milk in them.**
30. **The chocolate is so good in Spain and in Europe in general!** Milka, which is actually German, is the best ever... except for Swiss chocolate!

## THE DEVIL IN DISGUISE

As I stood on the beach ankle deep in water, my running shoes in hand, I took a deep breath and closed my eyes. The sun was warm. My ponytail moved slightly in the breeze.

I opened my eyes again. The white sand was soft under my feet, and the water was a clear blue. It sparkled in the sunlight. Even though it was mid-October, the water felt warm, not as warm as bath water but still comfortable. I walked out further until the water covered my knees. Since I hadn't taken my map with me, I wasn't sure if I was at La Playa de los Peligros (Beach of Risks) or la Playa de La Magdalena (Beach of the Magdalena). I had run there from my host family's apartment, located next to la Plaza de Toros (bull ring); it had taken me about forty-five minutes.

Now that my shoes were off, I didn't want to put them back on and begin the run back. My eyes traveled up and down the beach. I saw a few people searching for seashells in the shallow water. I imitated them, looking for shells that were not broken. After a while, an elderly gentleman, who was very tan, approached me. "You'll find better seashells over there," he told me in Spanish, pointing to an area of the beach with lots of rocks sticking out of the water. The rocks formed a type of reef or barrier, so that the water in that section stood still. "But the best shells," he added, "are at La Playa Sardinero."

As soon as I opened my mouth to thank him, he could tell I was not a native Spanish speaker. I explained that I had run to the beach, and although La Playa Sardinero was only a mile or two away, I didn't feel like extending my run any further, but I thanked him again for the advice and made plans to visit La Playa Sardinero later that day by bus. I found four seashells

that I liked in the shallow reef area. Having no pockets, I put them in my sock and ran back to the beginning of the beach barefoot.

Finally, though, I had to put my shoes back on. There was a knee-high shower on the beach for rinsing off. It was right in the middle of the sand, still twenty feet away from the paved path leading off the beach. I wished that it had been on the pavement. As it was, I had to stand on one foot as I rinsed off the other. It was a balancing act to keep the wet foot from touching the sand before I could get my sock and shoe on it, but after a couple failed attempts, I finally got my shoe on virtually sand-free.

Taking the seashells out of the next sock before I tried to put it on, I was about to rinse off my other foot when a woman, who reminded me of my grandma, approached me and immediately handed me a towel. "It's for your feet," she explained with a smile.

With the towel, it was much easier to get my next shoe on. The woman was very kind. After I parted ways with her, she returned to where she had been sitting on the beach. She had only come over because she had seen my struggling.

I waited for Sarah in the plaza in front of el Ayuntamiento (City Hall), but she was running a couple minutes late. Taking the time to wander around the plaza, I approached the statue of Franco on a horse. It was covered in red stains as though someone had taken a paintball gun to it.

"This is the only intact statue of Franco in all of Spain," a woman sitting on a nearby bench informed me. "All the other ones have been pulled down. People often throw rotten tomatoes or red paint at it. He was an evil man."

I didn't know how to respond. All I knew about Franco, the Fascist dictator, was what I had read in books or seen in movies. I hadn't experienced life under his rule and couldn't relate to the hatred the Spanish bore him. The whole country was still licking their wounds, trying to heal from the pain and oppression he had inflicted on them.

"This plaque must be Franco's. My guidebook said that it was covered in plastic," I explained to Sarah and Andee in the Plaza Mayor in Salamanca. The plaza was lined with plaques of all the rulers of Spain, going back to medieval times.

Pulling the collar of my coat up so that it touched my chin, I shivered. It was thirty degrees Fahrenheit but felt much colder with the wind.

"Do you know why this plaque is covered in plastic?" a woman walking through the plaza stopped and asked us in Spanish. We could guess but shook our heads. She explained that since so much hatred surrounds Franco, people had thrown rotten fruit and paint at it every day. To avoid cleaning it on a daily basis, the authorities had decided to cover it in plastic. "Franco performed atrocities to the Spanish people. Many people have tried to pull down his plaque. It doesn't belong here."

We listened to her until she had to leave. She was a school teacher in her late thirties. Although she had only been alive at the end of Franco's reign, her parents had experienced the brunt of his rule, and she had grown up in the aftermath of a broken country.

We ran into two other girls from our Santander program that evening in Salamanca. As we were struggling to take a picture of the five of us in the Plaza Mayor, out of nowhere a man walked up to us, taking Andee's camera and snapping a picture of us with it. He then returned

the camera and disappeared as suddenly as he had come. Even though he had been talking on his cell phone the whole time, he had gone out of his way to help us.

Determined to visit la Costa del Sol (Coast of the Sun), Cayla and I traveled to Malaga and spent the night at a hostel called The Melting Pot. A taxi was called for me the next day as I had to catch a train to Madrid. From there I would make my way to Athens, Greece and meet up with my brother and sister-in-law. I hugged Cayla good-bye and then started out the door.

“Espera!” the Spanish boy, who was manning the front desk, called as he ran out from behind his post. He gave me a huge hug and told me to come and visit again once my program in Santander ended and I was fluent. I had known him less than twenty-four hours, but he seemed genuinely sad to see me go.

On our way to el Parque de Buen Retiro (Park of Good Retreat) in Madrid, Kaisa and I saw an elderly woman carrying two overflowing grocery bags. I greeted her and offered to help her with her load. She declined my offer but was very excited to talk to us, my accent once again giving me away as a foreigner. Since Kaisa didn’t know any Spanish, I got to work as a translator. The woman called us beautiful and wished us a good day. “Ojalá que tenga un buen día,” I replied, trying to impress her with my knowledge of Spanish grammar by using the subjunctive. She gave me a huge smile.

There are few statues of the devil in the world, but one of them is in el Parque de Buen Retiro. Titled “El Ángel Caído” (the Fallen Angel), the large statue depicts Satan as he falls

from heaven. He is not shown with horns and a forked tail but is portrayed as a winged angel with human features and long flowing hair, his face expressing anger and arrogance.

The statue conveys movement. He is shown twisting and struggling as he tumbles towards earth, his movement constricted by a serpent wrapped around his waist and legs.

The base of the statue is covered with the heads of demons making wild faces, sticking out their tongues with eyes wide open, staring forward with piercing glares, each a different beast with distorted features and frightening expressions. Compared to them, Satan looks beautiful. Yet he's the deadliest of all.

Andee and I were walking home from el Paraninfo, a computer lab of the Universidad de Cantabria located downtown. We turned a corner and stopped short as we stepped into la plaza del Ayuntamiento. A large crowd was clustered around the Franco statue. To commemorate the 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of his death, a pro-Fascist demonstration had been organized.

Andee and I were aware that a demonstration had been planned for that evening, but since I had never heard a Spaniard say anything positive about the dictator, I had not been expecting a crowd this size. To get home, we had to walk through it.

There was no shouting or violence, but tension filled the air, the contested public demonstration being in the heart of downtown. I glanced around. There was a large police presence at the event. Clearly, they wanted everything to stay as peaceful as possible. All the same, it seemed dangerous to honor Franco's death in such a prominent place. The dictator had destroyed the lives of many people, some of whom were probably walking by the demonstration or trying to catch a bus in the square. He had ripped families apart, plunged Spain into a civil war, and willingly sacrificed the lives of his people for his own personal gain.

No one spoke to us as we walked through the plaza. Andee and I didn't make a sound until we were a block away from the demonstration; only then did we feel safe enough to breathe normally again and talk in muted voices.

*Guernica*. Distorted features and frightened facial expressions. Dismembered and disjointed bodies. All eyes look upwards. On the left a woman is screaming, her mouth turned toward the sky. She holds an infant in her arms whose eyes are lifeless. Above her stands a cow with human eyes and flared nostrils.

