So is This the End?:
The Unfinishability of Quixotic Play

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Abstract

Published in two parts in 1605 and 1615, *Don Quijote* is perhaps one of the most heavily studied, reviewed, and interpreted novels of all time. This thesis attempts a unique study, however, by interpreting the novel through a modern lens of performance theory. The study retroactively applies the theories of Richard Schechner, one of the forefathers of performance theory, onto the seventeenth century novel by arguing that certain representations of madness by characters other than Don Quijote can be understood as performances. Using Schechner’s theories, this paper creates a clear distinction between Don Quijote’s madness and that of the other “sane” characters based upon the social function of performance, which acts as a medium to enact socially forbidden behavior. The paper then argues that not only do the various characters perform madness, but that this performance is a type of dark play because of its inherent danger in destabilizing the boundary between sanity and madness. Tracing the progression of this dark play throughout the novel, the paper then posits a total obliteration of any distinction between play and reality, causing the play to be “unfinishable,” in an act of what I term quixotic play. The paper then turns to the 2002 film *Lost in La Mancha* directed by Keith Fulton and Louis Pepe as an example and embodiment of quixotic play, both in terms of the play enacted within the film and as part of a larger version of quixotic play which is the legacy of the seventeenth century novel. The comparative analysis concludes by suggesting that the original narrative, as an example of quixotic play itself, is unfinishable by its very existence, that it can never end and will instead remain perpetually in a state of play.
Introduction: The Never-Ending Play

“I want you, Sancho to think well and to have a good opinion of plays, and to be equally well-disposed toward those who perform them and those who write them, because they are the instruments whereby a great service is performed for the nation, holding up a mirror to every step we take and allowing us to see a vivid image of the actions of human life; there is no comparison that indicates what we are and what we should be more clearly than plays and players.”

—Don Quijote speaking in Cervantes’s Don Quijote

In this passage from the second part of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra’s two-part novel Don Quijote (1605 and 1615), the eponymous knight expatiates on the social function of plays. Plays, he says, are meant to hold “up a mirror” to society, demonstrating how they create spaces which allow for social critique and experimentation. The knight, however, goes on, saying, “[B]ut when the play is over and [the players] have taken off their costumes, all the actors are equal” (II. 12. 527). Sans costumes and makeup and elaborate sets, all of the players are simply individuals, unaffected by the role that they assumed for the performance. But what happens when the players cannot take off their costumes? When the play identities get mixed into real identities? When the play itself cannot end?

Behind the instances of staged theatrical performances in the novel, of which there are many, there is an underlying performance that forms the basis of the narrative itself. This is the performance of madness. Madness is an important feature in the novel and Cervantes’s representation of the condition can be attributed to late sixteenth and early seventeenth century theories regarding the humors. During this time, it was thought that the composition of a person’s body in relation to the proportions and quantities of the four humors (blood, phlegm, choler/yellow bile, and melancholy/black bile) would result in one of four temperaments:
sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, or melancholic (Murillo, 22). However, an imbalance in these humors could result in “pathological conditions,” or madness (Murillo, 23). From the outset of the narrative, Cervantes points to this humoral imbalance in Don Quijote by describing the knight in terms that would reflect an excess of choler and a lack of phlegm: “[W]ith too little sleep and too much reading his brains dried up, causing him to lose his mind” (I. 1. 21). Don Quijote’s madness is explicitly the cause of his brain (“dry[ing] up” due to an imbalance in the condition of the humors. Yet the madness exhibited by Don Quijote is not so easily contained by the prevailing theories of the humors, which has for centuries caused critics to question whether Don Quijote performs madness, questioning whether his madness is not lunacy but rather social commentary. And this potential performance is certainly not limited to the knight, as various characters throughout the novel seem to fall in and out of madness as they interact with Don Quijote. Sancho, the priest, barber, housekeeper, niece, Sansón Carrasco, and the duke and duchess all oscillate between sanity and madness as they not only participate in Don Quijote’s delusions but help to create new fantasies, all in the attempt to ensnare Don Quijote and convince him to end his adventures and return home. Yet this participation in delusions and creation of fantasy is not understood to be madness, rather Cervantes emphasizes the difference between the behavior enacted by the many characters compared to that of Don Quijote by situating the former in the realm of performance. Cervantes suggests that performed madness does not have the same social implications as actual madness and as a result, the players’ behavior is absolved whereas Don Quijote’s is condemned. However, this line between performance and reality becomes vexed. As the players move deeper and deeper into the performance it becomes unclear, in the terms of Don Quijote’s aforementioned thoughts on performance, not only if the players will be
able to remove their costumes and rejoin the world of reality, but whether the costumes themselves are reality. The players become so absorbed in the world of fiction that fiction starts to resemble reality so much so that even the creators of the play cannot tell the difference. Performed madness and real madness can no longer be clearly distinguished, and thus, the many ostensibly sane characters have risked their very sanity in the creation and continuation of the play. Madness and sanity, performance and reality, are no longer finite, distinct entities, but rather become one new muddled version of reality that is part truth and part fantasy.

In order to understand the function and signification of performance and play within the novel, this paper turns to Richard Schechner, one of the forefathers of performance theory. Using his theories, this paper will create a clear distinction between Don Quijote’s behavior and that of the other “sane” characters based upon the social function of performance, which acts as a medium to enact socially forbidden behavior. The paper will then argue that not only do the various characters perform madness, but that this performance is a type of dark play because of its inherent danger in destabilizing the boundary between sanity and madness. Tracing the progression of this dark play throughout the novel, the paper will eventually posit a total obliteration of any distinction between play and reality, causing the play to be “unfinishable,” in an act of what I will term quixotic play. The paper will then turn to the 2002 film Lost in La Mancha directed by Keith Fulton and Louis Pepe as an example and embodiment of quixotic play, both in terms of the play enacted within the film and as part of a larger version of quixotic play which is the legacy of the seventeenth century novel. The comparative analysis will conclude by suggesting that the original narrative, as an example of quixotic play itself, is
unfinishable by its very existence, that it can never end and will instead remain perpetually in a state of play.

Forbidden Behavior: Performance Theory and Dark Play

In his 1977 compilation of essays titled *Essays on Performance Theory 1970-1976*, Richard Schechner delineates common features of most performances, elements which, when deconstructed, elucidate the manner in which performance functions in society. These elements are not discrete entities, but rather overlap and work together within a single performance. My division of performance into three distinct elements is not meant to suggest that these are natural divisions within each performance, or that these are the only divisions possible, but rather that this set of divisions proves useful in the mapping of performance theory onto informal—non-theatrical—performances. The three elements of performance that I will note include: the transformative power of performance; the function of performance or what Schechner terms, “the efficacy-entertainment dyad”\(^1\); and performance as a form of play.

Performances are transformative in myriad ways—they both undergo transformation and cause transformation, and in this way implicate not only the performers, but the audience as well. Schechner breaks the performance down into three discrete levels, or places, of transformation: “1) in the drama, that is, in the story; 2) in the performers whose special task it is to temporarily

\(^1\) In his most recent work published in 2003, Schechner updates this to the “efficacy-entertainment braid”. The difference of the two terms can be understood in Schechner’s updated explanation: “Efficacy and entertainment are not so much opposed to each other; rather they form the poles of a continuum” (130). “Dyad” suggests that both elements exist simultaneously and must necessarily be present in a pair, whereas Schechner uses “braid” to suggest that while both efficacy and entertainment are present in any given performance, the degree of each element is variable and does not necessitate equal values of each. Because this paper draws upon Schechner’s 1977 work for the majority of its analysis, I have decided to use “dyad” for consistency, though I think it is important to note that the analysis is also informed by the notion of the two elements existing in a continuum.
undergo a rearrangement of their body/mind; 3) in the audience where changes may either be temporary (entertainment) or permanent (ritual)” (123). The transformation occurs within the performance itself in the form of the story, within the people who perform the story, and the people who observe the performance of the story. In terms of Don Quijote, this means that within the text itself, the performance, the characters who perform, and the characters who observe the performance/are targeted by the performance (typically Don Quijote) are all transformed through the process. But in an extra-textual sense, this also implicates the reader or viewer in the transformative process, an element which will be key to the understanding of quixotic play. This breakdown of transformation suggests that the performance is not a strictly unilinear event (i.e. the performance does not occur solely in the direction of performer to audience). Instead the performance implicates all parties in its transformative nature, causing a multi-linear structure in which the observers of the performance also have a role in its function and reception.

In studying the portrayal of formal acts of performance, Schechner notes a binary between efficacy and entertainment, an opposition which he terms the “efficacy-entertainment dyad” (75). These two elements, he argues, are present in every performance and together can help to understand the role of performance as both producing results (efficacy) and creating fun (entertainment). The combination of efficacy and entertainment produces for each performance a specific function within a cultural framework. Specifically, in performances “people are free to engage in behavior and associations that would otherwise be forbidden” (110). The transformative power of performance is what allows this rearticulation of forbidden acts, as the transformation caused by the performance allows for “the displacement of anti-social, injurious,
disruptive behavior by ritualized gesture and display” (66). Schechner locates this “displacement of anti-social” behavior as “making fun” (158), thus drawing upon the entertainment component of the dyad in the manner in which the performance creates fun, as well as the efficacy component, by suggesting a subversion, or mocking, of “anti-social, injurious, disruptive behavior”. This notion of performance as “making fun” will be a key element in the analysis of the behavior of players such as the duke and duchess who create play in order to mock Don Quijote and entertain themselves.

