

Female Voice and the *Pharmakos*: Marcela's Poisonous Cure in Cervantes's Intercalated Pastoral Story

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Abstract

This essay investigates the Marcela/Grisóstomo episode of the *Quijote* as it relates to astrology, medical terminology, the inclusion/exclusion paradigm and female space in the pastoral and early modern worlds. Marcela's creation of a female heterotopian space calls attention to feminine voice as the *pharmakos* that possesses the ability to bind or destroy pastoral Utopia. The pastoral episode of the *Quijote* portrays a utopian world where its inhabitants ignored the words "*tuyo y mío*" (Cervantes 97).¹ Grisóstomo's gender-specific utopian vision of the pastoral, however, is not reciprocated by Marcela, transforming male-projected Utopia into Dystopia. From Marcela's perspective, she creates a rift in the system and an alternate space that is neither utopian nor dystopian, but heterotopian. For Derrida, the *pharmakos* is simultaneously absent and always present in the Platonic word chain of *pharmakeia-pharmakon-pharmakeus*.² To this end, pastoral female actors, like the *pharmakos*, are present and necessary to latently hold together the Utopia, and yet they lack formal recognition in the pastoral construct.

In 1986 the American rock band Bon Jovi released an album entitled *Slippery When Wet* with the song "Social Disease" appearing as fourth on its first side. The following verses unveil a metaphor that the authors of the popular track, Richard Sambora and Jon Bon Jovi, in all likelihood had no intention of linking to the Early Modern Period:

From the White House to the alleys
From the President down to Long Tall Sally
Can't live with it but
You'll die without it - yes you would
...
You can't start a fire without a spark
But there's something that I guarantee
You can't hide when infection starts
Because love is a social disease. (5-16)

Lines 7-8 of the song refer to the despair that love engenders in the heart of the innamorato, while lines 15-16 position that sentiment in the realm of disease and infection. Key to these lyrics is the placement of love as not merely a disease of the individual but a social infirmity, thereby effectuating this condition upon the greater community. Since the metaphor of 'love-illness' that Bon Jovi creates is social, we must understand it in reciprocal or non-reciprocal terms. If the lover is

¹ Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de. *Don Quijote De La Mancha*. Ed. Francisco Rico. Madrid: Real Academia Española, 2004.

² Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

in turn loved, then harmony exists. Contrarily, melancholy and forlornness reside in the heart of the rejected, inciting our current understanding of lovesickness. The sickness is social, of course, due to its reliance upon another, the loved, for a cure or the perpetuation of illness—the admired's rejection of the lover.

Nonetheless, to an early modern audience, this interpretation of love as ailment is less metaphorical and more literal than Bon Jovi's witticism is to his 20th century spectators. Indeed, according to Marion Wells's compelling study on Love-Melancholy, *The Secret Wound: Love-Melancholy and Early Modern Romance*, no matter the variety of love we are questioning, "medical writers [of the Medieval and Early Modern world] occasionally seem to suggest that all love is a disease" (2). And as André Du Laurens, physician to Henry the IV of France, suggests in describing the symptoms of love, its subject quite literally goes mad when love's sequela sets in: "man is quite undone and cast away, the senses are wandering to and fro, up and downe, reason is confounded, the imagination is corrupted, the talk fond and senceless . . ." (118). In this study, I argue—as many others have already done—that the intercalated pastoral episode of Marcela and Grisóstomo in Cervantes's *Don Quijote* undeniably centers on love's effects. Yet, not only does this pastoral story operate within the confines of the loved and the rejected-lover, but also throughout the immediate community surrounding the failed couple in a similar manner to that of a contagion spreading illness. To this end, the entire body-politic finds itself experiencing the side effects of the love infirmity. In short, reading this tale under, what Foucault termed the "the clinician's gaze," ushers in a deeper awareness of the episode that, in turn, yields greater understanding to medical terminology and to the operating conditions of society during the period (*Birth* 120).

