

## Dressing Don Quijote: of Quixotes and Quixotes<sup>1</sup>

CARROLL B. JOHNSON

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We all know the name *Quijote* is derived from a piece of clothing, but I would still like to rehearse briefly the high spots in the history of its elucidation. The word *quixotes* appears in Covarrubias in 1611: “En el arnés las piezas que cubren los muslos, quasi *cuxotes*, de *cuxa* en italiano, que vale ‘muslo.’” The same definition is repeated in the Real Academia’s *Diccionario de autoridades*. It has since become customary to add the Catalan *quixot* to the neo-Latin etymology proposed by Covarrubias and *Autoridades*. *Quixote* means ‘thigh-guard.’ About fifty years ago

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<sup>1</sup> I want to thank all the friends who made this modest contribution to *Don Quijote* studies possible. First, Elaine Bunn of Drew University, who put me on to Carmen Bernis Madrazo’s new book, where I stumbled on what turned out to be the subject. My old friend James Monroe of UC Berkeley instantly supplied the Arabic etymon of a crucial Spanish word, and also took the trouble to query Sam Armistead at UC Davis. With his proverbial generosity, Professor Armistead sent me photocopied pages from three or four Spanish-Arabic vocabularies, and he put me on to a crucial variant of the word, in a fifteenth-century cancionero poem, that supplied the missing link in what would have been a pretty loose chain of associations.

Leo Spitzer divided our hero's name into a root, *quij-*, followed by the vulgarly comic augmentative suffix *-ote*, with its ironic reference to Arthur's paladin, *Lanzarote* (148). Dámaso Alonso suggested the ironic presence of the comical caballero *Camilote* alongside the serious and positively charged *Lanzarote* (20–28). In 1966 Elie de Jong identified the thigh-guard as a specifically Christian religious allegory. According to Christian feudo-chivalric allegorical tradition, the left thigh-guard represents the seven works of corporeal mercy, while the right guard stands for the seven works of spiritual mercy (90–92). Pierre Groult took issue with de Jong, and exception to the allegory, observing quite rightly that allegory in general is foreign to Cervantes and *Don Quijote* (172–74).

In 1976 José Antonio Maravall repeated the standard thigh-guard definition going back to Covarrubias, and he adds an interesting footnote, to which I want to return later, which documents the word as an item of nonmilitary masculine attire (114). In 1979, as *Don Quijote* was beginning to be viewed as a sexual being, John Weiger returned to the *quixote* as thigh-guard, noted the proximity of the thigh to the genital area, and drew the appropriate erotic-symbolic conclusions (35). I was happy to follow John's insight in my own examination of *Don Quijote's* sexuality in 1983, and I also identified *Lanzarote* as a sexual being, obsessively evoked in his adulterous affair with Queen Guinevere (68–71). In 1991, with sexuality now firmly established at the center of *Don Quijote's* character, Alfredo Baras Escolá summarized the accumulated sexual associations to the name, and in addition pointed to the phallic *lanza* embedded in *Lanzarote* (82).

This brings us to the most recent, and clearly the most authoritative commentary on the word *quixote*, in Francisco Rico's awesomely erudite new edition, where we read: "En la armadura, el *quijote* era la pieza (no usada por nuestro hidalgo) que protegía el muslo" (I, 42, n. 60). Rico immediately relates the word to the Arthurian cycle of chivalric romance, in particular to *Lanzarote*, who is now seen asexually, simply as one of that tradition's greatest heroes. Then we get the customary juxtaposition of *Lanzarote* and *Camilote*. By noting that our hero does not equip himself with a thigh-guard, Rico lays to rest the annoying specter of *Don*

Quijote as a man defined by sexuality. Other than that rather long stride backwards, Rico's commentary adds nothing to the tradition that begins with Covarrubias. In the end, the socio-semantic field of the word *quixote*, in its parodic as well as its serious dimension, is resolutely European, Christian, chivalric, and above all military. The hero's identity is thus constructed according to that paradigm.

Neither Rico nor any of the "respectable" commentators takes seriously Dominique Aubier's association of *quixote* to Hebrew *keshot* (with the letter 'tat'), 'truth,' and to Hebrew *kishott* (with the letter 'tav'), 'plant' (249).<sup>2</sup> Without considering the merits (or indeed the plausibility) of the allegory that results from combining the two Hebrew words—"the product of the germination of the truth, a natural production of the spirit within its vegetal growth"—, I would like to retain the notion of a Semitic *kishot* sharing space in our hero's name with the neo-Latin etymology accepted by all the commentators.