The performance works within two levels—it both performs behavior that is traditionally unacceptable by society’s standards, and simultaneously rearticulates this behavior through the very structure of the performance (by “making fun”). Schechner deconstructs this social function of performance:

[F]orbidden relationships [...] are blocked by law and custom even as they are desired by individuals. Drama is about the I-want-but-can’t/shouldn’t-have; or about the I-have-but-will-pay-for, which amounts to the same thing. If forbidden relationships are consummated in fact (as they are) the social order is threatened (as it so often is). When the social order is threatened, even in wishes and fantasies, a public performance is called for. [...] But in every case what must be performed are the forbidden acts which are thereby both released and contained (189).

The relationships that Schechner discusses here can be extended to include all behavior that is condemned or forbidden by society, the behavior which Schechner terms the “I-want-but-can’t/shouldn’t-have; or [...] the I-have-but-will-pay-for.” This behavior which falls outside of social norms of comportment would pose a threat to social standards should the behavior be practiced. However, the practicing of the behavior as a performance serves a different purpose, as the performance of the forbidden act both “release[s] and contain[s]” the behavior; the enactment of
forbidden behavior releases the desire of the audience to enact this behavior outside of the
context of performance while simultaneously containing the behavior within a realm of
performance, thus reaffirming the injurious nature of the act. Yet, the function of performance as
“making fun” must be taken into account, as this invocation of mockery suggests a subversion of
the forbidden behavior to happen concomitantly with the release and containment.

This simultaneous subversion of the forbidden act relates directly to the third and final
element of performance which I will discuss, that is, performance as a form of play. For a
definition of play, Schechner turns to Johan Huizinga’s 1955 work *Homo Ludens* which defines
play as follows:

A free activity standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not
serious,” but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an
activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It
proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed
rules of social groupings that tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to
stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means (13).

Huizinga thus draws on the duality of play, noting how it both stands “outside ‘ordinary’ life”
while “at the same time absorb[s] the player.” Play then is both recognized as existing in a space
wholly separate from the rest of society while also creating an internal structure that is
convincing in and of itself. While this definition is useful in articulating this function of play in
a cultural context it is also important to note the areas in which this definition of play is perhaps
limiting and incomplete. While Huizinga terms play “free,” Caroline Loizos writes that “[o]ne
of play’s immediately noticeable characteristics is that it is behavior that borrows or adopts
patterns that appear in other contexts where they achieve immediate and obvious ends” (53, qtd.
in Schechner). According to this definition, play cannot be free in that the behavior depicted in
play, however this behavior is distorted or corrupted, is behavior that originates from a certain cultural context. This is where the manner in which performance “makes fun” originates: in order for a play behavior to be making fun of something, that play behavior must originate from a “true” behavior, a behavior found in a particular setting or context that exists outside of the performance. If play is not free, then we also must take issue with Huizinga’s claim that “[i]t is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it.” On the contrary, play’s profit can be located in its cultural value as a tool which both superficially conforms to societal standards of comportment while simultaneously “making fun” of and subverting these very standards. Huizinga rejects all notions of function in regards to play, yet function is an intrinsic element in the analysis of the role of play in a given cultural context.

Play is inherent to performance, and it is only with the understanding of play that Schechner even attempts a definition of performance, writing, “A tentative definition of performance may be: Ritualized behavior conditioned/permeated by play” (52). Performance cannot be separated from play as play is the process by which forbidden behavior is rearticulated. In play, the behavior that is enacted is behavior that originates in a particular cultural context, and the “playing” of that behavior is what both releases and contains, as the very act of playing subverts the structure from which the behavior originated. Schechner draws upon the manner in which play is an act of restructuring, writing, “[p]lay is improvisational imposition of order, the making of order out of disorder” (56). Play is not free in the sense that it exists outside of social constraints of comportment. Instead, it invokes those exact constraints and restructures them, imposing a new “order” within the world of the performance. This restructuring of social behavioral order will be evidenced in the manner in which Don Quijote’s madness is condemned
and considered harmful, while the madness performed by other characters throughout the novel is considered innocuous precisely because it is play.

In his more recent work entitled *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance*, Schechner deconstructs the function of play in society by delineating certain aspects of play that are unique to a Western context. Two of these aspects with particular relevance to *Don Quijote* are play as “framed off as not really real” and play as “temporary” (35). These two attributes highlight the manner in which play is distinct from traditional interaction in a social context as the duality of play discussed above allows play to occupy a space both within this social context—through the performance of accepted hierarchies—and outside of it—through the undermining and rearticulation of those very hierarchies. In defining play as framed off as not real and as temporary, Schechner creates a deliberate distinction between the permanence of traditional interaction and action within society and the ephemerality of play—play can only exist within a site of performance. Play is dangerous in its reordering of hierarchies and subversion of norms of comportment, but it is simultaneously innocuous in its impermanence. By its very structure, play must eventually come to an end.

Schechner, however, cautions against understanding play as “fun-and-games” (though this is an aspect of many engagements with play) (193). Instead, Schechner notes the danger inherent to some play by creating a distinction between play (as discussed above) and dark play. Dark play can be distinguished from other forms of play in four important ways. The first distinction is that dark play can be unconscious playing, meaning “it can be playing in the dark when some or even all of the players don’t know they are playing” (36). The second distinction Schechner notes is that dark play is characterized by the coexistence of contradictory realities
which are constantly at risk of canceling one another out (36). This risk of destruction of reality feeds into the third distinction which states that dark play “subverts order, dissolves frames, breaks its own rules, so that the playing itself is in danger of being destroyed” (36). And lastly, these three characteristics of dark play come together to inform the last distinction which is that dark play is dangerous. As Schechner notes, “[Dark] play is dangerous and […] the perils of playing are often masked or disguised by saying that play is ‘fun,’ ‘voluntary,’ a ‘leisure activity,’ or ‘ephemeral’—when in fact the fun of playing, where there is fun, is in playing with fire, going in over one’s head, inverting accepted procedures and hierarchies” (26). The very manner by which play both releases and contains, thereby “making order out of disorder,” is the manner through which play also “play[s] with fire”; the danger that Schechner locates in play comes from its ability to enact and rearticulate forbidden behavior which thus functions to “[invert] accepted procedures and hierarchies.” Play is dangerous in its restructuring and questioning of a given social order, which is only possible through the superficial conformation to “accepted procedures and hierarchies” that in turn functions to subvert these very social patterns. But the danger goes one step further. Dark play in particular is dangerous because not only does it subvert accepted hierarchies but it does so potentially unconsciously and in doing so, risks the destruction of either the play world or the world of reality. When play becomes dark, the boundaries between real and not-real are blurred and dissolved, putting reality itself in danger of being destroyed. In dark play, then, the aspects of play being “framed off as not really real” and “temporary” no longer hold true—instead, the play is dissolved into reality so that they can no longer be cleanly separated, thus risking that the play itself will become a permanent feature of
reality. This Schechner terms “unfinishability,” suggesting that dark play’s danger lies in the very potential that it will never end, that the play will continue indefinitely.

If Schechner’s performance theories were retroactively applied to Cervantes’s seventeenth century novel, where would dark play be located? This paper will use this twentieth century theory to better understand and interpret the behavior and actions of characters within Don Quijote. In taking from Schechner’s interpretations, the forbidden behavior which is enacted through performance can be understood to be madness. But it must be noted that there are varieties of madness: Don Quijote’s madness which is not a performance but rather reality, and the “madness” of the many other characters in the narrative such as the priest, barber, niece, housekeeper, duke, and duchess, all of whom participate in Don Quijote’s madness by helping to construct delusions and encourage fantasies. However, this latter grouping of characters are represented as not actually being mad but rather as performing madness, as temporarily and momentarily playing insanity for a particular purpose which is often entertainment. Thus, if these characters are interpreted as putting on a performance of madness, it can be understood how this enactment of madness is accepted by society while Don Quijote is condemned and ridiculed for his madness. By performing madness, the characters are transforming the forbidden behavior by making fun of it; they simultaneously release and contain madness by accepting its existence only within the sphere of performance, a sphere which ensures temporariness and closure. Unlike Don Quijote’s madness, the other characters’ madness does not exist in reality but rather only in the site of the performance.

However, this play that the other characters create and engage in becomes dangerous and reflects the characteristics delineated in Schechner’s descriptions of dark play. In assisting in the
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construction of delusion and participating in Don Quijote’s madness, the other characters of the novel play in such a way that it requires the coexistence of opposing realities—in order for their play world to exist, Don Quijote’s fantasy world must also exist. The play destabilizes the boundaries between madness and sanity as the players move seamlessly between their creation and reality, and in doing so blur distinctions between the two. Thus, in dissolving the borders which frame off the play world as not real, the players put their very sanity at risk. The two opposing worlds cannot coexist permanently, potentially resulting in the destruction of their reality. The narrative must end with Don Quijote regaining sanity so as to reestablish the order of performance and reality, and ensure that the play is cancelled out and reality remains. However, the validity of Don Quijote’s reversion back into sanity is itself destabilized. Cervantes disallows narrative closure by suggesting that Don Quijote’s sanity is a new form of madness, suggesting that the play never ends, that it is “unfinishable”. Reality can no longer exist without play and the play will never be completed because in its creation it has dissolved the distinction between itself and reality.

Playing Reality: An Episodic Analysis of Don Quijote

This blurring of play and reality and the subsequent dissolution of the border between sanity and madness can be seen throughout the narrative as Cervantes portrays different characters falling in and out of madness as they both trick Don Quijote through their creation of fantasy and fall into the very traps they set. For the purposes of this paper, four episodes have been selected as representative of this coexistence of play and reality. However it must be noted that these episodes are not discrete entities; the following scenes which depict sanity slipping
into madness are not detachable from the rest of the novel, rather they are part of the larger quixotic narrative which creates the performance of the story. These episodes in particular have been selected as they demonstrate the increasing ambiguity between play and reality throughout the novel. In the first episode selected, the characters merely participate in Don Quijote’s madness, while by the fourth and final episode, not only do they participate, but they knowingly construct fantasy and then themselves become convinced of the truth of that fantasy. The episodes posit a chronological progression of what will be termed quixotic play which eventually results in the dissolution of play and reality into one single entity.