As above so below: Grisóstomo, student of the stars

In chapters 11-14 of book one of the *Quijote*, Cervantes introduces a typical pastoral episode, that of Marcela and Grisóstomo. Marcela, a rich orphan, determines to live out her life as a shepherdess, without the pressures of a masculine governing presence neither presiding over her body nor her estate. Grisóstomo, a student of the University of Salamanca,³ falls in love with her and he too becomes a shepherd in order to woo the lady of his desires. When he realizes the impossibility of the situation in procuring his love-object, Grisóstomo takes his life.⁴ The passion of love that Grisóstomo experiences is a result of an imbalance of corporeal humors. When it becomes evident to the student of Salamanca that Marcela will not reciprocate his feelings, humoral imbalance advances into a state of unbearable ailment. Gale Kern Paster articulates the rationale behind the early modern take on internal humoral imbalance of the body and its subsequent external expression:

Behaviors were understood as the expression of the interaction of the four qualities, because behaviors were understood to be—

³ The University of Salamanca is generally accepted as one of the epicenters for medical study of the medieval and early modern periods. From its official year of inauguration (1218), six subjects were imparted: Canonical and Civil Law, Medicine, Logic, Grammar and Music. See: *A Brief History of the University of Salamanca*. Web. 11 March 2013. < <http://campus.usal.es/web-usal/Ingles/Universidad/Historia/Historia.shtml>>.

⁴ Michael McGaha, in "The Sources and Meanings of the Grisóstomo-Marcela Episode in the 1605 *Quijote*," considers the death of Grisóstomo to be a suicide. McGaha notes that Américo Castro was the first to recognize that in Grisóstomo's poem Cervantes has codified the allusion to suicide in an effort to avoid censorship: "the Catholic Church's condemnation of suicide was so emphatic that a straightforward treatment of the subject would have been considered scandalous and would probably have been censored" (62). It is important that Grisóstomo's death be a suicide, for this demonstrates the extent of power a humoral imbalance may hold over one's actions/passions.

at least in part—an expression of the four humors. The forces of cold, hot, wet, and dry constituted the material basis of any living creature's characteristic appraisals of and responses to its immediate environment; they altered the character of a body's substances and, by doing so, organized its ability to act or even to think. (13)

Bearing this in mind, readership becomes acutely aware that Grisóstomo's outward reaction—suicide—is the result of a physiological ailment he suffers at the hands of a failed interpersonal interaction with Marcela. If she had experienced the same sentiments as Grisóstomo, and outwardly expressed them, balance of the internal humors would have been achieved and suicide would not have occurred. It is in this way that the passions, or behaviors, of an individual are expressed; namely, as responses to the body's immediate terrestrial environment, which are mirrored in the celestial sphere.

The imbalance of humors that ultimately destroys Grisóstomo is not entirely under his control or that of Marcela. The study of astrology in the early modern period is ubiquitous in medical, theological, philosophical and social treatises as well as in literature. To be sure, Rachel Schmidt indicates that “Según los estatutos de la Universidad de Salamanca, el responsable por la cátedra en astrología (o sea astronomía) tenía la obligación de enseñar la astrología judiciaria en el cuarto año” (184).⁵ Consequently, since Grisóstomo had been a student at Salamanca for many years and had returned “a su lugar con opinión de muy sabio y muy leído,” it must be understood that a large part of his education consisted of astrology (Cervantes 104). The study of astrology, as we currently understand it, differs vastly from that of the early modern period. As Abel A. Alves observes in his study on treatise author Deigo de Saavedra Fajardo and the cosmos, even “moderate supporters of a natural astrology very often argued that, as the moon influenced the tides, so too the heavenly bodies influenced elements of physical nature and earthly bodies” (72). The formations and movements of astrological bodies quite literally mirrored themselves in earthly bodies. The ancients used this science to interpret the functioning of most life, both human as well as celestial. In truth, the Hermetic tradition frequently circulates the use of the phrase ‘*As above so below*,’ referring to the mutually reflective quality attributed to the macrocosm/microcosm paradigm.⁶ As a result, we may observe a few of these facets of life that astrology influenced in the conversation between Pedro the goatherd and Don Quijote, as it pertains to Grisóstomo and Marcela's tale:

—Principalmente decían que [Grisóstomo] sabía la ciencia de las estrellas y de lo que pasan allá en el cielo el sol y la luna, porque puntualmente nos decía el cris del sol y de la luna.

—*Eclipse* se llama, amigo, que no *cris*, el escurecerse esos dos luminares mayores—dijo don Quijote. . . .

—Asimismo adivinaba cuándo había de ser el año abundante o estil.

—*Estéril* queréis decir, amigo—dijo don Quijote. . . .

— . . . hacían lo que él [Grisóstomo] les aconsejaba, diciéndoles: <<Sembrad este año cebada, no trigo; en éste podéis sembrar gar-

⁵ Schmidt further notes that for the early moderns—as for us—“la astronomía traza los movimientos de los objetos celestiales, mientras la astrología juzga los efectos que causan en las cosas terrenales” (184). In this way, judicial astrology is quite literally used to *judge* the effects of the celestial sphere on the earthly sphere through interpretation of the movements of stars and planets.