As I was working my way through Carmen Bernis's new book, *El traje y los tipos sociales en el Quijote*, toward the end, in the section devoted to the costume of the *moriscos*, I came across an illustration (plate 519, p. 463) of a non-European gentleman, one of the three Magi, wearing what is identified as a *quezote*. The picture shows a loose-fitting outer garment with wide sleeves, white or light-colored, decorated with vertical stripes and what appears to be embroidery. The illustration is a detail from an anonymous fifteenth-century *Adoración de los Reyes* located in a parish church in Tamarite de Litera.

I was struck by the phonic similarity of the name of this morisco-style garment to the word *quixote* or thigh-guard, which seemed to merit further investigation. In what follows I want to share the results of my modest research, and ponder its implications for Don Quijote and Cervantes.

Spanish *quezote* is one of three derivations from Arabic *kisa-*, which James Monroe glosses as "a well known type of loose mantle, cloak or blanket."<sup>3</sup> In Morocco and al-Andalus, the word *kisa-*

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<sup>2</sup> On Aubier, see the article of McGaha.

<sup>3</sup> Email to the author, 11 January 2002.

designated both a garment and a kind of cloth also used for tablecloths. The only Spanish form derived from *kisa-* given by Reinhart Dozy in his *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms des vêtements chez les arabes* is *alquicel* (385). The *alquicel* consisted of a single, rectangular piece of cloth. It was worn draped around the body according to the skill of the wearer, and it could also be used as a blanket, a tablecloth, or even a shroud. *Alquiceles* appear frequently in documentary and fictional writings from the sixteenth century, in descriptions by Luis del Mármol Carvajal, Diego de Torres, and Ginés Pérez de Hita, and in the fictions of Lope and Góngora. The *alquicel* was a poor man's garment. Mármol Carvajal reports that in the Magreb those who could not afford a *sayo* wore an *alquicel* (*Descripción general de África*). Torres recalls a particularly ascetic Moroccan holy man who went barefoot and wore only an *alquicel*. The *moriscos* in Pérez de Hita's *Guerras civiles de Granada* wear *alquiceles*.<sup>4</sup>

There is another Spanish form, *queça*, also derived from Arabic *kisa-*. The *queça* is a woman's undergarment, which appears in an erotic-voyeuristic poem in the *Cancionero de Estúñiga* that begins: "Desnuda en una queça / lavando a la fontana, / estaba la niña loçana, / las manos sobre la treça" (636).<sup>5</sup> Resisting the natural scholarly inclination to look further into the *queça*, I want to pass to the third Spanish derivation of *kisa-*, the *quezote* that appears in the illustration. Its linguistic form—the root *queça* plus the augmentative suffix *-ote*—suggests a *queça* to which some-

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<sup>4</sup> In addition, Bernis offers numerous examples of stage *moros* and *moriscos* dressed in *alquiceles* (*El traje y los tipos sociales* 470–73).

<sup>5</sup> Sam Armistead called my attention to this reference. More documentation is found in Corominas, who finds *queça* in *Libro de buen amor* 1219b and 1275c. Also see Arnald Steiger, s.v. *kisa-*: "español antiguo *queça*," apud Federico Corriente, s.v. \**ksw/y*: "vestir a otro; libre, vestidura de seda *quecua it*; alquicer *quici aqcia*." A more comprehensive description is found in *Le Dictionnaire Colin d'arabe dialectal marocain*, s.v. *ksat*, dim. *ksiya*: "rectangle de tissu de laine de fabrication locale, d'environ 6 m de long et 1 m 60 de large, maintenu par une extrémité à longue frange qui croise sur la poitrine et pend dans le dos; drapé, sans couture, d'une seule pièce, il est porté par les citadines; spec. *haik* de luxe pour homme; sorte de toge; vêtement d'apparat porté dans les solennités par le Sultan, les ministres, les hauts dignitaires, les oulemas, les notaires, les tolba, qui enveloppe la tête et le haut du corps." My heartfelt thanks to Sam Armistead for all these references.

thing has been added, something like sleeves and embroidery, for example.<sup>6</sup>

A most interesting variant appears in Bernis's earlier work, *Indumentaria medieval española*: "En la segunda mitad del siglo XV, los cristianos tomaron de los moros los *quixotes*, que eran sayos de telas veraniegas y bordados al gusto morisco" (37). This seems to describe the garment in the picture, but the word here is 'quixote.' That's right, *quixote*. And in fact the forms *quezote*, *queçote*, *quizote*, *quiçote*, and *quixote* all seem to be current in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The fullest description and explanation of the word and the garment is given in an article on Moorish fashions in late medieval and early modern Christian Spain that Bernis published in 1959. The word *quezote*, as the name of a garment worn by Moors, appears in a passage in the *Crónica de Juan II* concerning a military encounter: "Parecía que venía toda la sierra cubierta de moros e traían todos quezotes bermejos" (quoted in "Modas moriscas" 209).