Pain is written across every inch of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*. The mural depicts the German bombing of Guernica, a town in the Basque Country of Spain. The bombing, which occurred during the Spanish Civil War, was sanctioned by Franco. He allowed foreigners to experiment with different types of warfare on Spanish civilians, whom he considered his enemies.

The bottom middle section of the painting looks like it's covered in newspaper print. 250 citizens were killed in the bombing; 1,600 more were injured. The authorities downplayed the damage of the attack, even claiming that the Republicans, the opposing party to the Fascists, were at fault. The newspapers lied.

Picasso's mural traveled around the world, awakening outsiders to the truth about the Spanish Civil War and exposing the Fascists as liars. It is now displayed in el Museo de Reina Sophía in Madrid.

I stood before the painting at a loss for words, tears stinging the backs of my eyes. Everything was in gradients of black and white. The individuals in the mural were trapped in a

dark room with only a few openings. Perhaps they had retreated to the structure, believing it would be their refuge, but it had not saved them.

In Spanish culture, the home is sacred; it's just a place for family. Friends hang out in public places: cafés, plazas, or the street.

Planning our upcoming trip to Paris, Sarah, Andee, and I were sitting on a bench in one of the many plazas in downtown Santander. All the cafés were closed for the night. Three other students from our program passed by and stopped to talk to us.

A Spanish boy noticed our group and rushed over to talk to us. "You're from Oregon, no?" he asked. Before we could answer, he introduced himself as Albero and explained that he had been at the Intercambio meeting earlier that day where we had been assigned conversation partners. Although he had not been paired with a partner, he was very excited to be able to talk to us now.

He called his other friends over to join to us. Even though they had been studying English longer than he, they were more hesitant to talk to us. Albero, who was exuberant and slightly drunk, invited us to all join him for a longer conversation in the nearest bar. Since we were going to Bilboa the next day, we declined, but he was very persistent.

He grabbed Andee's and my arms and pulled us off the bench like we weighed nothing, even though I had been leaning backwards to make it difficult for him to pull me off. Laughing, we apologized again, dislodging ourselves from his grip, and started walking home. After looking downcast for a second, his countenance brightened again, and he waved good-bye to us.



**PART II:**  
**READING THE TEXT**

## DISILLUSIONMENT

### *The Perfect Photo*

Three things that I will never forget seeing in Toledo are the masterpiece of El Greco, a life-size statue of Cervantes, and a car that bore my name.

We started our tour on a hill overlooking Toledo. Using the panorama setting on my camera, I was able to capture the medieval city in one shot. Toledo was encircled by both a river and a high wall, the only way into the fortress being by bridge.

We moved from the vista to a steel shop on the outskirts of town. It specialized in blades and gold earrings. I selected a pair of autarique earrings for myself and spent the rest of the time admiring the displays of swords made from famous Toledo steel.

*El Entierro del Señor de Orgaz (The Internment of Count Orgaz)* was much larger than I'd been expecting. It covered an entire wall in what had originally been a chapel and was now a museum. Our guide explained that Doménikos Theotokópoulos, called El Greco (the Greek) by his Spanish contemporaries, had claimed that this painting was his masterpiece. Interestingly, though, the date accompanying his signature in the painting does not correspond to the duke's death or to the date he finished his work.

In the lower left of the painting is a small dark-haired boy. Holding a torch in one hand, he stared out of the painting, not looking at the burial occurring behind him.

The model for the boy was El Greco's son; the year included, 1578, was his birth date. El Greco considered him to be his true masterpiece.

A seven foot tall statue of Cervantes stood in the middle of a plaza, not sitting on a pedestal but on ground level, making it more accessible. Cervantes, who lived in the seventeenth century, became famous as the author of *Don Quixote*. The statue resembled a Shakespearean actor with tights, a broad ruffled collar, large padded shoulders, and a belted waist.

Standing to his right, I hooked my arm through his and posed for a picture. My other hand held my shopping bag, which contained the earrings, four posters, and a dagger I'd found in a dingy tourist shop.

Mégane. Stephen assured me it was a poorly made French vehicle, one of the worst cars on the road. Yet, his negativity did not affect my enthusiasm about the car with a name so similar to my own.

Although I had seen several Méganes in Santander, I never seemed to have my camera on me. After posing by the statue of Cervantes, I noticed a parking lot tucked behind a building. Andee and Sarah helped me search for my special car, but there weren't any in the lot.

Andee spied another larger parking lot, and after descending a set of stairs to reach it, the search began anew. I had almost given up hope of finding one when I spotted a beat-up car at the end of the lot. It was old and purple, but it was a Mégane. Smiling, I posed next to it to prove that such a model did exist.

It was time to head back to the bus. We could either backtrack by walking up the steps and going through the center of the city, or we could find a new way.

We headed down more steps at the end of the parking lot, which put us in an alleyway, following it to a maze-like path that led down to the old East Gate. Emerging by the river, we felt a little disoriented.

The sun was setting. We looked back up at the gate through which we had just come. There was no way we would be able to retrace our steps back to the Cervantes statue through the labyrinth we'd just navigated. We would have to walk beside the wall and follow the river back to the bus pick-up.

The way was uphill, and it was a long walk. Never having been able to shake our punctuality, Andee and I started running up the last stretch so as to not be late. Sarah, who had whole-heartedly embraced the Spanish mindset and characteristic tardiness, fell behind.

Panting, Andee and I joined up with the rest of our classmates. Sarah arrived a few minutes later completely relaxed.

The bus still had not arrived.

So much of what I did in Europe was geared around getting the perfect photo, a snapshot of me by a famous piece of art or historical monument. However, to flip through my pictures, you miss most of the journey because all you see are smiling faces. You miss the tears, the confusion, the pain, and the disillusionment. Photos only tell a small part of any story; they show the face you present to the world, the happy façade that all is well.

Time and time again Don Quixote sallies forth and is mercilessly beaten up by others. Yet he continues to live in his illusion of reality, refusing to see the world for what it really is.

By consciously dwelling on the highlights of his adventures and distorting the mundane details into something fantastic, it is as though he resides within his own version of a photo album.

Toledo is famous for its steel, but every steel shop I entered in Toledo was nothing more than a tourist trap.

Beside every castle was a parking lot, and McDonalds littered the landscape of any well populated town, each country with its own unique McFlurry flavor. My favorite was the Bacci McFlurry in Italy followed closely by the Flake McFlurry in Great Britain.

I fell into all these tourist traps, yet to have not done so, to have pretended that they did not exist, would have been just like Don Quixote. Having been modernized, Spain is not the same romantic landscape as described in *Don Quixote*. To have not accepted these changes would have been insane.

I wonder if Don Quixote would have embraced the metro system. Set in modern times, would he drive an old hippie van, or would he still insist on Rocinante?

During my first week in Spain, I had four negative experiences after trying to speak using my stilted Spanish. First the elevator boy hit me for using improper grammar, and then two other Spaniards told me that I was not very good at speaking Spanish. On another occasion when I tried to check into a hostel, the woman at the front desk grew angry with me and yelled at me to just speak English.

Internalizing their criticism, I tried to speak as little Spanish as possible, making Cayla act as my interpreter instead, even though I knew I would never improve by doing so. It took the

Malaga boy's hug and willingness to converse with me and my ability to successfully communicate with the man in Malaga's train station's ticket office to restore any semblance of confidence. I was shot down four times and encouraged twice. Don Quixote would have been immune to the criticism and welcomed the blows, but I am not Don Quixote. I shied away from the blows because I don't enjoy being hurt or embarrassed. Rather than continue to rush into such situations, I tried to avoid them.