⁶ For a detailed account of the use of this phrase see Nicki Scully's *Alchemical Healing: A Guide to Spiritual, Physical, and Transformational Medicine*.

banzos, y no cebada; el que viene será de guilla de aceite; los tres
siguientes no se cogerá gota.>> (104)

The local agriculturalists rely upon Grisóstomo, as an educated member of society, to inform them of when they should plant certain crops and harvest them.⁷ He does this by dint of astrological interpretation. The student of Salamanca had been educated in the movements of the stars; he could predict when an eclipse would take place by reading the “dos luminaires mayores” (Cervantes 104). He understood the effects of planetary movements on Earth, not only in agricultural terms, but moreover, how the celestial sphere affected life by altering humoral balances. Certainly, Pedro continues recounting his story informing us that Marcela was strikingly similar to her mother who had “cara que del un cabo tenía el sol y del otro la luna” (Cervantes 106). According to Francisco Rico, this is “aquella cara tan bella como el cielo” (Cervantes 106).⁸ The significance of Marcela’s face resembling that of the heavens, with on one side of it the Sun and on the other the Moon, is that she is able to influence Grisóstomo’s humoral balance with her beauty; much in the same way that the planetary alignments may sway the growing season of certain crops. As a result, Grisóstomo perishes due to a humoral imbalance caused by certain astrologically conducted alignments that he interprets upon reading the clues of Marcela’s body. The student of Salamanca reads Marcela as though he were interpreting the macrocosm, since the microcosm displayed upon her body is a supposed direct reflection of the macrocosm. Nonetheless, it appears that Grisóstomo misreads the signs of the microcosmic body that become visible in the young shepherdess. Or, perhaps what is more likely, Grisóstomo merely attempted to will his feelings for Marcela upon her through a misuse of his understanding of how the astral sphere functions.

Be that as it may, just as Grisóstomo is able to decipher how the celestial sphere may affect the terrestrial, medical practitioners of the early modern period linked astrological signs to the health of their patients. As Maravall discerns:

The discovery of the circulation of blood, which was coetaneous with baroque culture, confirmed this general law that ruled everywhere, from stars in the macrocosm to the vital center of the heart in the microcosm. Bances Candamo marveled that, in the same way the sun revolves, the heart also “makes, in repeated revolutions, that continuous movement of blood circulation which was discovered by the new Chemical Philosophy.”⁹ From science to morality, everything spoke to baroque individuals about this universal law of movement. (176-177)

In more explicit terms, the planets’ movements and alignments quite literally mirrored themselves in the body of a patient, or any other individual at the microcosmic level.

To this end, Grisóstomo’s suicide, caused by a passion that he felt for Marcela that she does not reciprocate, indicates disrupted harmony. In traditional pastoral fashion, Marcela would

⁷ As Abel Alves notes: “Despite Pope Sixtus V’s Bull against divination in 1586, astrology continued to be taught at Salamanca into the late eighteenth century, and Saavedra’s writings show a familiarity with actual astrological method” (70-71). Since Grisóstomo had studied at Salamanca, and Cervantes was aware of certain educational curriculum of his time, we should assume that astrological teachings were prevalent, as Alves demonstrates with his background on Saavedra Fajardo’s education.

⁸ The Sun and Moon seen in the face of Marcela’s mother is clarified by Leone Ebreo’s statement that “It is a fact that the seven planets have symbolic reference to the seven orifices which are seen in the head and subserve perception and cognition;—the Sun symbolizes the right eye and the Moon the left eye . . .” (93-94).

⁹ Original citation in: Bances Candamo, Francisco Antonio, and Duncan W. Moir. *Theatro De Los Theatros De Los Passados Y Presentes Siglos: Prólogo, Edición Y Notas De Duncan W. Moir*. London: Tamesis, 1970. p. 98.