**Episode One: Book Burning and Wise Enchanters**

One of the first episodes which enacts this slippage into madness comes after Don Quijote’s first sally when the priest, barber, housekeeper, and niece attempt to cure him of his madness by destroying the impetus for his loss of reason: his books of chivalry. The destruction takes the form of a book-burning in which the aforementioned characters act as the arbiters of justice at an inquisitorial hearing, saving the innocent books and condemning the guilty to the flames. This episode is one of the first that juxtaposes Don Quijote’s “mad” behavior with the behavior of others, establishing Don Quijote’s actions and mental state as socially transgressive. Cervantes depicts the other characters as recognizing the insanity of Don Quijote’s actions, as the priest says, “Now I know, and it’s as true as the death I owe God, that those accursed books of chivalry he’s always reading have driven him crazy” (I. 5. 43). By portraying the priest as recognizing Don Quijote as “crazy,” Cervantes establishes a distinction between the behavior of the knight and the rest of his community: Don Quijote’s behavior is crazy and thus transgresses social norms of comportment while the others are sane and enact socially accepted behaviors.
Using Schechner’s definitions, this “craz[iness]” on the part of the knight represents a “forbidden relationship [...] [that is] blocked by law and custom” (189). His madness is forbidden—transgressive—and so must be contained by society.

This containment is attempted physically as his friends and relatives intend to sequester him within his home, but it is also enacted through a simulation of madness, a willful participation in the delusions of the mad knight as a means of “releas[ing] and contain[ing]” his forbidden behavior (Schechner, 189). These sane characters intentionally participate in Don Quijote’s madness, both by indulging his delusions and aiding in the construction of his fantasy. For instance, as an explanation to Don Quijote regarding the disappearance of his books of chivalry, the friends decide to use the knight’s fantasy as reasoning. Cervantes writes, “[T]hey would say that an enchanter had taken the books away, along with the room and everything in it” (I. 7. 54). Cervantes depicts the sane characters as momentarily using madness as a means to an end—they play along with the knight’s fantasies in order to absolve themselves of guilt while simultaneously attempting to put an end to Don Quijote’s adventures. In doing so, the sane characters themselves perform madness. The purpose of such play can be understood through the efficacy-entertainment dyad discussed earlier, as the performance of madness both serves to contain the madness within a space of performance and dissuade Don Quijote from continuing his real madness, while also providing entertainment for the players through the mockery of the knight. Thus, the priest and the barber attributing the disappearance of the books to the work of a wicked enchanter is ostensibly different from Don Quijote’s belief in such an explanation since the priest and the barber are performing madness whereas Don Quijote is mad. Performance then is defined as strictly framed off from reality as “not really real” and “temporary” (“Playing”,
35), and therefore does not pose the same danger to social norms as does the enactment of the same forbidden behavior within a context of reality.

Cervantes, however, shows this performance of madness to go one step further, as the performance seems to turn into dark play. Rather than simply participating in the knight’s delusions, the players are shown to slip slightly into the delusions themselves, blurring the boundary between their sanity/performance of madness and his madness. Cervantes creates this slippage between performance and reality by portraying the players as beginning to use the logic of their play delusion to explain occurrences in reality. For example, the housekeeper says, “Take this, Señor Licentiate, and sprinkle this room, so that no enchanter, of the many in these books, can put a spell on us as punishment for wanting to drive them off the face of the earth” (I. 6. 45). Here, the housekeeper uses Don Quijote’s belief in enchanters as a reason to take precautions in the burning of the books. However, unlike the priest and the barber’s conjuring of enchanters as a means to trick Don Quijote, the housekeeper’s concern seems to be real; Cervantes’s language suggests that this is not part of the performance but rather that the housekeeper is actually afraid of an enchanter coming out of one of the condemned books. Madness is no longer contained within the sphere of performance since the housekeeper is using logic from the play of madness as reasoning for behavior in reality. This slippage between madness and sanity, between performance and reality, can be understood as dark play which, as referenced earlier, “subverts order, dissolves frames, breaks its own rules, so that the playing itself is in danger of being destroyed” (“Playing”, 36). The borders which segregated the performance off from reality have been compromised so that elements of the fantasy world seep into the real world. Not only has play become part of reality but madness has been introduced
into sane reasoning. The play constructed by the knight’s friends and family is thus shown to be dangerous as in creating this performance, the players have risked their very sanity.

**Episode Two: An Enchanted Inn**

As the narrative continues, the performative aspect of the story becomes more apparent and more characters become implicated in the play. Specifically, the inn in which the characters find themselves after the Sierra Morena adventure becomes a space of transformative play. Stephen Jaeger in his book *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* asserts that this inn “becomes an enchanted realm” in which characters are transformed via performance (211). The inn sees the reunion of lovers, friends, and family, including Cardenio, Luscinda, Dorotea, Don Fernando, the Captive, and Zoraida, all of whom become implicated in the play of madness. Jaeger notes, “The works of the imagination performed in the inn (Maritornes transformed into a princess; wineskins into giants) are answered by moves from fantasy to reality (Princess Micomicoma becomes Dorotea; her persecutor, the giant Pandafilando of the Squinting Eye becomes Don Fernando)” (211). Here Jaeger highlights a move from “fantasy to reality” that is the result of the move away from play. But before this reversion to reality can take place a performance must occur, a performance which I will argue complicates Jaeger’s unidirectional movement from “fantasy to reality”.

The episode of the inn is one of the first scenes in which Cervantes starts to explicitly highlight the playing of the other characters using the language of performance and play. In this episode, not only do the characters engage in Don Quijote’s madness with the hopes of convincing him to return home (much like in the book burning episode), but they do so by explicitly contriving a fictional history that once again serves the dual purpose of the efficacy-
entertainment dyad. However, this construction of a history differs from the play in the book burning episode as Cervantes portrays the characters in the inn as being explicitly aware of the performative aspect of their creation. Specifically, Cervantes suggests that the players begin to use the language of performance to describe their actions: “Dorotea replied that she could play the afflicted damsel better than the barber, and, what is more, she had with her the clothes to play the part naturally” (I. 29. 241). The participation in Don Quijote’s madness is no longer simply an extension of his preexisting madness (i.e. using the explanation of enchanters to explain the disappearance of books). Instead, the participation has become creation; the characters are now creating stories and fantasies that move beyond the knight’s own fantasy to contrive a fictional world of their own construction. And such world building is recognized by the characters as taking place through performance, as Dorotea acknowledges that she is “play[ing]” a “part”. The performance is no longer simply implicit in their behavior but rather it is designed. Their behavior is intentionally theatrical and thus fulfills the opposite of the move from “fantasy to reality” described by Jaeger.

As the players get absorbed in their performative creation, however, Cervantes highlights the ironic hierarchization of madness in which the players’ madness is absolved of harm whereas Don Quijote’s madness is condemned. Specifically, Cervantes suggests that the players fight fantasy with fantasy. For example, Don Fernando says, “I want Dorotea to go on with the fiction; this good gentleman’s village is probably not very far from here, and I would be happy if a cure could be found for him” (I. 37. 323). Don Fernando explicitly addresses the fictiveness of the story they have presented to Don Quijote as truth, yet he simultaneously suggests that this fiction is wholly dissimilar to the fiction that governs Don Quijote’s behavior—their fantasy is
innocuous whereas Don Quijote must be “cure[d]” of his. This hierarchization of fiction can be understood through Schechner’s theories which suggest an intrinsic difference between the enactment of forbidden behavior in performance and in reality, the former of which is temporary and “not real,” and therefore harmless.

Thus the characters surrounding Don Quijote are playing and in doing so not only participate in his madness but create a fantasy of their own, a fantasy which is ostensibly harmless because it does not permeate reality. Erich Auerbach in his work *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* describes the phenomenological transformation of reality into fantasy, writing, “Such metamorphoses make reality become a perpetual stage without ever ceasing to be reality” (351). Performance and reality coexist but only because reality is left unchanged, because the performance must end and reality will continue. However, this explicit dichotomy between reality and performance present in Auerbach’s previous claim as well as in Jaeger’s aforementioned assertion that “works of the imagination performed in the inn […] are answered by moves from fantasy to reality” is over simplified. In fact, Cervantes complicates this dichotomy and instead suggests an ambiguity between the two distinct realms, thereby making Jaeger’s move from “fantasy to reality” incomplete at best.

