

To the Editor:

Michael McCanles' provocative article presents *Don Quixote* as a novel that "affirms literal-metaphorical dialectic through presenting a literal-metaphorical interchange" (p. 284) and that provides a diagrammatic illustration (p. 289) of the transmission thereof. I can only marvel at the wondrous simplicity of the pictorialization; the least of its omissions is the unnamed translator which certainly must have been employed by Cide Hamete Benengeli, the greatest being Cervantes himself, that same Saavedra who was known to Ruy Pérez de Viedma in the Algiers prison.

If one were to follow a vaguely linear metaphor rather than a concise quadrangular literality, this procedure would make quite evident the overwhelming multiplicity of literal-metaphorical decisions to be made by the reader, himself proved to be a fiction by Walter J. Ong, S.J. ("The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction," *PMLA*, 90, 1975, 9-21). From my own perspective, for example, I find that McCanles has joined forces with Cervantes and has thereby aggravated my intense inner debate as I struggle to separate first world, second world, and heterocosm, thus to escape Don Quijote's error. The list I present is by no means exhaustive, albeit exhausting:

1. Did Amadís, son of Perión, really live the exploits related by his unknown chronicler?
2. Who was Alonso Quesada (or Quijano), who may or may not have been descended in the male line from Alonso de Ayllón Gutierre de Quesada, resident of Alcázar de San Juan?
3. Did Don Quijote, the "mad" creation of whoever this Alonso may have been, really live the exploits related by his biographer? Did Dulcinea del Toboso read of them as did the Duke and Duchess?
4. When did Cide Hamete Benengeli, characterized as a lying Arab, stretch the truth? Or was he really a Christian, as at times the history intimates?
5. Was Cervantes' wheat- and raisin-paid translator faithful to his task? (Has the humanist-guide included this in his *Suplemento a Virgilio Polidoro* as the invention of Raisin Bran?)
6. How much editing did Cervantes do? What errors did the printers make? What is the correct name for Sancho's *ofslo*?
7. Was Avellaneda the product of a collaboration between Lope de Vega and Guillén de Castro, as Margarita Smerdou Altolaquirre has stated in the *Estafeta Literaria* (550, 15 Oct. 1974, 8-12), or was he in his own right envious of Cervantes' fame?
8. If Avellaneda's *Quinta parte de sus aventuras* is apochryphal, how can he testify to the validity of the real Don Quijote? How does McCanles know that Don Alvaro Tarfe is spurious?
9. Are Don Quijote, Don Quixote, Don Quichotte,

Don Chisciotte, etc. all the same person?

10. Postulating that *PMLA* is as credible a source as is *Don Quijote*, who is the enigmatic "MMcC" on page 183 of Volume 91?

11. Is the Michael McCanles, purported author, the same as the Michael F. McCanles listed in *PMLA*, 90 (1975), 634, as well as "MMcC"? (Is the number in said listing, 53233, a metaphorical or literal interchange? A literal or metaphorical discourse?)

12. Is all of this to be construed to mean that a fictive approach to ontological decision-making is proved to be at least marginally valid in providing a reasoned construct of the first world, however metaphorical the interchanges, however literal the dialectics in the aforementioned heterocosm labeled *PMLA*?

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To the Editor:

Michael McCanles' article indeed provides "the kind of intellectual excitement that *PMLA* is attempting to generate" ("Editor's Column," p. 180). McCanles, though, seems to be somewhat mistaken or confused in several of his comments on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He states that Bottom is a literalist unable "to grasp the metaphorical nature of plays and their presentation" (p. 283), and certainly he is. McCanles, however, continues: "His various projected prologues explaining moonshine and the lion presuppose . . . that his audience will be as literal-minded as he is and will require explanations that the lion is really an actor and that the ludicrous figure representing moonshine does in fact so represent it" (p. 283). Bottom is the first to suggest a prologue to explain the things in the play that he fears will not please the audience. But his suggestion is for a prologue to explain that the swords will do no harm and that Pyramus will not be killed. Snout is the first to mention the lion and the one who suggests the prologue to say that the lion isn't a lion. Bottom then elaborates, but the credit for this prologue should go to Snout. Quince introduces the problem of moonshine, and Bottom, literalist that he is, says that he can leave the casement of the chamber window open and let the moon shine in. Quince offers the alternative of having an actor appear with a bush of thorns and a lantern and tell the audience that he represents the moon. Actually, then, neither the prologue concerning the lion nor the prologue concerning moonshine is Bottom's idea.