have unquestioningly accepted the desires of the male who expressed his love for her in order to preserve harmony and balance the humors of the microcosm and macrocosm.¹⁰ Since Grisóstomo had read a harmonic relationship of the Sun and the Moon on Marcela's face, he deduces that she will reciprocate his love for her. Nevertheless, since both Marcela and Grisóstomo are not truly shepherds, but rather impersonating them, it forces home the argument that Cervantes may be attempting to question established social mores in an effort to reveal the ridiculous nature of certain codes by which we live. Indeed, Don Quijote, as a knight-errant, enters into a long discourse referring to Virgil's Arcadia after he takes up a handful of acorns that remind him of that "dichosa edad y siglos dichosos aquellos a quien los antiguos pusieron nombre de dorados" (Cervantes 97). As Francisco Rico notes: "Don Quijote retoma la formulación poética inspirada en Virgilio y Ovidio . . . y la integra en su explicación del origen y la razón de ser de la caballería andante, como punto de partida de toda su visión utópica" (Rico, *Don Quijote* 99). Cervantes models Don Quijote as a symbol of pastoral and knight-errantry social codes that he utilizes to draw attention to ever-changing social values. What was once a utopian pastoral world is now a domain fraught with moving pieces that oppose the male-projected pastoral social construct. For Foucault "Utopias are sites with no real place . . . They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal places" (*Of* 24).¹¹ Obviously this unrealistic vision of microcosmic and macrocosmic—Arcadian/Utopian—harmony of which Don Quijote speaks after taking up the handful of acorns is not congruous with the contemporary social outlook of Hapsburg Spain; a society experiencing great economic and ideological crises.¹² Likewise, Grisóstomo's idea of how Marcela should react to his astrological interpretation of his love for her is incorrect, breaking the pastoral social codes of perfect harmony and ultimately destroying him.

Nevertheless, even if Cervantes's major concern is to provide us a window through which we may view the established system's attempt at a return to a perfect past to stymie economic and social crises as erroneous, he also provides a viewpoint into social trends of the day. Namely, a demonstration of common harmonic thought through a balancing of the cosmos is supplied. Indeed, Pedro's misspoken term for eclipse—"cris"—denotes a disharmonious imbalance in the microcosm and macrocosm. *Cris*, is not merely a linguistic faux pas but also an allusion to a social and physical medical term—*Crisis*. "En efecto, el eclipse en sí es una especie de crisis del sol y de la luna, a la vez que el punto decisivo de una enfermedad (su "crisis") se asocia también en la medicina renacentista con las influencias de los cuerpos celestiales" (Schmidt 188). Pedro's slip of the tongue foreshadows a crisis in the macrocosm—an eclipse—, which our author reflects upon the microcosm as an imbalance of Grisóstomo and Marcela's feelings for one another. The humoral imbalance results in a physiological infirmity for the protagonist that ultimately engenders his death and simultaneously engenders instability throughout the remaining pastoral

¹⁰ Paul Alpers's *What Is Pastoral?* gives a detailed account of the pastoral social code.

¹¹ Valentín Núñez Rivera, in his recent book *Cervantes y los géneros de la ficción*, outlines the historical significance of Arcadian utopias for the Renaissance: "Desde la Antigüedad, y a lo largo del Renacimiento, la pastoril funcionó como el espacio ideal más representativo donde plasmar estéticamente las aspiraciones utópicas, casi siempre con un carácter evasivista. A ese lugar le correspondía un tiempo también edénico, la mítica Edad de Oro, donde los hombres podían vivir en armoniosa unión con la Naturaleza. La representación artística para articular ese *cronotopo* utópico quedó conformado entonces . . . a partir de la figura prototípica del pastor y sus circunstancias, cuyo modo de vida idílico aparece generalmente incontaminado de las contingencias del presente" (223).

¹² J.H. Elliot, for example, indicates that "The growing awareness of decline—*declinación*— . . . had given rise to an increasingly vociferous movement for national reform and renewal . . . the reformation of morals and manners" (119). Reform is more suggestive of a dystopia than it is a utopia. Cervantes thereby signals to his readership the absurd notion of pastoral and chivalric utopias by creating this scenario in which these two perfect worlds unite but fail.

social construct.

Cervantes's Medusa as *Pharmakos* in sheep's clothing

In Jacques Derrida's *Dissemination*, he contemplates Plato's usage of the word chain *pharmakeia-pharmakon-pharmakeus* and how it reveals the conspicuously absent word *pharmakos* in the sequence (129). Based on the observation that Plato does not include the term *pharmakos* throughout his discussions, Derrida delineates a boundary between inside and outside terms. He asserts that *pharmakos*, which is the outside term, is continually already necessary and present inside the lexicon chain. He indicates that what Plato excludes is an essential part of determining what must also be included (Derrida 129-130). Derrida defines *pharmakos* as a "wizard, magician, poisoner," yet he also denotes that an alternative meaning of the word is "ritual" (130).