The garment was taken into the wardrobe of upscale Christians during the reign of Enrique IV, whose personal fondness for dressing Moorish-style is well known. Alonso de Palencia comments on what he considers the excessive popularity of Moorish fashion at Enrique's court: "Aumentose el séquito de moros, y sus trajes alcanzaron tal aceptación que al rey era más grato el que mejor los imitaba" (quoted in "Modas moriscas" 201). Bernis inventories the *quiçotes* in the wardrobes of various prominent Christians, including several ordered by Queen Isabel la Católica for her male relatives. She derives the word from Arabic *queza* (our friend *kisa-*), which she glosses as "una especie de tela delgada, lienzo fino o camisa." The *quiçote*, and other Moorish gar-

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<sup>6</sup> This kind of hybrid linguistic form—Arabic root with Spanish augmentative suffix—is documented by Dozy, who deconstructs a sub-Saharan version of *kisa* into its Arabic root and a suffix derived from Italian and Mandingo: "Cadamoto (*Navigazioni*, fol. 100") raconte que les *Azanaghi*, c'est à dire les Zenagah, les Sinhadjah, comme prononcent les Arabes, portent des manteaux blancs qu'ils nomment *alchezeli*. Je pense que *al* est l'article arabe; *li* est, si je ne me trompe, un pluriel italien de la terminaison mandingo du pluriel. En retranchant l'article et la terminaison du pluriel, nous retenons *chese* (prononcez *kese*) qui, sans doute, est l'arabe *kisa-*."

ments adopted by Christians, were “vestidos de gala,” to be worn on special occasions (“Modas moriscas” 211). It was the sensuous luxury of fabric, color and design that attracted the upscale Christian fashion plates in an age of obsessive concern for luxurious and refined clothing. Bernis cites a document from 1539, which recalls the fashions of what by then was a bygone era: “En verano traían algunos quizotes, que la palabra y el vestido debe ser tomado de moros, que eran unos sayos de lienzo o de holanda” (quoted in *El traje* 468, 470 n. 139.)

José Antonio Maravall finds Fernando el Católico wearing a *quixote* in 1486, as reported in the *Memorias* of Andrés Bernáldez: “El rey venía vestido un jubón de clemesín [carmesí] de pelo, con quixote de seda rasa de color amarillo; encima una saya de brocado e unas corazas de brocado vestidas, e una espada morisca ceñida” (170). Curiously, Maravall seems to believe that this *quixote* is derived from the neo-Latin *quixote* meaning thigh-guard: “it appears in Spanish in the fourteenth century; its meaning evolves, and at the beginning of the sixteenth century Bernáldez uses it to refer to an item of nonmilitary masculine attire” (114). Bernis’s index entry for this word in her new book repeats this impossible conflation in the doublet “*quezote o quijote*.” What appear as synonyms or variants are in fact two completely different items. The *quezote* is the Moorish garment we have been discussing (fig. 519), but the *quijote* for Bernis is our old friend *quixote* the thigh-guard (fig. 346).

On the one hand both Bernis and Maravall conflate two different garments, suggesting that they were struck, as I was, by the words’ phonetic isomorphism, in spite of their semantic discontinuity. On the other hand, both scholars appear to be in headlong flight from the obvious conclusion. Maravall brings the morisco *quixote* within the Christian, European, feudal-chivalric orbit by making it an evolved form of the thigh-guard, which has somehow morphed from steel into summer weight cloth, and migrated from the thigh to the upper body. Bernis concedes the non-European origin of the garment, but then she assimilates it, apparently unconsciously, to the same neo-Latin etymological and semantic field. The conflation of the two terms in her index is a classical Freudian slip. Finally, both she and Maravall seem

oblivious to the possibility of a three-way connection between the thigh-guard, the Moorish mantle, and Don Quijote. Their joint blindness to this connection recalls and perpetuates the official Spanish historiography that so resolutely excluded Semitic culture from a constitutive role in Spanish civilization and identity, and which my teacher Américo Castro never tired of denouncing.