### *Madness*

**Mad:** (adj.) **1** insane; frenzied **2** wildly foolish **3** wildly excited or infatuated **4** angry<sup>2</sup>

Don Quixote is called a hidalgo, or gentleman, of la Mancha. This hidalgo, formerly known as Alonso Quixano, takes up the anachronistic profession of a knight-errant, creating a new name for himself: Don Quixote. He also renames his horse Rocinante and his lady, formerly Aldonza Lorenzo, Dulcinea del Toboso. No one would recognize the name Alonso Quixano, but his alternate persona has become legendary and is easily identifiable with Spain and Cervantes.

Don Quixote creates a world for himself where knights roam the countryside defending the helpless, where windmills are transformed into giants, and where herds of livestock are mistaken for menacing armies. In this altered reality, magical caves unlock the mysteries of the afterlife, and squires are granted islands for their faithful service.

Don Quixote is usually treated as either a hero or a madman, with no option in between, but Robert Bayliss believes that Don Quixote simultaneously embodies both of these contrary

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<sup>2</sup> Ed. Laurence Urdang, *The American Century Dictionary* (New York: Warner Books, 1997), s.v. "mad."

roles.<sup>3</sup> At times he even exhibits clear reason and gives sound advice to others. Carl Good makes the interesting juxtaposition: “Don Quixote is most certainly mad. Don Quixote is most certainly not mad.”<sup>4</sup> Does his dual behavior indicate he is fanciful yet sane, insane with occasional bouts of clarity, or something else entirely?

Álvaro Ramírez purports that Don Quixote is not insane: “The hidalgo is not mad; he has only come to the realization that he can counterdefine the received world. However, counterdefining the world is by no means inventing a new reality, but rather changing or translating the old one.”<sup>5</sup> After deciding to become a knight-errant, the first thing that Don Quixote does is “refurbish some rusty armor that had belonged to his great grandfather.”<sup>6</sup> By taking something from the past, he seeks to reinvent and reestablish an old order rather than creating an entirely new one.

The narrator states that the knight has lost his senses, but can we trust the narrator? In Part II of the novel, the narrator forgets the name he has already given to Sancho Panza’s wife, calling her Teresa Cascajo instead of Juana Panza,<sup>7</sup> which proves that he is not always reliable. However, even if he is not entirely dependable, Don Quixote’s actions and speeches are best explained by the narrator’s theory that the knight is crazy. This opinion is confirmed by most of the characters who interact with Don Quixote and later by the knight himself.

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Bayliss, “What Don Quixote Means (Today),” *Comparative Literature Studies* 43, no. 4 (2006): 383.

<sup>4</sup> Carl Good, “Don Quixote and the Law of Literature,” *Diacritics* 29, no. 2 (1999): 55.

<sup>5</sup> Álvaro Ramírez, “Counterdefinitions of Reality: Translating the World in *Don Quixote de la Mancha*,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 43, no. 4 (2006): 418.

<sup>6</sup> Miguel Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 59.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

In Part I of the novel, Sancho says, “No one ought to take the words of a madman seriously.”<sup>8</sup> Although he is referring to someone else, as responsible readers we should apply his words to his master Don Quixote. Later he also describes their exploits as “mad, foolish frolics.”<sup>9</sup> Able to see things for what they are, Sancho represents realism, the opposite of Don Quixote’s idealism.

Convinced that a group of windmills are giants, Don Quixote rushes at them, even though Sancho Panza advises him that they are just windmills. After Don Quixote and Rocinante fall to the ground and suffer injuries, he says, “Did I not tell you, sir, to mind what you were doing, for those were only windmills? Nobody could have mistaken them unless he had windmills in his brain.”<sup>10</sup> Unlike his master, Sancho is able to discern fantasy from reality.

Eventually Don Quixote acknowledges that the giants are actually windmills, but refusing to face the truth, he claims that an evil enchanter is responsible for their extraordinary transformation: “I am convinced... that the magician Frestón, the one who robbed me of my study and books, has changed those giants into windmills to deprive me of the glory of victory.”<sup>11</sup> Who is crazier: Don Quixote or Sancho Panza? Don Quixote subverts reality, living in his own imaginary world, but Sancho Panza chooses to follow him even though he is able to recognize the truth. Is he more insane because he is not deceived by an extravagant imagination yet still willingly involves himself in his master’s quests, or is Don Quixote at fault for dragging him along and including him in his universe?

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<sup>8</sup> Miguel Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 239.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.



Humans define reality by creating notions of what constitutes acceptable behavior. Our conclusion is somewhat arbitrary, based on differing cultural and social values. We set the standards for what is normal, and anything outside of this is called insane: “Any attempts to counterdefine reality are deemed as falling into irreality or madness”<sup>12</sup> Not confined by the restrictions of society, Don Quixote translates his world into something entirely different, trying to reinstate lost order of chivalry he has read about in books. However, this is impossible to carry out. The old order has passed away, and as much as he wants to bring it back, he cannot.

The narrator of *Don Quixote* has a negative view of books of chivalry, claiming they are responsible for Don Quixote’s skewed perception of reality:

In short, he so immersed himself in those romances that he spent whole days and nights over his books; and thus with little sleeping and much reading, his brains dried up to such a degree that he lost the use of his reason. His imagination became filled with a host of fancies he had read in his books – enchantments, quarrels, battles, challenges, wounds, courtships, loves, tortures, and many other absurdities.<sup>13</sup>

The literature Don Quixote reads gives him a new code for living, as well as providing a form of escape for him and deluding his sense of reality. Carl Good argues that Don Quixote’s unswerving “commitment to a law of literature” puts assumptions about his madness into question.<sup>14</sup> He maintains that someone with such concrete resolutions could not be insane. Until his death bed renunciation, there is no doubt that Don Quixote whole-heartedly believes in his created world of knight-errantry, but believing in something does not make it true. Even though he has strong ideals, he is still undoubtedly insane.

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<sup>12</sup> Álvaro Ramírez, “Counterdefinitions of Reality,” 418.

<sup>13</sup> Miguel Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 58.

<sup>14</sup> Carl Good, “Law of Literature,” 54.

Literature directly influences Don Quixote to travel, tying literature and travel together, but although the romances he has read give him a nudge towards the door, only a madman, believing the exploits described in their pages to be true, would act on that nudge. Despite the eccentricities of its main character, *Don Quixote* is a realistic novel and serves as a critique of medieval romance literature. Don Quixote turns the idea of a knight's quest on its head, reminding us to live in the present world. We can alter our reality to a certain degree, but unless we'd like to be called insane, we must stay within the set perimeters.

After he sallies out from his house the first time, Don Quixote is beaten up by a muleteer and "thrashed... like a piece of wheat."<sup>15</sup> Demanding a band of muleteers and traders headed to Toledo acknowledge that Dulcinea is the fairest in the world, Don Quixote instigates the conflict. When they falter in giving her praise, he attacks them.

Before he is able to deliver his blow, Rocinante stumbles, sending both horse and rider to the ground. Once down, Don Quixote cannot get back up because of his heavy armor: "Although he tried to rise, he could not, for he was so impeded by the lance, the buckler, the spurs, the helmet, and the weight of the ancient armor."<sup>16</sup> He is then beaten up by the muleteer because he continues to insult the passing group. His inability to see his own foolishness prompts the beating, and his antiquated armor renders him helpless.

In this pathetic condition he is found by his peasant neighbor and brought home on a stretcher. Yet this negative experience does not deter him in the least from his quest of becoming a knight-errant and wandering across the countryside in search of adventures. On the contrary, it barely penetrates his consciousness, and he deludes himself into thinking that he is

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<sup>15</sup> Miguel Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 79.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

lucky to be suffering, “for he thought that his misfortune was peculiar to knights-errant and he attributed the whole accident to the fault of his horse.”<sup>17</sup> He learns nothing from his beating, and besides refashioning his helmet, drafting Sancho Panza as his squire, and packing saddlebags with some money, his preparations for his second sally are almost identical to his first.