The character of the *pharmakos* has been compared to a scapegoat.

The *evil* and the *outside*, the expulsion of the evil, its exclusion out of the body (and out) of the city—these are the two major senses of the character and of the ritual. (Derrida 130)

Derrida's comments on Plato's *pharmakos*-absent word chain trace the origins of the inclusion-exclusion paradigm. Precisely, what remains in "exclusion out of the body (and out) of the city" may take the form of an individual member of the body, "poisoner," or may be ritualized in a way that systematically excludes all members associated with unwanted values (Derrida 130). Derrida's choice of lexicon to demarcate inside/outside boundaries situates his discussion in the field of medicine:

Intra muros/extra muros. The origin of difference and division, the *pharmakos* represents evil both introjected and projected. Beneficial insofar as he cures . . . harmful insofar as he incarnates the powers of evil . . . The expulsion of the evil or madness restores *sōphrosunē*. (133)

In the body-politic *pharmakos* functions both as a harmful introjection of ideology and yet simultaneously a curative entity with the capability of restoring *sōphrosunē*—healthy mindedness or balance—upon expulsion.

An interesting treatise on the physiological effects of coitus underscores the idea of limitations that must be placed upon medical procedures, health practices and medicine, thereby demarcating when and where to include or exclude the *pharmakos* in the word chain. Michael Solomon introduces and translates *The Mirror of Coitus* (*Speculum al foderi*). This 15th century Catalan medical treatise puts forth sexual acts in and of themselves as a form of *pharmakos*. According to Solomon

the author of the *Mirror* defends the act of coitus as a means to preserve the body rather than to perpetuate it. His major concerns are that his readers will fail to take advantage of the health-producing nature of sexual intercourse, and that through overindulgence or improper use they may cause themselves harm. (xv)

Consequently, this medical treatise or self-help book, attempts to harness the practice of coitus to controllable and healthy measures. Too little or too much coitus may produce adverse affects for its participants, while an appropriate amount will undoubtedly prove healthy to the body. Though many of the chapters in this text seem absurd to the modern eye, the overall message that moderation of any one indulgence promotes a healthy body is spot on; whether the body

referred to is that of the individual member or that of the body-politic itself. Perhaps what is more interesting, in terms of the present study, is the incorporation of the word *Mirror*—*speculum*—into the title of the treatise. Its readership is privy to the reflective qualities of a mirror in order to model oneself and one's actions after that which the text presents, thus acting as a control to modify the quantity of *pharmakos* redirected upon the user of the manual.¹³ This literary topos displays itself in many early modern works. Quevedo's *Búscón*, for example, holds it as part of this picaresque work's title.¹⁴ But we might locate the origins of this frequented technique of refraction to convey the properties of one thing upon another in Greek antiquity, at the heart of perhaps the earliest *pharmakos*.

The story of Medusa depicts her as the only one of three sister gorgons who is mortal.¹⁵ Her face portrays a hideous female with hair comprised of venomous snakes. She transforms those who look upon her into stone. Perseus, a Greek demigod, beheads her and uses her cranium as a weapon against his enemies until he later bestows it upon the goddess Athena who wears it on her shield. According to Jonathan Sawday, "No individual could endure the glance of the Medusa, and Perseus could approach her only with the aid of a polished shield—a mirror endowed with the magical power of Athene" (10). Once again we observe the use of a mirror employed for the reflection of characteristics of one thing upon another. Nonetheless, in the case of Medusa, Perseus's shield redirects the gorgon's toxic gaze upon herself thereby exploiting her strength as her weakness. While alive, Medusa wielded destructive and venomous power used for the purposes of evil, but deceased and in the hands of Perseus she becomes an instrument for the power of good. Sawday notes that "her glance [is] conquered, then her blood is drawn off, her skin woven into a magical container, her head [is] exhibited only to those to whom one wishes destruction" (10). Once Perseus harnesses her powers, Medusa essentially transmutes into *pharmakos*. "The attributes of the Medusa—blood, head, and skin—are emblematic of a fragmented and dispersed body-interior—a profoundly ambivalent region—whose power can be somehow harnessed for good or ill" (Sawday 9). Sawday further denotes that within this story

the male protagonist confronts his female opponent and renders her powerless through a dispersal of her body parts. Or rather, her killing and healing power—her head and her blood—are appropriated by male archetypes: the wandering hero, and the surgeon or healer. (9)