This ambiguity can be seen in the inn episode regarding the helmet of Mambrino and the packsaddle. During this adventure, Don Quijote’s delusion regarding the helmet of Mambrino collides with reality when he is confronted with the owner of the helmet which is actually a barber’s basin. However, rather than setting Don Quijote straight as to the truth of the basin (and the packsaddle which Don Quijote sees as a horse’s harness), the others in the inn instead attempt to convince the owner of the basin of the truth of Don Quijote’s delusion. Don Fernando
declares, “The fact is, my good man, that I am weary of hearing so many opinions, because I see that no one whom I ask does not tell me that it is nonsense to say this is a donkey’s packsaddle and not the harness of a horse, even a thoroughbred, and so, you will have to be patient because despite you and your donkey, this is a harness and not a packsaddle” (I. 45. 393). Don Fernando, a sane character, has become so engrossed in his play of madness that he attempts to convince others of the truth of the fantasy which he knowingly created. The distinction between his reality of sanity and his performance of madness begins to be obscured as his performance permeates the boundary into reality. This blurring of the borders can be seen in the reactions of the characters who are unaware of the presence of play: “For those who were aware of Don Quijote’s madness, all of this was cause for a good deal of laughter, but for those who were not, it seemed the greatest lunacy in the world” (I. 45. 393). To the characters who do not know the distinction between the madness exhibited by Don Quijote and the madness exhibited by the players, the two madnesses appear identical. In this sense, Cervantes suggests a slippage between the ostensibly disparate behaviors, insomuch that from an outside perspective there is no perceivable distinction. The players’ play has become dark; they have jeopardized the “truth” of reality and compromised the hierarchy of portrayals of madness, risking their identification as sane members of society. Both Auerbach and Jaeger in claiming a continuation and solidification of reality have obscured this slippage into ambiguity. As Auerbach claimed, these transformations enacted through the creation of fantasy have caused reality to become a “perpetual stage,” but, contrary to the critic’s argument, this new reality can no longer be recognized as wholly dissimilar from the fantasy world of the play.
In her article “Modernity, Madness, Disenchantment: Don Quixote’s Hunger,” Rebecca Gould discusses the significance of the episode involving the helmet of Mambrino in relation to historical scientific developments of the seventeenth century. She notes the “demarcation between the modern and the premodern,” writing:

Suddenly, within Don Quixote’s newly historicizing and historicized horizons, a system of unprecedented scope and power posited inner contradiction as the negation of validity; a new science argued against the collaboration of the material with the ideal. Mambrino’s helmet could either be an element in a soldier’s armory or a barber’s basin; to lay claim to both realities would mean violating the law of non-contradiction. When the either/or of proto-positivist science entered literary history (ultimately resulting in the aesthetic we call “realism”), Don Quixote had to choose between the empirically real and the imaginatively possible (42).

In recognizing the guiding “law of non-contradiction,” Gould can be taken in tandem with Schechner and his theory of dark play which also suggests an impossibility of the coexistence of contradictory realities. Schechner proposes that such a balancing act eventually results in the destruction of one reality; Gould, too, claims that the helmet can be either an “element in a soldier’s armory or a barber’s basin” but it cannot be both. Thus, both theorists posit that one reality must disintegrate in the face of the other—Don Quijote’s madness cannot coexist with the sanity of the other characters because they are contradictory. But rather than Don Quijote being pulled into the reality of the sane, as would be the assumed result from the professed intentions of the other characters, it is the ostensibly sane characters who are pulled into the fantasy of Don Quijote’s world. Mambrino’s helmet becomes, for all intents and purposes, “an element in a soldier’s armory” because even the sane characters profess this as the truth. One reality has been destroyed but it has been the reality of the supposedly sane world.

**Episode Three: The Mad Palace and The Wise Governor**
One of the most extensive and pertinent examples of the increasing ambiguity between play and reality occurs in the episodes regarding the duke and duchess. From the very beginning of this episode, Cervantes establishes that even before they meet Don Quijote, the duke and duchess are aware of his madness as they have read the first part of the novel. Cervantes writes:

[T]he two of them, because they had read the first part of this history and consequently had learned of Don Quixote’s absurd turn of mind, waited for him with great pleasure and a desire to know him, intending to follow that turn of mind and acquiesce to everything he said, and, for as long as he stayed with them, treat him like a knight errant with all the customary ceremonies found in the books of chivalry, which they had read and of which they were very fond (II. 30. 655).

In this passage which introduces the events that will occur over the next few hundred pages at the ducal palace, Cervantes not only establishes the pre-existing knowledge of the two regarding Don Quijote’s “turn of mind,” but also points to the play that will ensue as the duke and duchess will “follow that turn of mind and acquiesce to everything he said.” Cervantes also juxtaposes the “absurd[ity]” with which the two regard Don Quijote’s madness with their simultaneous desire to “treat him like a knight errant.” Fully aware of the knight’s madness, the duke and duchess will intentionally participate in crafting fantasies and playing along with his delusions. And Cervantes asserts that they will engage in such behavior “with great pleasure.” Thus, their behavior can be understood through Schechner’s efficacy-entertainment dyad; the duke and duchess play along with Don Quijote’s madness for fun—as a means to entertain themselves and others.

The duke and duchess’s desire for entertainment and their resulting performance of madness to mirror Don Quijote’s goes so far as to convince Don Quijote of his knight errantry. Cervantes suggests that this experience at the ducal palace is the first time that Don Quijote’s
fantasies are presented back to him as reality: “[T]his was the first day he really knew and believed he was a true knight errant and not a fantastic one, for he saw himself treated in the same manner in which, he had read, knights were treated in past ages” (II. 31. 658). The performance of the duke and duchess is so convincing that it is even “true[r]” for Don Quijote than his own fantasies have been, because this is the first time that his behavior is mirrored and reflected in the behavior of others; this is the first time that he does not have to convince himself of the reality of his delusions because reality is confirming those very delusions. The play presented in the palace is so convincing that the play becomes almost invisible.

Cervantes highlights this departure from reality by contrasting the behavior of the duke and duchess who both claim sanity with the figure of the ecclesiastic who questions such a claim. Cervantes presents the ecclesiastic as a tether to reality, as one of the only characters who not only vehemently rejects being implicated in the play of madness but also questions the sanity of those who do engage in such behavior. In speaking to the duke after hearing him play along and encourage the knight’s fantasies, the ecclesiastic says, “Your Excellency, Señor, must give an accounting to Our Lord for what this good man does. I imagine that this Don Quijote, or Don Halfwit, or whatever his name is, is not so great a fool as Your Excellency wants him to be when you provide him with opportunities to continue his absurdities and nonsense” (II. 32. 664). Here, the ecclesiastic reprimands the duke and duchess for their encouragement of Don Quijote’s madness, but he also points to the extent of their participation in his madness which he suggests has caused Don Quijote to be a greater “fool” because he has been provided with “opportunities to continue his absurdities and nonsense.” This condemnation of their behavior goes further, however, as the ecclesiastic accuses the duke and duchess of being victims of their own play,
saying, “By the habit I wear, I must say that Your Excellency is as much a simpleton as these sinners. Consider that of course they must be mad, since the sane applaud their madness!” (II. 32. 667). Cervantes thus portrays the ecclesiastic as drawing a clear distinction between himself who refuses to encourage and participate in this constructed fantasy world with the duke and duchess who not only “applaud” mad behavior but themselves choose to enact it, rendering themselves nothing more than “simpletons”.

In his essay “On the Place of Madness, Deviance, and Eccentricity in *Don Quijote,*” David A. Boruchoff provides an important historical reading of the difference between a madman and a simpleton. He writes that the insane were divided into two classes: “the *mente capti,* deemed incapable of reason due to imbecility, and the *furiosi,* who may evince memory, lucidity, and understanding, but whose judgment is compromised by their restlessness or anger” (9). He goes on to note that these two classes are commonly known as “idiots” and “lunatics” but that only the latter was “subject to judicial action” (9). Don Quijote, it would seem, would fall under the class of lunatic; he is a man who’s “judgment is compromised by […] restlessness” brought on from reading too many books, and his behavior is censured and restricted both legally and socially. However, the ecclesiastic suggests that the duke and duchess also fall into a class of the “insane,” but rather than “lunatics” they are “idiots.” By accusing the two of being simpletons, the ecclesiastic incorporates them into a class of people who are “incapable of reason due to imbecility.” The irony here is astounding; the duke and duchess (as well as the many other characters who have judged and humiliated Don Quijote for his madness while simultaneously choosing to participate in it themselves) in their attempt to entertain themselves by exploiting Don Quijote’s loss of reason, have themselves lost their reason by
going to such great lengths to create a fantasy world. They have become the victims of their own play, and though their class of insanity may not be “subject to judicial action” as Boruchoff suggests, it remains apparent that they have staked their very sanity on the continuation of the performance of madness. By the ecclesiastic’s accusation and Boruchoff’s definition, they have become idiots, and have thereby destabilized their classification as sane individuals through their play.

As the episode at the ducal palace continues, the idiocy of the duke and duchess and the various players is made all the more apparent through the consistent clash between distinct performances. Specifically, the many players (which includes the staff and guests of the palace) become the victims of each other’s play as each performance is dictated by a specific set of rules that not all players are made aware of. In this way, there are no distinct boundaries between performance and reality because each character is constructing their own individual play, causing supposedly sane characters to be implicated and targeted in the constructed fantasy of others. The duke, for example, is forced to become the target of his own play during the beard-washing episode. In this scene, maidens who work in the palace construct a performance in which they wash Don Quijote’s beard after a meal, convincing the knight that “in this land it must be the custom to wash one’s beard rather than one’s hands” (II. 32. 669). However, Cervantes emphasizes the slippage between this play constructed for Don Quijote and reality by highlighting the duke and duchess’s lack of knowledge about the performance, writing, “The duke and duchess, who knew nothing about this, waited to see how so extraordinary a washing would end” (II. 32. 669). The maidens washing Don Quijote’s beard have constructed a performance independent of that of the duke and duchess which is thus dictated by a different set
of rules. In his text *Lector Ludens: The Representation of Games and Play in Cervantes*, Michael Scham describes this collision between distinct performances by suggesting that “the ducal pair loses control of their games due to unplanned incursions from ‘reality’” (177). Through these “incursions from reality,” Cervantes demonstrates that performances with distinct rules cannot coexist, and instead the players who do not construct the performance must become implicated in the madness. The duke in particular is forced into becoming the target of play, just as Don Quijote is, so as to not alert the knight to the falsity of the situation. Cervantes writes, “The girl, who was shrewd and diligent, approached and placed the basin beneath the duke’s beard as she had with Don Quijote, and they quickly washed and soaped him thoroughly, and having wiped and dried him, they curtsied and left” (II. 32. 669). Just as Don Quijote is mocked for his madness in believing such a ridiculous behavior to be a custom of high honor, the duke is equally shown to be a fool as he not only participates in the performance of madness but does so even while knowing that it is mad. But this participation is necessary in order to maintain the illusion of the veracity of the world that has been constructed for the knight errant. The maidens’ play has equally targeted Don Quijote and the duke, thereby highlighting the increasing indistinguishability between sanity and madness. It is also important to note the significance of the beard as the subject of entertainment and madness. Barbara Fuchs in her book *Passing for Spain: Cervantes and the Fictions of Identity*, writes that “[b]eards, of course, have traditionally been associated with virility and honor and are a basic mark of gender difference” (23). The comical act of soaping, scrubbing, wringing, and drying a beard at a meal quite clearly undermines the “virility and honor” of the man being washed. Throughout the novel, Don Quijote’s honor and masculinity is questioned as a result of the various clashes between fantasy
and reality, but the beard-washing episode also undermines the honor and masculinity of the duke. Thus, his decision to be subjected to humiliation rather than risk Don Quijote discovering their play highlights the lunacy of his actions—in his desire to create a believable fantasy world to mock Don Quijote and entertain himself, the duke has himself become absorbed into the fantasy.