Don Quixote seems to live in a world outside of fear. Upon hearing a horrible thumping noise that he assumes could only mean giants, he says, “Yet all that I describe to you serves but to rouse and awaken my courage, and causes my heart to burst in my bosom with longing to encounter this adventure, however great it may be.”<sup>18</sup> Although he displays great courage in the face of possible destruction, his actions and speeches are reckless, as he continues to delude himself and rush into dangerous and harmful situations.

Eventually, he is forced to return home as the result of a trick played on him by the curate, barber, and some new acquaintances. His return marks the end of Part I of *Don Quixote*. Although they are not able to disenchant him of all his crazy notions, they convince him to stay home for awhile.

His third and final sally begins Part II. The second half of his wanderings is interesting because he is recognized by many people as the famous Don Quixote. A significant amount of time has passed, during which the first part of his narrative circulated around Spain, making him famous. As he is recognized, many people, such as the Duke, the Duchess, and their many servants, participate in his fantasy, creating ridiculous quests for him and pulling pranks on him.

He returns home the last time after he is defeated by the bachelor Sansón Carrasco, who disguised as the Knight of the Half Moon challenges him to a joust. The terms of his defeat

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<sup>17</sup> Miguel Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 80.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 187.

require him to return home for a year. Unable to bear the thought of staying at home, Don Quixote makes plans to take up the lifestyle of a shepherd for the interim. However, before he can execute these plans, he contracts a serious illness.

Don Quixote renounces his lifestyle of a knight and dies as plain Alonso Quixano. On his deathbed, he maintains, “My judgment is now clear and unfettered, and that dark cloud of ignorance has disappeared, which the continual reading of those detestable books of knight-errantry had cast over my understanding.”<sup>19</sup> Finally recognizing the harm his books caused, he affirms his sanity: “Now I see their folly and fraud... I would have it remembered that though in my life I was reputed a madman, yet in my death this opinion was not confirmed.”<sup>20</sup>

Having fully invested in and accepted Don Quixote’s version of reality as truth, Sancho Panza begs his master to resume his former ways, saying:

Don’t die on me; but take my advice and live on for many a year; the maddest trick a man can play in his life is to yield up the ghost without more ado, and without being knocked on the head or stabbed through the belly to mope away and die of the doldrums. Shame on you master; don’t let the grass grow under your feet. Up with you this instant, out of your bed.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the squire’s earnestness, Don Quixote does not heed him.

How do we as readers interpret this reversal of roles with Sancho Panza as the idealist and Don Quixote the realist? Throughout the course of the novel, Sancho Panza changes, adjusting his former beliefs to accommodate Don Quixote’s altered vision of reality. He allows himself to be influenced by his surroundings, yet at the end, he, too, needs to realize that it

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<sup>19</sup> Miguel Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 1045.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 1045.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 1047.

wasn't real. Their existence as knight and squire was a sham, nothing more than a product of his master's madness.

The reaction of others to Don Quixote's disillusionment is fascinating. Accustomed to his madness, his housekeeper, his niece, the curate, the barber, and the bachelor Sansón Carrasco are shocked when he begins talking sensibly and continue to discuss knight-errantry with him. In response, Don Quixote calls his former exploits "foolish" and states that "at such a moment a man must not deceive his soul."<sup>22</sup> He is finally willing to let the charade come to an end. When his family and close friends comprehend that he has returned to his senses, they send for a priest and a notary to prepare his will as he has requested.

Yet outside of these acquaintances, most people, believing that his madness was a great source of entertainment, are saddened by his disillusionment. After Don Quixote has been defeated by the Knight of the White Moon, Don Antonio expresses his intense sadness, saying that the world has lost its most amusing madman: "May God forgive you for the wrong you have done in robbing the world of the most diverting madman who was ever seen. Is it not plain, sir, that his cure can never benefit mankind half as much as the pleasure he affords by his eccentricities?"<sup>23</sup>

The Spanish celebrate Don Quixote's eccentric adventures and his independent spirit, not his renunciation. For a person living by an archaic code, Don Quixote's longevity and adaptability are surprising:

He has battled both Spanish fascism and American imperialism; he has defended and shaped national identities and cultures on both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed, the paradox of Don Quixote at four hundred years old is that despite his supposedly anachronistic nature (a seventeenth-century character who aims to revive medieval institutions of

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<sup>22</sup> Miguel Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 1046.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 995.

chivalry), he has proven to be truly protean and adaptable to modern and postmodern circumstances.<sup>24</sup>

Don Quixote adjusts to changing times as a symbol of hope for the individual. His high idealism and determination have come to represent more than madness. Practically synonymous with Spain and Spanish culture, “Don Quixote became an icon of national identity.”<sup>25</sup> Though he is inevitably thought of as a madman first, he continues to be a unifying force in Spanish culture.

### *Translate*

**Translate:** (v.) **1** express the sense of (a word, text, etc.) in another language or in another form **2** interpret<sup>26</sup>

Any notion we might have had about Don Quixote and his universe is thrown into question by the lack of a clear narrating voice. The story passes through several voices before ever reaching us as readers. First come the various characters who translate reality through their dialogue and through the stories they tell, some chapters being written as dramatic monologues. Second is the original historian, Cide Hamete Beningeli, the Moor who recorded Don Quixote’s exploits in Arabic. Although Moors were renowned as historians, they were also known for their tendency to exaggerate the truth. The narrator calls Cide Hamete’s reliability into question several times.

Next is the translator and then the narrator of the story who is not identifiable with the author, Cervantes. The narrator finds the manuscripts about Don Quixote but cannot read them.

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Bayliss, “What Don Quixote Means,” 383.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 386.

<sup>26</sup> Ed. Laurence Urdang. *The American Century Dictionary*, s.v. “translate.”

Therefore, he takes them to a translator, a Morisco who speaks Spanish and Arabic. Moriscos were men of Arabic descent living in Spain who decided to convert to Catholicism during the Spanish Reconquista rather than be expelled from Spain.

Although the figure of the author never reveals himself in the metafiction, we cannot forget about him. Cervantes carefully crafted all the various speakers in his book, the overlapping narrating voices, and the many layers of translation in such a way that the novel itself subverts reality.

*Don Quixote* is a wandering novel, spliced by many interruptions. The narrative is already broken up into episodes, which in turn are interrupted by the many characters who “cross Don Quixote’s path... in the form of speeches, testimonies, plays, jokes, poems, and so on.”<sup>27</sup> The knight himself recounts some of these tales, which serve both productive and unproductive purposes.<sup>28</sup> Some further illustrate elements of the plot, but most have no real purpose outside of entertainment.

Some tales, such as Sancho’s story about the river crossing, are unfinished. While the squire is telling his story, Don Quixote interrupts him, and Sancho in turn forgets the ending.<sup>29</sup> Don Quixote’s interruptions create a distance rather than a connection between the stories and the overlapping narrative,<sup>30</sup> thus emphasizing the wandering nature of the novel and of Don Quixote’s mind.

Literature teaches us to read closely and not accept everything we see or hear as truth. With *Don Quixote*, we have to actively interpret what we read and compare it to our own

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<sup>27</sup> Carl Good, “Law of Literature,” 44.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>29</sup> Miguel Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 191.

<sup>30</sup> Carl Good, “Law of Literature,” 52.

perceptions of the world and what constitutes reality: “Cervantes...demands his readers to be prudent, to make judgments in conceiving virtual reality.”<sup>31</sup> You have to be a good reader to survive.

In the middle of writing his novel, the narrator abruptly stops the narrative because Cide Hamete’s manuscript ends mid-story. Curious as to the ending of Don Quixote’s exploit, the narrator scours the Alcaná market in Toledo for the missing pieces of the narrative. His persistence and attention to detail bear results: “One day when I was in the Alcaná or the silk market of Toledo, a lad came up to sell some parchments and old papers to a silk merchant, and as I am very fond of reading even torn papers in the street, I was tempted by my natural inclination to pick up one of the parchment books the lad was selling.”<sup>32</sup> The old papers turn out to be the missing pieces of the narrative.