It is significant to note that Perseus's abilities as a "surgeon or healer" come about by dint of Sawday's ruminations concerning Medusa's gaze, and that of the female in general (9). Foucault observes that "[The] clinician's gaze becomes the functional equivalent of fire in chemical combustion; it is through it that the essential purity of phenomena can emerge: it is the separating agent of truths. . . . The clinical gaze is a gaze that burns things to their furthest truth" (*Birth* 120). To this end, if Perseus is a clinician, surgeon or healer, the gaze that he must utilize to cut through to the core of any anatomical problem or illness is his most prized medical instrument. Sawday notes "The surgeon seems to share the iconic status of the artist (or the visionary) within our culture, since both are held to be in possession of a privileged gaze which is able to pass beyond common experience, through surface structures, to encounter a reserved core of reality"

¹³ Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* further explains the various methods employed to 'self-fashion' oneself to those moral values upheld by hegemonic tradition. Perhaps the *Mirror of Coitus* is the medical equivalent for self-fashioning a healthy body.

¹⁴ *Historia de la vida del Buscón, llamado Don Pablos, ejemplo de vagamundos y espejo de tacaños* (literally: *History of the life of the Swindler, called Don Pablos, model for hobos and mirror of misers*) (Quevedo).

¹⁵ For a detailed account of Medusian mythology see chapter 2 of Stephen Wilk's *Medusa*.

(12). Since Perseus uses Medusa's own gaze to stun her in order to slash into her flesh and cure the ailment she presents, he is acting as medical practitioner of the body-politic employing the clinician's gaze and eliminating the gorgon's threat to society. This is the *pharmakos* that the gorgon represents: her gaze may destroy her, it may destroy others and it may cure her very own ailment, the evil that she epitomizes. "The surgeon . . . therefore enjoys a rare cultural status as mediator between the exterior and the interior worlds" (Sawday 12). In the body-politic the surgeon delineates *extra muros/intra muros* cultural values.

Notwithstanding, the traditional clinician is male and it is therefore a masculine hand, or gaze, that must do the cutting, discovering, diagnosing and curing. Medusa is the *pharmakos*, the instrument, but Perseus is the male physician that avails himself of her in order to cure. If the patient happens to be female, then diametrically opposed gender specific problems present themselves. For Sawday "The Medusa stands for fear of interiority; more often than not, a specifically male fear of the female interior" (3). And as Patricia Marshall illustrates "la figura de Medusa . . . puede considerarse símbolo de un miedo creciente a la interioridad del cuerpo humano frente a los nuevos descubrimientos anatómicos del siglo XVI" (138). These new discoveries in anatomy and medical science of the 16th and 17th centuries served to accentuate the already passionate debates surrounding the place of women in a continually changing social body. María Helena Sánchez Ortega observes that "Since ancient times, woman has been the object of accusations that have essentially transformed her into the source of all suffering" (196). Classical and Judeo-Christian history "associate her with the appearance of sudden illness, death, accidents, and even metaphysical malaise. Eve, Lilith, Delilah, Pandora, and Helen are names that immediately bring to mind the misfortunes befalling men who trusted women" (Sánchez Ortega 196). This fear of the female interior is resultant of a long line of medical thought that begins with the female anatomy, the uterus.¹⁶

The uterus in pre-modern culture seemed to share a set of common attributes with disease. Like disease, the uterus operated according to its own laws, travelled at its own pace, hid itself from the searching gaze of natural scientists, and demonstrated its presence by a token: blood. (Sawday 10)

Sawday's reference to blood stems from female menses, which adds depth to our interpretation of the Medusa. Likewise, he fuses the uterus to the unpredictable characteristics of disease that stereotype patriarchal understandings of women. In Covarrubias's definition of Medusa he signals that once Perseus decapitates the gorgon "[the head] la trajo consigo y atravesando con ella por los desiertos a África las gotas que caían del cuello se convertían en sierpes." Additionally, in the Spanish born Roman poet's *Pharsalia*, Lucan comments that "when her [Medusa's] head was cut off, serpents were bred from the fallen blood" (Garber and Vickers 40). Concurring with this definition of Medusa's blood morphing into snakes is the description that the *Diccionario de Autoridades* furnishes for "BASILISCO. s. m. Espécie de serpiente, que segun Plínio, y otros Autóres se cría en los desisertos de Africa . . . Es fama vulgar que con la vista y resuello mata, por ser eficacissimo su veneno . . . No solo como el *Basilisco* siendo mirado mata los cuerpos; empéro con solo el deséo . . . inferna las almas." Consequently, the blood that Perseus lets plummet to the ground from Medusa's head metamorphoses into basilisks. It is important to illustrate that

¹⁶ As of 2016 the *Diccionario de la lengua española* of the Real Academia Española still associates hysteria with the female gender, just as in classical thought movements of the uterus provoke its onset: "histeria. i. f. Med. Enfermedad nerviosa, crónica, más frecuente en la mujer que en el hombre, caracterizada por gran variedad de síntomas, principalmente funcionales, y a veces por ataques convulsivos" (RAE).