Cervantes gives us a character whose name, and presumably therefore his identity, is simultaneously derived from the identical-sounding names of two very different articles of clothing. Clearly, if identity is encoded in a name, and if the name is the name of clothing, then clothing is a fundamental aspect of the construction of personal identity. We all know the story of *quixote* as thigh-guard, a garment that remits to the Christian, European, feudal-chivalric world and which defines its bearer in terms of that cultural paradigm. At the same time, the same name contains another *quixote*, a lightweight, festive outer garment that remits to the Arab-Islamic cultural orbit, the Other in opposition to which the officially approved Spanish identity was to be constructed. Not only does the name conflate two cultural identities as disparate as, say, George W. Bush and Osama bin Ladin, the Christian European cultural identity is evoked as an item of military attire, while the newly incorporated Other is represented by the garb of peace. But this is not just any item of non-belligose attire. The *quiçote* carries associations to oriental refinement, sensuous luxury, to a monarch famous for frivolity and foppery, but not for fatherhood. Especially when contrasted with the super-masculine thigh-guard, the gauzy *quiçote* carries strong suggestions of sexual ambivalence, the perversion that every sixteenth-century Spanish commentator gleefully attributes to Islamic civilization and cultural identity, from Algiers to Istanbul.<sup>7</sup>

The process I have been so laboriously documenting in Don Quijote's name is just one more instance, albeit a particularly important one, of what Fredric Jameson might call the Cervan-

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<sup>7</sup> I am thinking of the work published under the name of Diego de Haedo, *Topografía de Argel*, at the western end, and the anonymous *Viaje de Turquía* in the east.

tine *Aufhebung* of the dialectic of cultural identity in his conflicted society.<sup>8</sup> If we read the *Quijote* in terms of that dialectical opposition, and if it is true that the opposition is called into question right from the beginning, in the protagonist's name, then maybe we need to reconsider a number of suppositions. Foremost among them, I would submit, is the notion that bellicose Christian chivalry, whether in its old-fashioned feudal-medieval form or the new, improved Counter-reformation version, is in fact the ideological cornerstone of the work. Maybe Don Quijote's failed efforts at combat and physical dominance are not examples of a deviant individual's inability to measure up to certain ideals, but an interrogation of the validity of the ideals. Maybe we should take more seriously Américo Castro's last vision of the relationship between Don Quijote and Sancho, as a fictionalized reconciliation of the ethnic conflicts of their society. In the context of Don Quijote's more or less newly discovered sexuality, maybe we ought to revisit José Ramón Fernández de Cano's wonderfully ingenious but too easily dismissed elucidation of the "mozo de campo y plaza" who makes a one-sentence appearance in I, 1, and whom Fernández de Cano considers an object of his master's erotic interest along with his niece. This reorientation in turn bears anew on the relation between Don Quijote and Sancho. At the metafictional level, maybe we should rethink the relationship among the authorial presences—the Christian first and second authors, and the "historiador árabe manchego." And maybe we

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<sup>8</sup> Lest the conflation of cultural difference I have observed in the name of Cervantes' greatest creation be considered an aberration or a coincidence, I would like to remark the same phenomenon in other works. Some time ago I suggested something similar was present in *La Numancia*, where the Romans are simultaneously the villains, the Other to the Numantinos' Spaniards, and also the Spaniards themselves in the sixteenth century. Long before that Américo Castro had called attention to the strange presence, in Teresa Panza's kitchen, of "tocino adunia," a phrase that combines the Old Christian cultural identity anxieties encoded in the conspicuous mention of pork products with an Arabic adjective that undercuts or neutralizes those very anxieties. (Castro discusses this passage in "La estructura del *Quijote*.") Finally, in the *entremés* of the "Elección de los alcaldes de Daganzo" Cervantes gives us *regidores* named Panduro and Algarroba, whose names turn out to be a Latin and an Arabic version respectively of the same unflattering personal characteristics.

should pay more attention, among the myriad possibilities, to the hypothesis advanced in the nineteenth century by the Arabist José Antonio Conde and made generally available in Rodríguez Marín's edition (1: 283), that the name "Benengeli" contains an Arabic version of "Cervantes." Finally, maybe we should take more seriously the various studies that suggest Cervantes' own ambiguous sexual orientation, along the lines proposed by Louis Combet and Rosa Rossi among others not normally taken seriously by Cervantine orthodoxy.<sup>9</sup>

Department of Spanish and Portuguese  
University of California  
Los Angeles CA 90095-1532  
johnson@humnet.ucla.edu

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<sup>9</sup> See the summary offered by Alberto Sánchez. See also Cruz and Martín.

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