Just as the narrator searches for the missing manuscripts, we must carefully sift through everything we encounter in the text because it is open to various interpretations.<sup>33</sup> We must learn to be critical readers and question our surroundings.

Cervantes never tells us how to read his work. That’s something we’re supposed to figure out on our own.

After living in Spain, I better understood the humor, the characters, and the landscape of *Don Quixote*. The Spanish sense of humor is random, and even after three months, I still don’t think I fully understood it. The Spanish laugh loudly and are not afraid to be silly. Although

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<sup>31</sup> John Beusterien, “Reading Cervantes: A New Virtual Reality,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 43, no. 4 (2006): 431.

<sup>32</sup> Miguel Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 107.

<sup>33</sup> John Beusterien, “Reading Cervantes,” 437.



they think that physical comedy, like being injured from being beaten up or from clumsiness, is amusing, they also appreciate irony and subtle jokes.

Stereotypical characters, like Sancho Panza, the peasant with his endless fount of proverbs, are considered particularly funny. Proverbs are a huge part of Spanish culture, but Sancho subverts the traditional wisdom associated with these sayings by rattling off three or four for every situation when one would suffice.

The Spanish are loud, vibrant, and abrupt, both in speech and manner. At first I thought they were yelling at me, but once I realized that they were just really loud talkers with small personal space bubbles, it was much easier for me to take criticism. I had the wrong attitude the first week because I was filtering Spanish actions through an American mindset. With possibly two exceptions, the Spanish I encountered were not being deliberately rude to me. They were just being Spanish, where no one minces words or says anything delicately. They were not attacking me but were trying to help in their own way.

I became more like Don Quixote as I learned to not internalize criticism, but I was never exactly like him. Still able to discern reality, I never completely abandoned my proper, polite behavior. If anything, I was more like Sancho Panza. Though puzzled and a little skeptical at first, I immersed myself in Spanish culture, and by the end of my time abroad, I had embraced the craziness, readjusting my former perceptions. I didn't completely abandon my old views in favor of the new; rather I incorporated the new into the old.

One time Sarah, Andee, and I were studying for a test in a café that we had dubbed “the sterile café,” its nickname originating from its streamlined appearance and austere color palate of

white and silver, along with the fact that it was the only non-smoking café we had been able to find in Santander. After diligently working for half an hour, we got distracted by something funny and couldn't stop laughing.

Only in Spain have I laughed so hard and long that I've experienced pain in my stomach and face. Because our cheeks ached from excessive smiling, we jokingly puffed them out, resembling a puffer fish when attacked, which prompted more laughter. As Sarah was puffing her cheeks out, she turned and looked out the window, unintentionally making eye contact with an elderly woman who was walking past the café's window.

Mirroring Sarah's expression, the woman puffed her cheeks out at us as she passed by and then erupted into laughter. Anywhere else in Europe we would have been shunned for such uncivilized, juvenile behavior. Only in Spain was our inside joke accepted and mimicked in good humor.

### *Travel*

**Travel:** (v.) **1** go from one place to another; make a journey, especially a long one or abroad **2a** journey along or through (a country) **b** cover (a distance or period of time) in traveling **3** move or proceed as specified **4** move or operate in a specified way<sup>34</sup>

Everyone travels through space and time; it's part of life. I identify with Michael Mewshaw when he says, "We are...not just who and what we are. We are shaped by where we are. Places work on us just as do events and people, and we become – or have the capacity to

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<sup>34</sup> Ed. Laurence Urdang. *The American Century Dictionary*, s.v. "travel."

become – different people in different settings.”<sup>35</sup> We are all influenced by our environment, both by what we would consider to be home and by the foreign places we visit. What is normal in one culture does not always translate to another. Mewshaw maintains that traveling into the unknown stimulates the senses.<sup>36</sup>

Don Quixote travels through la Mancha, located in central Spain on the plateau where it is dry and arid. “La Mancha” literally means a spot, mark, or stain.<sup>37</sup> However, his world is just a sliver of the diverse topography of Spain. Northern Spain, where I spent the majority of my time, was incredibly lush and green. Parts of Southern Spain were very dry, while others on the coast were tropical. Western Spain, Galicia in particular, was green and had strong ties with its Celtic past.

I did not realize how close Spain was to the rest of Europe until I lived in Santander. On a pleasant day, members of Santander’s sailing club would sail to England across the Bay of Biscay. One weekend, I took an overnight bus from Santander to Paris, and while in Southern Spain, I could look across the la Costa del Sol (Coast of the Sun) and see Africa.

Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived side by side in Spain for seven centuries, under both Muslim and Christian rule, as Spain lay in the crossroads between those two different worlds. Even though *Don Quixote* was written after la Reconquista and the expulsion of Muslims and Jews, remnants of these populations still make appearances in the novel. Spanish, European, and Arab women are all described as being breathtakingly beautiful in the novel, indicating that Cervantes was not prejudiced by the color of one’s skin or by one’s nationality. Spain was a bit

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<sup>35</sup> Michael Mewshaw, “Travel, Travel Writing, and the Literature of Travel,” *South Central Review* 22, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 9.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Oxford Spanish Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), s.v. “mancha.”

of a melting pot, and if the novel is any indication, it appears that most Spaniards were proud of their diverse population just as long as everyone professed to be a devout Christian, the contentious issue of the day being religion.

Some people believe that travel, as defined by visiting a foreign region to learn from and about their culture, is dead. It has been replaced instead by “the plague of tourism.”<sup>38</sup> The American Century Dictionary defines a tourist as “a person traveling for pleasure, especially abroad.”<sup>39</sup> Tourism is the facilitation of these people and has evolved into a large industry, full of resorts, luxuries, and cultural activities that may or may not be native to a particular location but that are usually still associated with it.

When I was in Barcelona, I went to a flamenco show and tapas night. Although flamenco dancing and tapas (Spanish appetizers) are a large part of Spanish culture, neither is native to Barcelona or the region of Cataluña. The flamenco and tapas night was very entertaining, but it was clearly targeting tourists. No Spaniard would ever go to Barcelona to see flamenco dancing.

As described, tourism seems more like a business ploy or just a relaxing vacation devoid of any educational undertones, but is that a good enough distinction between the two? What makes some experiences authentic and others mainstream?

Tourism would never be confused as wandering, but true traveling could. To truly experience and embrace a foreign culture, you cannot have a set plan. You can have a general idea, but you have to be flexible and embrace the unexpected to gain an understanding of the unknown. Travel is not an exact science or a booming industry but a chance to learn and grow. If you never step beyond the established boundaries of resorts and big tourist sites, you miss the

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<sup>38</sup> Michael Mewshaw, “Literature of Travel,” 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ed. Laurence Urdang. s.v. “tourist.”

actual culture of the place that is thriving beneath the surface. It takes some digging to find it, but once you do, it's more meaningful than the polished façade we're usually shown.

Although Don Quixote would have been immune to tourism, I don't think he understood authentic travel either. Life was difficult for him because of his delusion and determination to do things his own way. He never had a set plan and could not differentiate between reality and fantasy.

### *Foreign*

**Foreign:** (adj.) **1** of, from, in, or characteristic of a country or language other than one's own **2** dealing with other countries **3** unfamiliar; alien **4** coming from outside.<sup>40</sup>

Present in adventures there is always an uncertain element. Understanding the "Other" is essential for understanding ourselves.<sup>41</sup> Sometimes it takes an experience in a foreign setting surrounded by others who believe differently than we do for us to truly understand who we are, what we stand for, and why. Traveling and experiencing other cultures are important because they remind us that there are different ways to look at everything.

In order to assimilate to a foreign culture, one must first experience it and then later embrace it. Are these elements missing from *Don Quixote*? Although the knight-errant has some unexpected encounters with unusual people, almost everything extremely foreign and unrecognizable is from his imagination, like the windmill episode.