Medusa's blood is female blood, but it remains blood, one of the four corporeal humors. These fantastical demonstrations of the magical and evil powers that female blood possesses explain, in part, why "Traditionally, women have . . . been regarded as the repositories of supernatural powers, which they have used to aid their lovers, but which they have also used against them . . ." (Sánchez Ortega 196). Certainly women are not merely unpredictable, but on a more innate level than this, the blood that courses through their veins provides a medical and hereditary explanation for their status as *pharmakos*.

Following this tradition of male fear for unpredictable women expressed in mythology, Cervantes's Marcela envenoms Grisóstomo and the male goatherds that revere her beauty. Earlier, we reviewed the microcosmic and macrocosmic relationships that influenced Grisóstomo's misreading of Marcela's feelings for him and engender his suicide. After his death, we encounter the student of Salamanca's fellow shepherd, Ambrosio, and their goatherd friends, gathered around the site of his tomb reading his last words in a poem clarifying his failed love story. Grisóstomo's verses depict a pastoral tale of love and place the blame of its catastrophic ending upon the object of his desires.¹⁷ Marcela appears out of nowhere and perches herself upon a rock above the congregation of goatherds, Don Quijote, Sancho Panza and Ambrosio, as if to preemptively defy the dead student's self-eulogy before she even utters a single word. Ambrosio, offended at the presence of who he perceives as his friend's assassin, questions her and likens her to a basilisk: "¿Vienes a ver, por ventura, ¡oh fiero basilisco de estas montañas!, si con tu presencia vierten sangre las heridas de este miserable a quien tu crueldad quitó la vida?" (Cervantes 125). The interrogative interjection of Ambrosio elucidates two vital elements to understanding exactly how the goatherds, and the other male spectators of this tale, view Marcela. Firstly, as Francisco Rico illustrates in a footnote to his edition of the *Quijote*: "Era y es creencia popular que el cadáver sangra en presencia del asesino" (125). There is no doubt in the mind of the male spectator of this intercalated story that Marcela is a murderer. The physiological reaction of Grisóstomo's dead corpse, if it bleeds in the presence of his killer, will deliver medical evidence of this. Secondly, Marcela kills in the same manner that the basilisk or Medusa does, those who gaze upon her perish since they find themselves powerless before her beauty. Ambrosio goes so far as to label her with the title basilisk, denoting her poisonous attributes and unifying her story to that already long line of dangerous and venomous females.

In her article "The Pastoral Episode," Yvonne Jehenson calls attention to "Marcela's unconventional defense of a woman's right to choose her own life style, and the author's unconventional handling of the episode" (16). Specifically, Cervantes's treatment of this episode and Marcela's defense of her right to choose break pastoral social codes. According to Jehenson, "Pastoral is a male fantasy, a microcosmic image of man's gender-inflected wish fulfillment" (19). The pastoral genre portrays a utopian world in which Don Quijote informs us that those who inhabited it "ignoraban estas dos palabras de *tuyo y mío*" (Cervantes 97). It is a world of perfection where there is no need to own or be owned and there is no lacking or wanting. However, it is a male invention that sets up binary dichotomies, harnessing male and female actors to their utopian roles, since functioning outside of these roles will require a certain level of ambition and egocentrism. Marcela, a free woman who wishes to roam the mountains attending to her sheep, interrupts this world creating a rift in the system. Jehenson explains that male female tension, their adhering to traditional binary roles, is what "keeps the system together, latent-

¹⁷ For a reading on the pastoral tradition see Paul Alpers's *What Is Pastoral?* Also see Yvonne Jehenson's article "The Pastoral Episode in Cervantes' *Don Quijote*: Marcela Once Again," for a reading of the pastoral tradition in the Marcela and Grisóstomo intercalation of *El Quijote*.