This absorption into their own constructed world is further exemplified through the astonishment that the duke and duchess experience as a result of their play of madness. Throughout the episode (and increasingly so as the players fall deeper into the fantasy world), Cervantes portrays the players responsible for creating the fictional performance as being stunned or astonished by the results of the play. Cervantes suggests that this wonderment is not in fact part of the performance—it is not used as a tool to convince the knight of the veracity of the play—but rather is a true reaction to the absurdity of the events that occur from their own making. The wonder of the duke and duchess is often paired with that of Don Quijote, creating a parallel between the madness of the knight and the progressive loss of sanity of the other characters: “The duke was stunned, the duchess was astounded, Don Quijote was astonished, Sancho Panza trembled, and even those who knew the cause were frightened” (II. 34. 687). Here, the duke and duchess, the two “sane” characters in the group, are depicted as experiencing the same wonder as Don Quijote and Sancho, and Cervantes suggests that even the players aware of the play are “frightened.” Caroline Walker Bynum in her article “Wonder” provides important insight into the historical and social significance of wonder, specifically discussing what can cause wonder. She points to Gervais of Tilbury, writing, “He asserts that only facts can induce wonder: although you will wonder only at what you cannot explain, you cannot be amazed by
what you don’t believe” (13). In the aforementioned passage, the duke, duchess, and Don Quijote are all described in terms of wonderment (“stunned,” “astounded,” and “astonished”) and it is surprisingly only Sancho who is not described as experiencing such an emotional reaction, instead only described physically through his “trembl[ing].” From Bynum’s account of Gervais of Tilbury’s assertion, it can be surmised that the three characters described in terms of wonder experience such astonishment not only because what occurred they “cannot explain,” but because they “believe” in the truth of the event. The event in question is a performance which the duke and duchess devised, a play involving devils and demons. Yet these two players have tricked themselves; they are “stunned” and “astounded” by the sights and sounds of the performance and since “you cannot be amazed by what you don’t believe” it is apparent that they believe in the truth of the fantasy they have constructed. Cervantes does not write that the pair *seems to be* astonished but that they *are*—their wonder is depicted as a legitimate reaction to inexplicable events, events which they ironically created.

Cervantes further highlights the slippage between the fantasy world and reality through portrayals of wonder by at times suggesting an ambiguity to the truth of the duke and duchess’s reactions. The descriptions of the wonderment of the pair vacillate between ostensibly sincere as the previous example illustrates and potentially performed as in the following instance. During the adventure of Clavileño, the entire group at the palace pretends to fall into a faint, and Cervantes describes the awaking from the feigned swoon, writing, “The duke, very slowly, as if waking from a deep sleep, regained consciousness, and in the same fashion so did the duchess and all those who had fallen in the garden, showing signs of so much wonder and astonishment, one could almost believe that what they knew so well how to feign as a joke had really
happened” (II. 41. 725). Not only does the ambiguity of this passage contrast with the certainty of the previous passage, but the very language of the sentence is contradictory in nature. Cervantes begins the description with the phrase “as if,” highlighting the performative nature of the duke’s behavior which is constructed to imitate a true behavior. In writing “as if waking from a deep sleep,” Cervantes situates the duke firmly on the side of sanity, as a player who recognizes the behavior as part of a performance and therefore not real. This phrase, however, is immediately contrasted with the following action of “regain[ing] consciousness.” Unlike the previous clause, the description “regained consciousness” is not phrased in the hypothetical or performative; it is a concrete action that implies that the duke was previously unconscious and in this moment has regained lucidity. While the first part of the sentence suggests that his unconsciousness is a performance, what immediately follows suggests the opposite. In this way, Cervantes shrouds the duke’s behavior in ambiguity—it is at once a performance and a true behavior, and thus his madness can be simultaneously interpreted as play and reality. This ambiguity is further exemplified in the continuing description as Cervantes writes that they “show[ed] signs of so much wonder and astonishment, one could almost believe that what they knew so well how to feign as a joke had really happened.” The performance of wonder is so convincing that Cervantes suggests it would be possible to interpret the behavior as sincere, that it could appear as though the duke, duchess, and other players had all experienced the adventure of Clavileño as reality. Bynum would perhaps suggest that this interpretation is not a choice but rather a necessity since the very experience of wonder, according to Gervais of Tilbury, requires belief in the event. The players could only be astonished by Clavileño if they truly believed it to be reality. Unless of course the astonishment itself is part of the performance. At this point of
irresolution, of slipperiness and confusion in the text, then, is where the border between sanity and madness gets muddled. Cervantes disallows a concrete understanding of the duke and duchess as either sane or mad, portraying them simultaneously as both the creators of performance and the unknowing targets of that very play.

In thinking about this passage, it is useful to turn to the original Spanish which elicits a slightly different meaning. The same passage reads: “El duque, poco a poco, y como quien de un pesado sueño recuerda, fue volviendo en sí, y por el mismo tenor la duquesa y todos los que por el jardín estaban caídos, con tales muestras de maravilla y espanto, que casi se podían dar a entender haberles acontecido de veras lo que tan bien sabían fingir de burlas” (Ed. Murillo, II. 41. 352). Here, a key difference between Grossman’s English translation and Murillo’s Spanish edition is the word “espanto”. According to the Real Academia Española, espanto is defined as “terror, asombro, consternación” (RAE). Grossman’s translation of “astonishment,” then, draws upon the second definition, “asombro,” which implies an experience of wonder as stated above. However, the alternate definitions imply quite distinct meanings: “terror” and “consternación” (terror and dismay/consternation) suggest a horror or fear in the reactions of the duke and duchess. Rather than simply being astonished, the duke and the duchess express legitimate fright at the play that they have created, an indication of the depth of their immersion into their own performance and a reflection of the danger inherent in dark play. Not only are they astonished by their play which, according to Bynum, reflects a belief in the truth of the performance, but they are also scared of it, demonstrating the riskiness of engaging in dark play which necessitates the erasure of social boundaries, and in this case, a destabilization of sanity.
However, the duke and duchess are not the only “sane” characters who are implicated in their play; Cervantes suggests that the priest, barber, and Sansón Carrasco also become the targets of the performance, highlighting the resulting clash between plays which are all governed by distinct sets of rules. While the priest and barber are the main players in the first half of the novel, the text transitions in the second portion as the duke and duchess take on a principal role of creators of fantasy. During Sancho’s governorship, however, Cervantes depicts these two performances as coming into contact with one another, and portrays such contact as resulting in confusion and further muddling of fantasy and reality. After Sancho is awarded an ínsula, an emissary from the duke and duchess is sent to Sancho’s village to bestow gifts upon his wife. The emissary encounters the priest, barber, and bachelor who desire to doubt the truth of Sancho’s governorship but are confronted with the reality of presents and letters which come from the duke and duchess. Cervantes presents this confrontation between what is presented as reality versus fantasy: “Then, Señor, does your grace still affirm that Sancho’s governorship is true, and that there is a duchess in the world who sends his wife presents and writes to her? Because we, although we touched the presents and read the letters, don’t believe it” (II. 50. 789). Reality is no longer straightforward: the duke and duchess have created a fantasy world for Don Quijote and Sancho which includes the presentation of a governorship to Sancho. However, the governorship is real in many senses—Sancho is given a real village to govern and acts with the duties of a real governor. This indistinguishability between that which is fantasy and that which is a real result of the fantasy is what Cervantes depicts in the reaction of the priest above; while he truly believes that the governorship is a hoax, this belief is countered by the physical representation of the governorship in “the presents and […] the letters.” The priest eventually
concludes that he and the others “don’t believe it,” however he can still not dispute the physicality of the rewards of that which he does not believe, confounding any clear distinction between the boundaries of the real and the created.

Sancho’s governorship as a whole represents an adventure which blurs sanity and madness so much so that the reader cannot easily pinpoint where one ends and the other begins. The governorship lies in an ambiguous state of both being part of a fantasy play and being a real reward for Sancho which includes actual responsibilities and duties. Throughout the novel, Sancho’s desire to be a governor is equated with Don Quijote’s desire to be a knight errant—it appears to be something that could only occur in a fantasy world. The duke and duchess, however, turn Sancho’s fantasy into reality by granting him the governorship of the Ínsula Barataria (which is actually a small village):

They gave him to understand that it was called the Ínsula Barataria, either because the village was named Baratario or because he had been given the governorship at so little cost. When they reached the gates, for it was a walled town, the village councilmen came out to receive him; the bells were rung, and all the inhabitants displayed general rejoicing, and with a good deal of pomp they brought him to the largest church to give their thanks to God, and then, in a ridiculous ceremony, they presented him with the keys to the village and accepted him as perpetual governor of the Ínsula Barataria (II. 45. 747).