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<sup>40</sup> Ed. Laurence Urdang. *The American Century Dictionary*, s.v. "foreign."

<sup>41</sup> Simone Pinet, "On the Subject of Fiction: Islands and the Emergence of the Novel," *Diacritics* 33, no. 3/4 (Fall-Winter 2003): 179.

Don Quixote never really changes or demonstrates personal growth until his deathbed renunciation. It is not until he is on the brink of death that he allows himself to become vulnerable and influenced by outside sources. Repenting of his former madness and embracing his fear, he finally lets the charade end.

Ignoring fear or pretending that it does not exist keeps us trapped, but acknowledging and working through our fears opens us up to change. Traveling is about learning, and real learning is controlled by fear:

Albert Camus writes, ‘What gives value to travel is fear’... [He] speaks of the fact we feel when we encounter something foreign and are challenged to enlarge our thinking, our identity, our lives—the fear that lets us know we are on the brink of real learning: ‘It is the fact that, at a certain moment, when we are so far from our own country...we are seized by a vague fear, and an instinctive desire to go back to the protection of old habits... At that moment, we are feverish but also porous, so that the slightest touch makes us quiver to the depths of our being. We come across a cascade of light, and there is eternity.’<sup>42</sup>

Being faced with something foreign forces us to expand and reexamine ourselves. We become more open to change because we are plunged into the unknown where nothing is certain. Home is far away, and we are presented with a choice: either remain in a state of fearful homesickness or embrace the fear and open ourselves up to something new. The latter option is not easy but is necessary for understanding or assimilating to a foreign culture.

Cervantes lived in Madrid for the majority of his writing career. Two large statues of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza now sit in la Plaza de España (the Plaza of Spain) as a testament to his influence in the city.

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<sup>42</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life* (U.S.A.: Jossey-Bass, an Imprint of Wiley, 1998), 39-40.

I climbed onto their platform and stood between the two bronze figures. Both were mounted: Don Quixote on Rocinante, the lord of hacks, and Sancho Panza on Dapple, his beloved mule. I stood just about eye level with Dapple.

Don Quixote was tall and very lean. His armor and clothes were mismatched and ill-fitting, but from the expression on his face, one would think him a king. He raised his right arm in a gesture that looked like he was going to call out to or try to stop someone. In his left hand was a lance, an appropriate weapon for a knight-errant.

Rocinante looked exhausted and famished, like he could fall over dead at any moment. Like his master, he was very thin and lanky. Sancho Panza looked out of breath. He was short and round.

I was the most intrigued by Dapple. If a mule was possible of such a complex mindset, Dapple looked slightly bored and amused, like he had resigned himself to the situation yet could still see the ridiculousness of it all.

**PART III:**  
**I AM SANCHO PANZA**



## LOCKED IN MASS

After his martyrdom in 44 A.D., it is believed that the corpse of Santiago Ápostal (St. James the Apostle) was transported in a stone boat without sails from the Holy Land to Spain by two disciples. Hundreds of years later a religious hermit was led to the grave by a guiding star. A church and later a cathedral were built over the sacred relics.

Now Santiago de Compestela is one of the biggest Catholic pilgrimage sites in the world, even rivaling Jerusalem and Rome in importance in the eleventh through thirteenth centuries.

Tourist stands, selling everything from conch shells and walking sticks to pilgrim and witch dolls, filled the plaza outside the main entrance to the cathedral. Andee, Sarah, and I had spent hours browsing through the various wares earlier that morning, but now thick glass and steel doors separated us from the square. It was 5 p.m. mass, and we were locked inside the cathedral.

The pilgrims who walked el Camino de Santiago (the Trail of St. James) used walking sticks and hollowed-out gourds for carrying water. Beginning in France, the trail went through northern Spain and ended in Santiago de Compestela, located in Galicia.

The entire region of Galicia still has strong ties with its Celtic heritage. The sudden infusion of Christianity caused an interesting syncretism with the native pagan religion, and miegas (white witches) continue to be held in high regard, esteemed for their healing abilities and for bringing good luck. When pilgrims fell sick along el Camino de Santiago, the miegas would nurse them back to health. Our hostel in Santiago de Compestela was named Miega

Backpackers (White Witch Backpackers), and in a shop called Taller Miegas (Shop of the Good Witches), I found a pair of wooden clogs.

We had already attended the Pilgrim's mass at noon, during which we had seen el botafumiero (smoke spitter) in action. As the largest incense burner in the world, el botafumiero swung the whole breadth of the transept, barely missing the end. It took seven priests to swing it. The giant pendulum had to build momentum, but once it started moving quickly, the incense poured out of it, filling the whole cathedral with thick perfumed smoke.

That evening we had returned to the cathedral to take pictures of the Apocalyptic Doorframe, the original façade of the cathedral that depicted a scene from Revelation.

Jesus was enthroned in the center of the relief sculpture above the doorjamb. In the Pantocrator pose, he was seated on a throne like a judge with the world at his feet, his hands raised in benediction. He was flanked by the four Gospel writers, shown with their corresponding apocalyptic symbols: Matthew (angel), Mark (lion), Luke (ox), and John (eagle). Surrounding the doorframe's arch were twenty-four musicians.

Beneath the Apocalyptic Doorframe was a statue of Maestro Mateo, the architect of the cathedral. There's a tradition that says if you hit your head three times against his statue, some of his genius will be imparted to you. Unfortunately, there was a gate that prevented us from doing this, but I still reached through the grating and tapped the statue three times, then my head three times.

While we had been taking pictures of the doorframe, the doors had been locked on us. Although we tried pulling and pushing on them, none of them budged. A small boy who was outside put his hand on the glass. I mirrored him. He wanted in; I wanted out, but it was impossible to switch places now. We would have to wait for mass to finish.

Twenty minutes later we found an exit and escaped from the incense laden sanctuary into the fresh air.

Even though I was staring up at a ceiling covered in paintings of bison, deer, and horses, I felt disappointed. Altamira is a cave in northern Spain with prehistoric paintings dating to 15,000 BCE. Its ceiling has large paintings of bison and other animals, the artist having used the natural shape and contours of the ceiling as part of the animals' bodies. A round protruding bump was used as one bison's body, giving the painting some depth.

I had been looking forward to Altamira ever since I had read on the syllabus that we would get to visit the site. However, since the actual cave was closed to visitors, we toured the replica cave in Altamira's museum instead.

Although the replica had been well made, I did not feel like I was in a cave or believe for a moment that the paintings I saw were authentic. All the same, I took out my camera to take a picture of the fake ceiling. The woman leading our tour stopped me. "No se permite las fotos," she said, which meant that photos were not allowed.

Although I put away my camera, I could not help but think the situation was ironic. It was a replica cave, not the original. It didn't matter if it was damaged by flashes; it was plastic and could be repaired.

Something very simple had been smothered. Was the cave really so sacred that we couldn't even take pictures of its replica? The museum served as nothing more than a huge shrine, a building that the institution of science had created to protect something it valued.

Santiago de Compostela, the cathedral and the city, had been built around a relic, St. James' bones. There was something beautiful and mysterious about the legend of the stone boat and the guiding star.

Simple bones had necessitated the large cathedral, had caused the phenomenon of tourist shops lining the square outside the cathedral, and had prompted the creation of el botafumiero.

Just bones.

I would have rather visited the cave in the hillside, the true Altamira, without any of the explanatory plaques. The museum felt like a tomb. Having been sacrificed to accommodate the institution, everything mysterious and simple was dead.

Santo Toribio de Liebana is a monastery up in the mountains of northern Spain. Along with Rome, Jerusalem, Santiago de Compostela, and Caravaca de la Cruz, it is one of only five places in the world with the privilege of celebrating the Holy Year.