McCanles' statement that the "moral" of the play "is that those who misunderstand poetic fictions are condemned to act out poetic fictions" (p. 284) also seems to be inaccurate or, at least, not supported by the facts of the play. Bottom, as McCanles main-

tains, is an example. He misunderstands poetic fiction and is condemned to act out the poetic fiction involving Titania. As we have seen, though, he is certainly not the only one of the craftsmen who is a literalist in this sense. Snout and Quince are also literalists, yet neither is condemned to act out such a poetic fiction. McCandles refers also to Theseus as a literalist (p. 282), but Theseus is not required to act out a poetic fiction. If, however, McCandles intends the same definition of literalist in his reference to Theseus, he apparently again has not considered the facts of the play carefully. In Act v Theseus is the one who is most willing to accept the story of the lovers, as well as the play, as metaphor, certainly not as being literal. Hippolyta, though, is a literalist, but she is not condemned to act out a poetic fiction.

Let us hope that in our efforts to generate intellectual excitement we do not forget the importance of reading carefully the material under consideration.

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*Mr. McCandles replies:*

The letters of Allen, Bandera, and Hathaway all testify to the immense complexity of Cervantes' play with the logic of his own fiction. I was content to deal with only a part, though a major part, of this complexity in my article; and since my discussion of *Don Quixote* was subordinate to my larger theoretical argument, I shall deal here mainly with interpretive questions as they entail consequences for that argument.

John J. Allen's contention that, at least in the passage he cites from Chapter xxv of Book I, Don Quixote recognizes the fictionality of Dulcinea del Toboso is well taken. It seems to me appropriate that Cervantes should have him state such a recognition somewhere in his romance, inasmuch as this recognition, far from canceling the Don's literalism through his adventures (it doesn't), adds still another confirmation of it. At this point, Don Quixote is answering Sancho's own literalistic demand that Aldonza Lorenzo match in beauty and grace the Don's own vision of her. This puts him in the position of performing exactly the critical act of recognizing the difference between the literal and the metaphorical that he fails to perform through the rest of the romance. He says: "But to bring all this to a conclusion: I am content to imagine that what I say is so and that she is neither more nor less than I picture her and would have her be, in comeliness and in high estate" (Putnam trans.). In other words, his recognizing the difference between literal and metaphorical has merely given Don Quixote the dubious safety of going on from there

and treating Aldonza as if she corresponded to his imagined vision of her!

Allen's second point, regarding Don Quixote's putative recovery of a sense of the literal-metaphorical dialectic at the moment of his death, I find unconvincing. As I said in my article, literalism can take two apparently opposite forms: naïve acceptance of fictions as literal truth and rejection of fictions because they are not literal truth. To my mind, Don Quixote slips from the one position to its opposite.

Cesáreo Bandero's extrapolation from my article of an important distinction between sane and insane literalism I can certainly agree with. I am puzzled, however, by his further statement that keeping in view the "frame" that surrounds a fiction removes the reader safely from responsibility for and to the fiction itself. Part of the problem, I think, occurs in his re-statement of my notion of the literal-metaphorical dialectic, "in which the two are kept safely apart." This is by no means my argument. The literal-metaphorical dialectic represents a continual and dynamic mental process in the reader, a process in which the literal dimension of the fiction and its fictionality are perceived alternatively as mutually supportive and as mutually exclusive. In place of this dialectic, Bandero apparently has substituted still another version of literalism, one that crashes the literal dimension wholly into the metaphorical/fictional, and leaves the reader comfortably removed from it. However, as I argue on page 287, second column, the recognition of the literal-metaphorical dialectic allows the reader to participate wholly in the fiction, but this participation is balanced by and made possible through the recognition of its fictionality, a balanced participation that the literalist cannot achieve.

Robert L. Hathaway's amusing and provocative comment takes me to task for prematurely closing the literal-metaphorical dialectics of *Don Quixote*. To that offense I willingly plead guilty. One of the consequences of that dialectic is precisely the way in which great fictions that deal in it announce their own resistance to such closure. Hathaway raises, in fact, the difficult question of how it is possible to write a critical text that states definitively the logic of another, fictive text that overtly forbids such definiteness. My answer is that such a critical text (e.g., my own) must necessarily remain open to further extensions, as Hathaway's own communication demonstrates. To his questions 10 and 11, let me say this: He can indeed assume that the various signs, such as "MMcC" and "Michael McCandles" do refer to the same entity, not because I say so (for, after all, in this collection of signs do I define my "reality" in a way different from that in which Don Quixote defines his?), but because the rules of textual coherence that *PMLA* appears to have postulated for itself