Even though Sancho’s “island” is actually a village, his governorship appears very real. He is greeted by ringing bells, “general rejoicing,” and a ceremony to officially bestow upon him the “keys to the village.” According to this description, Sancho’s governorship is real in every sense of the word because his authority is “accepted” by the village. It is also imperative to note that the villagers accepting Sancho as their governor are for the most part unaware of the governorship as play since Cervantes mentions “all of the people who were not privy to the
Thus the duke and duchess’s fantasy has been accepted by other sane characters as reality because it has been presented as such. Sanity can no longer be defined as the opposite to the delusional world accepted by the knight and his squire because a whole village of supposedly sane individuals also recognizes that delusion as truth.

The irony of the legitimacy of Sancho’s governorship is furthered when it becomes clear that Sancho is actually a good governor. The governorship has been created to entertain the duke and duchess through the madness of the knight and the simplicity of his squire, yet what was created to “make fun” (as Schechner describes the entertainment function of play) instead demonstrates a wisdom and maturity in Sancho that had not been exhibited previously. Sancho governs with justice and composure, as Cervantes describes, “[T]hose present were astounded, and the man writing down the words, deeds, and movements of Sancho could not determine if he should record him as a fool or a wise man” (II. 45. 750). Again Cervantes describes the event in terms of wonder, describing the villagers present as “astounded” by Sancho’s governing. In her discussion of wonder, Bynum writes, “[M]arveling and astonishment as reactions seem to be triggered most frequently and violently by what Bernard of Clairvaux called admirable mixturae: events or phenomena in which ontological and moral boundaries are crossed, confused, or erased” (21). The marveling exhibited by the villagers appears to be the result of such ontological mixing as the wonder is directly related to the inability to classify Sancho as either “a fool or a wise man.” The intended function of the duke and duchess’s play which was to entertain themselves via the madness or simplemindedness of Sancho is not so easily achieved. Instead of showing Sancho to be an utter fool, which would solidify their position as the opposite and thus reemphasize the firm distinction between their sanity and the other’s madness, they
have created a performance so convincing that it “crosse[s], confuse[s], [and] erase[s]” the ontological boundaries separating foolishness from wisdom.

While it is clear throughout the episode of the duke and duchess that they are playing, Sancho’s role in the production is more ambiguous. Throughout the text, the squire seems to oscillate between recognizing his master’s behavior as mad and seeing the same delusions as reality, disallowing a clear categorization of either mad or sane. However, the moment that Sancho becomes governor, there is a shift in his behavior so much so that his foolishness appears replaced by newfound wisdom and clarity. Scham describes this apparent lucidity, “[His] performance as governor involve[s] an unexpected level of agency on his part, at times suggesting a recognition and mastery of the games staged by the Duke and Duchess” (177). Is Sancho a “master” of play? Is he, according to Boruchoff’s terms, a mente capti, “deemed incapable of reason due to imbecility,” or is he a clever businessman, using Don Quijote and his madness as a means to gain material wealth and power? I would argue that returning to Schechner’s discussion of the function of play could prove particularly useful in this distinction.

As noted earlier, Schechner describes function in terms of the efficacy-entertainment dyad which encompasses a play’s purpose of both producing results and creating, or making, fun. The plays discussed so far created by the duke and duchess or the priest and barber have for the most part exemplified the second half of the dyad, that is, the performances entertain by making fun of Don Quijote. Sancho’s role in the performances differs, however, perhaps because his play embodies the other function—efficacy. In another attempt to distinguish between madmen and simpletons, Anthony J. Close in his article “Sancho Panza: Wise Fool” goes one step further and breaks the category of simpleton into two distinct types: “the ‘natural’ (or ‘innocent’) and the
‘artificial’. The first was the half-wit and the second was the clever buffoon pretending to be one” (344). It is easy to classify Sancho in the first category, as the “natural,” “innocent” “half-wit” since throughout the text, Sancho is ridiculed for his simplemindedness. Close also asserts this categorization and turns to Sancho’s own reasoning as proof, citing the quote, “But by my faith as an honest man, I’ve never said anything bad about any enchanter, and I don’t own enough for anybody to envy me; true, I have some guile in me, and a touch of cunning, but all of it is covered and concealed by the great cloak of my simplicity, which is always natural and never sly” (II. 8. 505). However, Close fails to incorporate in his analysis of the previous passage the context in which Sancho declares his simplicity. This assertion of innocence comes only after Sancho has lied to his master about meeting Dulcinea, an episode in which Sancho demonstrates much “guile” and “cunning.” Thus I contend that Sancho’s claim that his simplicity is “always natural and never sly” is imbued with irony; at this moment in the text, Sancho is very aware of his ability to use his “simplemindedness” to his advantage, or to achieve a particular purpose. Thus, it can be concluded that Sancho’s play functions in a different realm than that of the other characters. He does not engage in Don Quijote’s delusions for his own entertainment, but rather to achieve a particular goal. And I would further contend that this goal is hidden within his claim of innocent simplicity in the portion of his declaration that seems out of place. In describing his honesty, Sancho claims that he “[doesn’t] own enough for anybody to envy [him].” This claim regarding Sancho’s financial standing appears unrelated to his self-designation of “simplicity,” and instead it points to his main motivation throughout the novel—the accumulation of material wealth, specifically in the form of a governorship. Even upon leaving on his first sally with Don Quijote, Sancho is described as riding “on his donkey like a
patriarch [with] a great desire to see himself governor of the insula his master had promised him” (I. 7. 56). Sancho’s inspiration to join the knight on his adventures and thus indulge his delusions is in many ways economical. Sancho’s fluid movement between sanity and madness is tactical as he plays with the purpose of becoming a governor (though this desire is in itself somewhat mad). And so it is not surprising that “[o]nce Sancho [takes] possession of his island and [begins] to administer justice, he assumes a character different from that exhibited thus far in the novel” (Greene, 118). He has achieved the end-purpose of his play and so no longer needs to perform madness.

This diminishment of Sancho into a man purely motivated by material profit is too reductionistic and ignores the strong bond that develops between the squire and his master, but it is useful to think about Sancho’s play as being motivated by efficacy rather than entertainment, as it helps to explain the difference between Sancho’s relationship with madness as compared with the other characters in the novel. While the many other players in the text progressively slide further away from any firm categorization of sanity, Sancho has a moment of sanity during his governorship, perhaps the result of the consummation of the intended purpose of his partnership with the knight. But this sanity is also ambiguous and impermanent, as Cervantes suggests that Sancho continues to exist somewhere in between sanity and madness, between performance and reality, occupying a liminal state which the other characters progress into as their reality slowly morphs into the reality of the performance.

**Episode Four: The Final Transformation**

The lengthy episode at the ducal palace in many ways represents a turning point in the novel. Within the confines of the metaphorical palace walls, the worlds of reality and fantasy are
not discrete entities and instead the palace seems to exist in a state of ambiguity in which play is indistinguishable from truth. However, as Don Quijote and Sancho leave the palace and the influence of the duke and duchess, this ambiguity follows them. Rather than being thrust back into the previous society of the novel which refused to recognize Don Quijote’s world as anything other than delusional, the knight and squire now find themselves in a world that struggles to categorize such delusions as either madness or wisdom. While in the first part of the novel Don Quijote’s madness was apparent even to strangers, Cervantes now suggests that those who are unaware of the specificities of the knight’s delusions are unsure of whether he has actually lost his reason. Describing Don Quijote’s interaction with a pair of strangers, Cervantes writes, “The two gentlemen were exceedingly happy to hear Don Quijote relate the strange events of his history, and they were as amazed by the nonsensical things he had said as by the elegant manner in which he said them. Here they considered him intelligent, and there he seemed to slip into foolishness, and they could not determine where precisely to place him between intelligence and madness” (II. 59. 847). In this passage, it is clear that the two gentlemen are not playing—their “amaze[ment]” at Don Quijote’s reason, which harkens back to Bynum’s discussion of wonder as necessitating realness, is portrayed as absolutely true and not part of a performance. Unlike the many other episodes discussed so far, these two gentlemen do not engage in Don Quijote’s madness as part of a performance, they do not pretend to believe in his fantasies for their own entertainment. Instead, Cervantes suggests that their inability to categorize him within the bounds of either “intelligence or madness” reflects a further inability to distinguish between a play world and the real world. The two gentlemen are not playing and yet they act in the same manner as the many players encountered thus far. In this way, Cervantes
alludes to an increasing pervasiveness of the play world insomuch that even for characters outside of the intentional creation of performance, the boundaries between the two worlds are not distinct, causing madness to increasingly take on the appearance of sanity.

Scham marks this increasing ambiguity of reality through a discussion of the function of humor within the novel. He writes, “Much of the novel’s comedy is generated by exposing the lack of correspondence between names and meanings, and when the names can no longer be substantiated, the reality that reasserts itself is not always reassuring” (176). The play which functions as entertainment, both at the textual level within the story and as entertainment for the reader of the novel, is entertaining precisely because of the recognition of the “lack of correspondence between names and meanings,” meaning the lack of correspondence between reality and the reality presented as truth within the play. Scham, however, gestures to the point at which this entertainment fails, when “the names can no longer be substantiated” and the reality that remains is not “reassuring.” Reality has been so deeply implicated in the construction of play that when the play dissolves, the reality that remains is not the original reality, but a reality tainted by the fantasy of performance. Cervantes in fact suggests that the real world starts to mimic the absurdity of the fantasy world, writing, “And the truth was just as [Don Quijote] had imagined it” (II. 60. 851). As the novel gets closer to ending, Don Quijote is portrayed as getting closer to sanity. His imagination, which used to create absurd and ridiculous scenes far from the truth of reality, is now conveying to him “truth.” But this truth must be questioned: is Don Quijote moving out of his madness and seeing reality for what it is, or is reality starting to take on the appearance of the play? Schechner defines play as necessitating the canceling out of one
of two coexisting realities, and Cervantes seems to suggest that it is the real world that is in jeopardy of being destroyed.