When I stepped off the bus, it was mid-morning. The sun was bright in the cloudless sky, but the air was cold and thin. It hurt to breathe. Although I was wearing a sweatshirt, coat, hat, scarf, and gloves, the wind penetrated them with ease. I could not stop shivering as we waited for our turn to enter the monastery.

After twenty minutes, a monk came out and brought us inside, leading us through the labyrinth of halls, which were narrow and crowded with artifacts. The air was stuffy. Hugging myself tightly to make myself take up less space, I felt a strong desire to return outside.

Finally we arrived in the chapel. Recorded hymns blasted from hidden sound equipment, creating the illusion that there was a choir in the room with us. The monk led us past all the pews up onto the stage. We stood in line behind him as he took an object wrapped in purple velvet out from a locked enclosure.

He unwrapped the velvet, revealing a golden cross, in the center of which was a piece of wood. He explained that it was the largest remaining fragment of the cross of Christ.

We were given the opportunity to touch or kiss the fragment as we filed by. When it was my turn, I said a prayer, leaned down, and kissed the cross. Having been worn down by millions of kisses and touches, the wood was so smooth it felt polished.

We were herded through more courtyards and hallways before we exited the monastery and were hit by the sharp wind once more.

**40 SPANISH PROVERBS**

1. **Poco a poco, se llega lejos.** *Little by little, you go a long way.*
2. **Cada oveja con su pareja.** *Each sheep with its mate.*
3. **Nadie nace sabiendo.** *No one is born knowing.*
4. **Llueve sobre mojado.** *When it rains, it pours.*
5. **Aunque la mona se vista de seda, mona se queda.** *Although the monkey's dressed in silk, it's still a monkey.* You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.
6. **Nadie es profeta en su tierra.** *Nobody's a prophet in his own land.*
7. **En todas partes cuecen habas, y en mi casa toneladas.** *Lima beans are boiled everywhere, and in my house lots!* Everyone has his share of problems, and I'm no exception.
8. **En boca cerrada no entran moscas.** *Flies can't enter a closed mouth.* Know when to keep your mouth shut.
9. **Por la boca se muere el pez.** *By his mouth, the fish dies.* Know when to keep your mouth shut.
10. **A rey muerto, rey puesto.** *One king dies, another takes his place.* The institution remains.
11. **Agua pasada no mueve molino.** *Past water doesn't move a mill.* Don't cry over spilled milk.
12. **A lo hecho, pecho.** *What's done is done.*
13. **A la tercera va la vencida.** *Third time's a charm.*

14. **Más vale pájaro en mano que cien volando.** *One bird in your hand is worth more than 100 flying.* A bird in the hand is better than two in the bush.
15. **Dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres.** *Tell me who you walk with, and I'll tell you who you are.* You're known by the company you keep.
16. **Si juventud supiera y vejez pudiera.** *Youth is wasted on the young.*
17. **En martes y trece, ni te cases ni te embarques.** *On Tuesday the 13<sup>th</sup>, don't get married or set out on a trip.* Tuesday the 13<sup>th</sup> is the Spanish equivalent of Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>.
18. **A caballo regalado no se le mira el diente.** *Don't look a gift horse in the mouth.*
19. **Quien busca, halla.** *He who seeks, finds.*
20. **Con la ayuda de un vecino, maté un cochino.** *With the help of a neighbor, I killed a pig.*
21. **En tierra de ciegos, el tuerto es rey.** *In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.*
22. **Allá van leyes, do quieran reyes.** *Laws disappear where kings want them to.* The king is above the law.
23. **A mí me gustan las cosas claras, y el chocolate espero.** *I like clear things and thick chocolate.* I like things told to me straightforwardly. If you're going to make something dense or cloudy, let it be hot chocolate. Having the consistency of fondue, Spanish hot chocolate is very thick.
24. **No es tan fiero el león como lo pintan.** *The lion is not as fierce as he is painted.* His bark is worse than his bite.
25. **Perro que ladra no muerde.** *A barking dog doesn't bite.* His bark is worse than his bite.

26. **A quien madruga, Dios le ayuda.** *He who rises early, God helps.* The early bird gets the worm.
27. **Poderoso caballero es don Dinero.** *The most powerful gentleman is Mr. Money.*  
Money talks.
28. **El peor sordo es él que no quiere oír.** *The worst deaf man is he who won't hear.*
29. **Quien no se aventura, no pasa la mar.** *He who doesn't venture forward, never passes the sea.* Nothing ventured, nothing gained.
30. **Cría cuervos y te sacarán los ojos.** *Raise crows, and they'll peck out your eyes.* If you lie down with dogs, expect to wake up with fleas.
31. **Donde estuvieres, haz lo que vieres.** *Wherever you go, do as you see.* When in Rome, do as the Romans do.
32. **Ojos que no ven, corazón que no siente.** *Eyes that don't see, heart that doesn't feel.*  
Out of sight, out of mind.
33. **Año de nieves, año de bienes.** *Year of snow, year of plenty.*
34. **Al buen entendedor, pocas palabras.** *The good listener needs few words.*
35. **Al mal tiempo, buena cara.** *In bad weather, have a good face.* Smile even when things are going poorly.
36. **Haz bien y no mires a quién.** *Do good and don't look at to whom you're doing it.* Do good to everyone.
37. **Más vale estar solo que mal acompañado.** *It's better to be alone than to have bad company.* You're known by the company you keep.
38. **Lo barato es caro.** *Cheap is expensive.* You get what you pay for.



39. **No hay mal que cien años dure.** *There is no evil that lasts 100 years.* Every cloud has a silver lining.

40. **Del dicho al hecho hay muy largo trecho.** *Between saying and doing, there is a huge distance.* Easier said than done.

## COMING HOME

Although I had already spent a week in southern Spain and Barcelona, flying into Madrid this time was different. It was late September, and my adventures were over. I would start classes at la Universidad de Cantabria in two days. Having spent the previous day shopping in Zurich, Switzerland, it was a shock to my system to be heading off to school.

The red-eye flight from Zurich to Madrid was a blur. I didn't fully take in my surroundings until I boarded the train that would take me to Santander. An empty feeling settled in my stomach as I took my seat on the train. At that moment a wave of cowardice swept over me, and I wished that I were on a plane ride back to the U.S. instead of heading into the unknown.

The scenery outside my window didn't help my sudden homesickness. As we traveled northward, the terrain changed from flat, dry plains to green hills and mountains. The view from my window reminded me a bit of the Columbia Gorge in Oregon. It wasn't what I had thought Spain would look like.

After a while I noticed that a low-hanging fog coated the valleys outside. The farther up in the mountains we went, the more dense the fog became. For about half an hour, I couldn't see anything out my window, the glass being cold to my touch.

I woke up several hours later as the train came to a stop. After a four and a half hour ride, we had arrived in Santander. For the next ten weeks, this would be my home. The fog was gone, but the sky was still full of grey clouds, looking dark and foreboding, like they might dump rain at any moment.

My host mom had said she would pick me up at the train station. I waited thirty minutes, but she never showed.

If I hadn't spent the past eight weeks backpacking across Europe, I might have panicked. As it was, I just walked outside, flagged down a taxi, and gave the driver my host family's address. After a five minute ride, the taxi pulled over to the right side of the road on a four-lane busy street. My driver gestured towards the building, and I caught the words for "apartment" and "fifth floor" in his stream of rapid Spanish. I looked at the address I had scrawled across a page of my journal and read it aloud, confirming with the driver that this was the right place before climbing out and paying him the exorbitant fare.

There was a small market on the ground floor of the building, right next door to a smoke-filled café. I walked hesitantly to the intercom. Sure enough, my host mom's name was written next to number 5. I pressed the button and explained who I was. There was an immediate click as the door to the street unlocked itself for me. My host mom instructed me to walk up all the stairs, her apartment being on the top level of the building.