The change that has occurred within the text during the ducal palace episode is further highlighted as Cervantes suggests that even after Don Quijote has left the palace, the duke and duchess continue to attempt to control the play. Cervantes describes the duke desperately attempting to bring the knight and his squire back to the palace, writing that “he sent out many of his servants on foot and on horseback to search roads close to and far from the castle, all the ones he imagined Don Quijote might use to return home, so that either willingly or by force they could bring him back to the castle” (II. 70. 914). The episode at the palace has ended, and yet Cervantes portrays the duke as unwilling or unable to release control of the play. He searches desperately for Don Quijote for no apparent reason other than “the pleasure he derived from matters concerning Sancho and Don Quijote” (II. 70. 914). The duke derives “pleasure,” or entertainment, from creating and participating in the delusions of the knight, however it is this desire for entertainment which causes him to fall so deeply into his own performance that his grasp on reality is loosened. Cervantes portrays the supposed author of this history, Cide Hamete Benengeli, as commenting on this loss of reality: “Cide Hamete goes on to say that in his opinion the deceivers are as mad as the deceived, and that the duke and duchess came very close to seeming like fools since they went to such lengths to deceive two fools” (II. 70. 914). Here again Cervantes ironically casts the supposedly sane characters in the position of fools—the duke and duchess have invested so much in the creation of a fantasy world for Don Quijote that their own world has been obscured in the process. Scham denotes this particular form of play as “play as a mode of existence,” writing that the play “transcends conventional limits of time and space,
with no apparent demarcation from the character’s purposive reality” (131). According to this categorization of the ducal play, the pair have worked so hard at creating a convincing play reality for Don Quijote that they have transcended “conventional limits of time and space” so much so that their own “purposive reality” cannot be fully distinguished from that of the performance. By terming this “play as a mode of existence,” Scham points to the all-consuming nature of this play, a play which extends so far that it seems to have no end.

The play, however, is forced to end. As the novel closes, Cervantes establishes one single possibility for a conclusion by portraying Don Quijote as regaining his sanity and dying. Just as the play is starting to become reality, as it appears to be what Schechner terms “unfinishable,” Cervantes reestablishes a firm boundary between madness and sanity through the knight’s epiphany as to his previous state of madness. This reversion to sanity is depicted through names. Throughout the entirety of the book, the eponymous hero has been identified as nothing other than Don Quijote, his chivalric alias. But upon his deathbed, the knight reveals, “Good news, Señores! I am no longer Don Quijote of La Mancha but Alonso Quijano” (II. 74. 935). Thus, through the transition from Don Quijote to Alonso Quijano, Cervantes gestures to a regaining of sanity and therefore a reordering of reality as wholly dissimilar and separate from play. The man who the reader has known only as the chivalric knight is portrayed as no longer identifying as such, thereby creating a clear distinction between his previous madness and his current sanity.

Yet this reestablishment of play as distinct from reality is shown to be incomplete. The characters who surround Don Quijote/Alonso Quijano on his deathbed are the characters who have attempted for the previous 900 pages to cure him of his madness and reveal to him his true identity. But as Don Quijote becomes Alonso Quijano before their eyes, the culmination of their
lengthy goal, they regard this sanity as a new form of madness: “When the three men heard him say this [that he is now Alonso Quijano], they undoubtedly believed that some new madness had taken hold of him” (II. 74. 935). They have finally achieved what they have been working towards over the course of the entire novel and yet they cannot accept this sanity as the truth. Instead, Cervantes portrays the priest, barber, and Sansón Carrasco as trying to re-convince Don Quijote of the truth of his delusions. Sansón insists, “Now, Señor Don Quijote, you say this now, when we have news of the disenchantment of Señora Dulcinea? […] For God’s sake, be quiet, come to your senses, and tell us no more tales” (II. 74. 936). Not only does Sansón refuse to call Don Quijote/Alonso Quijano by the name that would identify him with the real world and instead refers to him by his knight’s name, but he also attempts to reestablish madness by referring to the previous delusions of the knight as if they were truth, an ironic twist on his previous desire to “cure” Don Quijote of his madness. The inversion between reality and fantasy goes further as Sansón insists that Don Quijote/Alonso Quijote must “come to his senses” meaning that in his current state as Alonso Quijano he is senseless but as Don Quijote he is in control of his senses. His current sanity is considered madness and his previous madness is referred to as sanity, and if sanity is madness then can they be considered distinct entities? Cervantes suggests that they are so intertwined, that play and reality are so intermixed, that distinguishing between the two is not only impossible but it is futile. In the end, even the identity of Alonso Quijano is questioned as a performance as Sansón accuses, “tell us no more tales.” The identity which has been sought after for the entire novel as the truth is now another “tale” to be performed. The truth is yet more play.
Thus Cervantes establishes the danger in the play that has occurred throughout the text: by performing madness so continuously and so convincingly, the sane characters have risked the rules by which their reality governs sanity, destabilizing its definition so that it becomes a hybrid state of sane-madness or mad-sanity. Schechner was right, then, in cautioning against understanding play as simply “fun-and-games” (193). What started out as playing for fun, for entertainment, has become “playing with fire” (“Playing”, 26). The play has become, or perhaps has been all along, dark play, play which “subverts order, dissolves frames, breaks its own rules, so that the playing itself is in danger of being destroyed” (“Playing”, 36). But it is not the play that is destroyed; instead Cervantes suggests that the coexistence of contradictory realities must result, as Schechner does posit, in the destruction of one reality, however it is the reality that was once understood as the truth which is compromised and the fantasy world of the play which remains. The play then is unfinishable. Schechner writes, “The structure of play […] shapes and interrupts the process of playing, imposing end points requiring further starting points. Playing left to itself would go on forever” (“Playing”, 39). An end point has been imposed on the play, that being Don Quijote’s/Alonso Quijano’s reversion back to sanity, however this end point necessitates a new starting point and so the play starts over again, this time with sanity figuring as the condemned behavior being rearticulated. As Schechner describes it, play is a “continuous bending, twisting and looping,” it is a never-ending cycle of performance which can never truly end (39). The play will go on forever.

A Quixotic Legacy: Lost in La Mancha
The play of the characters in the novel is unfinishable, yet is the novel itself unfinishable? As noted above, Cervantes creates a very deliberate, intentional ending which preempts any other attempts at the continuation of the story with the death of the eponymous hero. And in this sense, the story does end. Yet while the narrative itself concludes, the play has continued on for centuries through endless reinterpretations and reimaginings of the text in the form of visual art, film, theater, and novel. Cervantes created an end point in the death of Don Quijote, however this end point has seemed to inspire and require an infinite number of starting points, one of which is the 2002 film *Lost in La Mancha*.

Co-directed by Keith Fulton and Louis Pepe, the documentary traces the director Terry Gilliam through the production and filming of his film *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*. This version of the classic story stars Johnny Depp as the “modern-day advertising executive” Toby Grisoni who travels back to the seventeenth century and is mistaken by Don Quijote (Jean Rochefort) for his squire, Sancho Panza (*Lost in La Mancha*). Fulton and Pepe follow Gilliam throughout the production process as he struggles with investors who back out, tumultuous and unpredictable weather, and a Don Quijote who cannot ride a horse because of health issues. Despite these many inclemencies, however, the documentary is framed as a “making-of” film, a film to be released in advance of the feature film to increase publicity and exposure. As a result of this generic categorization it seems apparent that the feature film, *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*, will, in fact, be produced and released.

However, as the documentary continues and the obstacles Gilliam faces seem more impossible to overcome, it becomes clear that the documentary framed as a “making-of” is truly an “unmaking,” a documentary which traces the production process of a film which will never be
produced. In his article “Quixotic Storytelling, Lost in La Mancha, and the Unmaking of The Man Who Killed Don Quixote,” Sidney Donnell describes this as “[t]he negation of a film genre,” arguing that the unmade film within a film “is a way of interrogating quixotic storytelling’s relation to the many interruptions of its own narrative” (92). Donnell goes on to argue that Lost is truly the first of its kind, unpacking the generic categorization by writing, “[I]n even its broadest theoretical sense, ‘unmaking’ comes to mean ‘deconstruction.’ Indeed, the co-directors of Lost tug at the loose narrative threads of Killed’s demise until they unravel: then, the co-directors reknit them to tell another story” (95). In this sense, Fulton and Pepe create a story that is not the story of Killed nor the story of how Killed was never made, and instead create a new story that blurs generic categories and filmic realities. Specifically, the documentary—a genre which purportedly reveals an unmitigated truth—distorts the reality of the success of the feature film project. As Brigitte Adriaensen notes, “Far from announcing from the beginning that Terry Gilliam’s quixotic fantasies on Don Quixote will fall apart, and will never take form as a real movie, the documentary maintains the illusion that eventually things will turn out well, thus inviting the spectator to share Gilliam’s optimism” (252). Rather than clarifying from the beginning of the documentary that the feature film being studied did not succeed and was never produced, Fulton and Pepe create a performance which obscures this truth from the viewer, instead upholding the fantasy that the film is a “real movie.” This play that Fulton and Pepe engage in intentionally creates ambiguity since it confuses the boundary between the reality of the film’s failure and the performance of its eventual success.

This distortion of reality and fantasy, then, characterizes the generic qualities of an “unmaking” which self-reflexively comments on the impossibility of truth in a documentary
framework by “creating the illusion of an unmitigated line of communication between filmic object and audience” (Donnell, 94). In their respective descriptions of Lost, both Adriaensen and Donnell emphasize the word “illusion,” thereby highlighting the artificiality of the reality produced in Fulton and Pepe’s play which mirrors the illusory nature of the realities created for Don Quijote by the various players throughout the novel. In this way, Fulton and Pepe occupy not only the role of Cervantes, the grand player of the novel, but also that of the duke and duchess, priest and barber, and the many other characters who intentionally create a non-reality framed as reality. Following this logic, Don Quijote’s filmic equivalent is not only Gilliam who often explicitly compares himself to the idealist knight, but it is also the audience, the viewers of the film who are implicated in the play of the directors and as a result can not determine whether or not the film actually exists. Donnell suggests that this implication of the viewer in play is perhaps unconscious on the part of the audience since the film “manipulates the expectations of viewers” but that it also requires a somewhat active suspension of disbelief (97). The audience is aware of the impossibility of the success of the project and yet continues to believe in its potential, reflecting a willful participation in the illusion of the truth presented.

However, this willful participation in conjunction with Fulton and Pepe’s adherence to the delusion results in a reality which is never entirely distinguished from play. Specifically, the viewer is never fully disabused of the notion of the film’s success, and instead is left in an ambiguous state of uncertain reality in which it is not clear where the play ends and reality begins. Towards the end of the film, the viewer hears one of the directors asking a key investor about the current state of the project, to which he responds, “Abandoned” (Lost). He goes on to explain (translated from the French), “There is no concrete project today for anyone to take over.
Maybe it will happen one day. But the rights to the film are owned by the insurance company” (Lost). Following this explanation, different members of the crew offer opinions as to why the film failed, many expressing that the project was “doomed from the start” (Lost). With each testimonial, however, it becomes painstakingly apparent that the project failed, that The Man Who Killed Don Quixote was never completed and suspended indefinitely. Yet, Fulton and Pepe complicate this straightforward interpretation which would establish a clear end point to their play. After the credits role, Fulton and Pepe reintroduce a clip that was shown earlier in the film as a potential trailer for Killed. The clip features three men appearing as giants running towards the camera with the words “Coming Soon” superimposed on top of the image. In this brief clip the viewer’s reality is confronted with a contradictory play reality that is presented as truth. Not only is the only reality available to the viewer that of fantasy—the viewer sees giants and not windmills, thus being forced to view Don Quijote’s madness as reality—but the words “Coming Soon” suggest that the project will eventually be completed and that the movie will be in theaters soon. Donnell writes:

[I]t is disconcerting for the audience to be unexpectedly confronted with written evidence that Gilliam’s film exists and is ‘coming soon.’ Didn’t we just spend ninety minutes and the price of admission to see the first documentary in cinema history about the unmaking of another movie? Gilliam, of course, never completed his feature film, but Fulton and Pepe presented us with a discursive conundrum appropriate to Don Quijote. For a brief instance we wonder if their story is fact or fiction (107).

Is Lost in La Mancha “fact or fiction”? Has the movie been abandoned as the many crew members suggested, or is the film truly “coming soon” to theaters? As Donnell suggests here, Fulton and Pepe end their film ambiguously, disallowing narrative closure by implying that the feature film has been made and will soon be available to audiences everywhere. In doing so, the
directors allow the play to continue indefinitely since the “end point requir[es] further starting points” (“Playing,” 39). The play is unfinishable and as a result the coexisting realities are constantly in danger of canceling one another out; the documentary risks its claim at truth by presenting this final fiction as reality, thus obscuring the boundary separating performance and reality in an act of dark play.

**Conclusion: So is this the end?**

In concluding his discussion about *Lost in La Mancha*, Donnell poses the question, “So is this the end?” (107), expressing an appropriate uncertainty about the end of the film which does not end at all but rather reflects upon its own intrinsic unfinishability as an expression of quixotic storytelling. As noted above, Donnell positions quixotic storytelling as related to “the many interruptions of [a story’s] own narrative” (92), but how, then, can a story be interpreted if it is not simply interrupted by reality in the form of its own narration, and rather is inseparable both from reality and from itself as a narrative construct? Donnell’s definition of quixotic storytelling goes further as he relates it to “indeterminacy and polyvocality” (98), suggesting that this type of narrative raises questions of authority and verisimilitude. According to this definition, both *Don Quixote* and its modern reimagining in the form of *Lost in La Mancha* are examples of quixotic storytelling. If play is an act defined by its very questioning of authority and verisimilitude, where then does it fit into this definition?

The critic Gillian Brown adds another term to this unraveling of the relationship between fiction and reality. The “quixotic fallacy”, she suggests, is a phrase which reflects a reader’s experience in losing (or being unable to discern) a finite boundary between what is presented in
the text as truth though must be recognized as fiction and what is experienced in reality. Don Quijote is the primary example of such a fallacy as he acts upon what he has read in the fictional chivalric romances. Occurrences of this fallacy are present in reality as well and Brown writes, “The fact that sometimes a story is just a story heightens the reader’s satisfaction in the instances when reality actually accords with fiction, which is to say, when fiction has so successfully reproduced reality that reality appears to verify fiction” (250). Reality verifies fiction in an illogical directionality which places fiction at the point of origin and reality as a reproduction. The quixotic fallacy, then, results from the reader’s interpretation of what the author presents as truth.

Thus quixotic storytelling and the quixotic fallacy lie at different ends of one spectrum—quixotic storytelling is produced by the creator of the work through play with perspective and multivocality, devices which serve to confound the reader or viewer’s ability to locate “truth” in the narrative, while the quixotic fallacy occurs on the part of the person interpreting the narrative through an act (whether conscious or unconscious) of bringing the fictional world into reality. So what accounts for the interaction between these two, when quixotic storytelling leads to the quixotic fallacy? This, I contend, is where quixotic play lies. Quixotic play serves as a means to understand quixotic storytelling as necessarily producing the quixotic fallacy and the fallacy as occurring not simply from the positionality of the individual interpreting the narrative, but rather is a fallacy that occurs when the quixotic-ness of the story being told becomes so overpowering that all players involved become subject to the indeterminacy produced. Quixotic play unites the creator of story with the receiver of that creation, implicating all parties in the resultant muddling of fiction and reality, much like the multi-dimensional, transformative nature of play noted by
Schechner. The duke and the duchess engage in quixotic play when they become so enraptured by their own creation that even they exhibit wonder; Sancho, the priest, and the barber produce quixotic play when they convince Don Quijote/Alonso Quijano of the madness of his newfound sanity; and Fulton and Pepe reflect quixotic play in their final clip which proposes that a film which was never created will be “coming soon”. The play in these narratives is not unidirectional, moving from player to victim of play, rather the players become victims and the victims produce their own play in a never-ending cycle of performance which obliterates any clear distinction between fantasy and reality.

Thus, quixotic play is by its very nature dark play. It “plays with fire” by destabilizing its own categorization as play and it constantly risks the continuation of each reality. However, unlike dark play which necessitates the destruction of one of the coexisting realities, quixotic play is characterized by a disintegration of both realities into one single reality which is at once truthful and deceitful, honest and contrived. This new reality is not temporary; rather the reality created through quixotic play is not an ending point but a starting point. Quixotic play is quixotic in its very unfinishability—play whose very creation ensures that it will never be completed. In the end of the novel, the various players have succeeded in creating so convincing of a new reality for Don Quijote that they have lost the original reality—it no longer exists, and in its place is a reality defined by an indistinguishability between truth and fantasy. This indistinguishability propels the reality into an indeterminate future in which it is unclear whether the boundaries between sanity and madness will ever again be firmly reestablished. Likewise, *Lost in La Mancha* projects an uncertain future in which the film may or may not be produced. The plays can never be finished and as a result continue indefinitely.
Both works demonstrate quixotic play within their narratives, but it must also be noted that both are themselves examples of this unfinishable performance. At the close of the novel, Cervantes writes of his eponymous hero, “Don Quijote, who, surrounded by the sympathy and tears of those present, gave up the ghost, I mean to say, he died” (II. 74. 938). The knight’s death is indisputable. Don Quijote dies and thus along with him must expire the many adventures and tales that sprang from his narrative. Yet, contrary to Cervantes’s desire to create a definitive end for his hero, Don Quijote has survived. He has been produced and reproduced in the countless reimaginings, reworkings, and revisionings of the original novel over the course of four centuries. He has been represented visually in paintings and sculptures, he has been presented on the stage in theatrical interpretations, and he has been rewritten in any number of novels and stories. Cervantes, then, failed in killing off his protagonist, as Don Quijote not only survives but is thriving in modern culture. In fact, Don Quijote had to survive because his life, his narrative, is unfinishable. The quixotic play that characterizes the story requires that the story will never end, that each ending point only creates a new starting point, and that the narrative will continue indefinitely in a “continuous bending, twisting and looping” (“Playing,” 39). Thus, Fulton and Pepe’s Lost in La Mancha is necessary in understanding quixotic play not simply as an example of it itself, but as the modern result of a quixotic play that began in 1605. Lost, and even the unfinished The Man Who Killed Don Quixote, are the necessary result of a narrative whose performance will never be complete, and thus they too can never be complete. Gilliam’s film must remain unfinished and Fulton and Pepe must create an ambiguous ending which suggests a new beginning because they are engaging in a play whose very creation 400 years ago ensured that it would never end. Thus, in posing the question, “So is this the end?” Donnell
highlights the crux of quixotic play—this is not the end, for either *Lost in La Mancha* or *Don Quijote*, because there is no end. An end cannot exist and will never exist. The players will keep playing, sanity will continue to masquerade as madness, and the performance will forever be “coming soon to a theater near you.”
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