Shifting under the weight of my large backpack, I began the trek up the stairs. Europeans count floors differently than we do in America. The ground floor is level "0," and what we would consider the second floor, they call the first. Therefore, to reach the fifth floor, which was the sixth floor by American standards, I had to climb up five flights of stairs. Even though I was panting when I reached the top, I admired the potted plants that lined the steps on my final leg. I wondered if my host mom liked to garden.

Since there was only one door, I didn't have to guess which one belonged to my host family. Although the keyhole was in the normal location, on the right side of the door, there was

no accompanying handle. Instead there was a large knob in the middle of the door that didn't turn.

I knocked on the unusual door. It seemed that before I could even drop my hand, the door was flung open, and I was welcomed into the small, bright apartment. My host mom hugged me, gave me air kisses on both of my cheeks, and then introduced herself. As soon as she let me go, my host sister, Aisha, stepped forward and repeated the greeting.

Then they showed me my room. It was lime green with beautiful framed paintings on the walls, my single window facing out onto the busy street. In the distance I could see the harbor and a sliver of ocean. I was glad to put my bag down and unpack my things for the first time in months.

After I had settled in a bit, they showed me the rest of the apartment, the tour not taking long. The main hallway was painted a bright yellow, the kitchen and living room were white, and the bathroom was sky blue. Everything was clean and fresh smelling. There was no dryer; instead the laundry hung dry on racks outside the kitchen window. It was simple, almost rustic, but very beautiful.

Even in November, Santander looked beautiful and green. For All Saints' Day, Andee, Sarah, and I had spent the long weekend in Paris, where we had been reminded by the brightly colored leaves on the ground that it was autumn. We had taken an overnight bus there and back. As the bus drove through Santander in the early morning, we passed by palm trees, evergreens, and deciduous trees. They all looked healthy and alive. Some of the deciduous leaves had changed color, but none had fallen to the ground yet. From my vantage point it looked like it

could be late August, but I knew that once I stepped outside, the cold would remind me that summer was long past.

Compared to Spain, France seemed much more chic and sophisticated. I thought it strange that there was such a huge cultural difference over such a short distance. Paris and Madrid were only 630 miles apart, but they were as different as night and day. I think I preferred Madrid, but it was nice to visit Paris and remember some of the former luxuries we take for granted in the U.S., such as hot showers, clean streets, and well-dressed people who don't shout or sport mullets.

I continued to look out my window as we neared the bus station. The streets were deserted, the city looking asleep. The sky was a light blue with only a few puffs of clouds drifting around. Although it was too cold to sunbathe, I imagined that it would still be a popular day at the beach when everyone finally woke up.

This was no longer the unknown. I knew what to expect, yet when I left Paris, I couldn't help but feel slightly deflated that I had to return to Spain. A part of me still craved the comfort of home.

I was very happy in Spain, and my happiness unnerved me a little. I had acclimated to my new environment, and I realized that the more I adjusted and let go of my apprehensions, the harder it would be to go back to the U.S. As I embraced Spanish culture, I forgot bits and pieces of home. The two worlds were very different, and I had learned that you can't really hold on to both at the same time. Trying to do so only breeds discontentment.

I was scared because I fit in better in Spain, but I knew I couldn't stay there indefinitely. Once December arrived, I would have to leave. I missed my family, but in many ways, Spain felt like a better home for me than Oregon ever had.

I held onto the sides of the drawbridge and looked down. The moat was dry, but a drop from this height would surely be lethal. The castle in Segovia, called the Alcazar, was perched on a tall hill with jagged rocks at the bottom. Only accessible by drawbridge, it was like something out of a fairytale. I stared at the dizzying drop a few moments more before joining up with the rest of my classmates in the castle's courtyard. Pointing out suits of armor and medieval torture devices, our tourguide led us through various rooms.

She showed us the throne room where Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand had sat and ruled an empire and then ended the tour by bringing us outside into another courtyard amid the castle walls. I walked around its perimeter, taking pictures from every angle possible. The castle was built of light grey stone, looking almost white in the sunlight. At night with yellow spotlights shining on it, it glowed a light gold.

It had a blue slate roof, tall slender towers, pointed spires, and crenellated walls. Dating back to Roman times, the structure had been renovated several times, and in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, the castle had been remodeled to resemble the German castles of the time. Along with Neuschwanstein Castle outside of Munich, Germany, the Alcazar in Segovia was the inspiration for Walt Disney's Sleeping Beauty Castle.

How interesting it would have been to live in Segovia and call this castle home. The air was very dry and static; it made my hair knot together. The stone was cold. Many rooms had

their own fireplaces, and tapestries lined the walls. I'm sure when they were in use, they would have kept everything warm and livable.

My Saturday had now lasted for thirty hours, and it was only 9:00 p.m. I had three more hours to go before one of the most exhausting days of my life would officially end. It was strange flying against time. Even though my flight from Paris to Atlanta had lasted ten hours, according to the plane's clock, which took into account the time zone differences, it had only taken four hours. My watch, still set on Spanish time, told the truth.

I had gone through customs in Atlanta and then boarded a plane set for Portland, my third flight of the day. It lasted for five hours and thirty minutes, but once again according to the world clock, it showed that only two and a half hours had passed. I had been awake and travelling since 7:00 p.m. the day before, thirty-five hours ago.

We landed around 9:10. I picked up my purse and grabbed my backpack from the overhead compartment. Breezing by the rest of the sleepy passengers, I was one of the first off the plane. As I passed by the line of flight attendants at the front of the plane, I almost spoke to them in Spanish. I caught myself at the last second and thanked them for their service in English instead. Being the first time I'd been in a native English-speaking country for three and a half months, it felt strange to finally be eloquent again.

As soon as I walked into the airport, I smiled. It looked like home: Cinnabon, Panda Express, a Borders bookstore, and Starbucks. I rounded a corner and saw my family waiting for me as close to the security gates as they could possibly be. Once they spotted me, they ran to me, and I was flooded with hugs and kisses. My six month old niece was thrust in my arms. In

the four months I'd been gone, she'd practically tripled in size. Together we went down to collect my checked baggage.



## CONCLUSION

We all travel through life. Don Quixote's journey helped me in my own travels, teaching me that life is all about failing and then picking yourself up again. In my experience, I had to learn to break order and become flexible to become a good traveler.

Living abroad in Spain forced me to reconsider the way our culture promotes consumerism. Compared to the rest of the world, we're extravagant spenders and wasters, as well as being much less concerned about the environment and foreign policies.

One time my host sister, Aisha, came home with some stickers she'd bought along with her school supplies. She was excited because she had gotten a good deal on them.

Frowning, my host mom took the stickers from her and flipped the package over. "Aisha," she said, her voice full of disappointment, "these were made in China by people who have no rights. Their factories are horrible, and the government does nothing to improve their working conditions. You know that since we don't agree with that kind of mistreatment, we don't support them financially."

Although she was not entirely willing, Aisha returned the stickers the next day. How many of us have that kind of resolve? Normally when our checkbooks are affected, we go with the cheaper option regardless of who suffers because of our choice.

The sky grew progressively darker as we headed down to la Playa de los Peligros. Even though it was cold now, we still took off our shoes, rolled up our jeans, and waded in the surf.

It was our final night in Santander. I was leaving the next day to fly back to the U.S., Andee was headed to Ireland, and Sarah was going to Malaga in Southern Spain to work with some Christian missionaries.

As the sun started to dip beneath the horizon, the sky exploded into a myriad of colors: bright pinks, reds, and oranges. The light sparkled across the water.

It was a bitter-sweet moment. Although we knew we'd still see each other at OSU, it wouldn't be quite the same. This was good-bye.

Gradually the colors became less vibrant, fading into purples and blues. Finally, the sun disappeared from view, the last of the colors vanishing from the sky. Shoes in hand, we turned and walked back across the soft sand to the pavement.

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