ly, by virtue of [female] exclusion” from the structures of power, or freedom to roam about at will (20). To this end, when Marcela erupts onto the scene after the goatherds and Grisóstomo have, in their minds, successfully held up their end of the pastoral social code by placing blame where it belongs, she fractures the system. “Marcela refuses to be silent, refuses to be blamed for Grisóstomo’s suicide, and refuses to vindicate herself within the terms of the binarisms used to malign her” (Jehenson 26). Pastoral tradition compelled female participants to willingly receive masculine declarations of love. In his discourse on this joyous golden age Don Quijote unveils the pastoral breaking point, where all began to unravel:

Las doncellas y la honestidad andaban . . . por dondequiera . . .
sin temor . . . y su perdición nacía de su gusto y propia voluntad. Y
ahora, en estos nuestros detestables siglos, no está segura ninguna
. . . porque por allí, por los resquicios o por el aire, . . . se les entra la
amorosa pestilencia . . . (Cervantes 98)

Don Quijote indicates that all lived in pastoral harmony until the system’s undoing, signified by feminine desire and taste. In a word, pastoral social codes dictate that women must only crave that which their male counterparts inspire in them, else the system cease to function properly. Don Quijote, comparing the pastoral society with his own contemporary circumstances, continues by elucidating his distaste for modernity and signaling that no woman or person is now safe from ‘amorous pestilence.’ His choice of metaphor guides the reader to medicine. Francisco Rico’s footnote to “pestilencia” sheds light on the pastoral understanding of love: “El amor fue considerado hasta el Renacimiento como una enfermedad” (98). Thus feminine love and desire, considered a form of ailment, unravel the utopian pastoral world.

Nonetheless, Marcela will not stand by idly accepting her relegation to an obligatory obedience of pastoral dichotomy:

Y así como la víbora no merece ser culpada por la ponzoña que tiene,
reprehendida por ser hermosa, que la hermosura en la mujer
hermosa es como el fuego apartado o como la espada aguda, que
ni él quema ni ella corta a quien a ellos no se acerca. (Cervantes
126)

The shepherdess defends herself against Ambrosio’s accusation that she is a basilisk and concurrently accepts it, declaring that the beautiful woman is no more or less liable for her attractiveness than the viper is for its venom; those who hold their distance will not come into harms way. The same may be said of the Medusa, for she would not cause harm to those who merely held their distance, away from her gaze. Consequently, Marcela consents to Ambrosio’s positioning of her as ailment yet simultaneously questions the culpability attributed to her power and to illness itself. Perhaps the reasoning supporting her acceptance of the accusation that she is an infirmity may be found in the operative actions of the basilisk’s venomous characteristics stemming from gaze.

Sergei Lobanov-Rostovsky reminds us that

In Galenic theory, the eye is both sovereign and implicitly *male*: it engenders the visible world by its projection of spiritual substance, the “pneuma” that flows out through the hollow optic nerve, exciting the surrounding air and translating it into a receptive body made “sympathetic . . . with the change effected by the outflow of the pneuma into it.” (198)

Since the Platonic pneuma is an ocular phenomenon that traditionally originates in the mascu-

line eye, in female possession pneuma's power generates male fear. "Crucially, it is not female desire that the image of the basilisk invokes but a male fear of the woman's gaze, which threatens to solicit or destroy male desire" (Lobanov-Rostovsky 206). Marcela realizes that she breaks from traditional pastoral dichotomies and admits to their existence, yet she questions their relative-ness. If she is indeed a basilisk or Medusa-like figure she possesses a power that will disrupt the status quo. "As a metaphor for desire, the basilisk is an equivocal figure: it poisons, as Pliny notes, both by the power of its gaze and by attracting the gaze of its victim" (Lobanov-Rostovsky 207). Marcela's refusal to remain silent, thereby forcing acceptance of her positioning as female in a masculine dominant pastoral world, envenoms the social organization. Society "depended on her silence for its perpetuation" (Jehenson 26). Accordingly, if Marcela maintains silence she promotes the healthy structure of pastoral society. Nevertheless, feminine vociferation defending her position reveals her unhealthy attributes and likewise her station as *pharmakos*. Her ability to speak or to remain silent signifies a change in static gender dichotomies and presents a danger to masculine sensibilities; much like the Medusa's ability to cast her gaze upon her onlookers thereby turning them to stone or to be covered in Perseus's kibisis¹⁸ and rendered harmless.

The Marcela-Grisóstomo intercalated story closes with the shepherdess vanishing into the mountains, prohibiting her masculine counterparts any opportunity to retort or reject her discourse. Essentially, Marcela's defense of her position disarms the entire male-projected fantasy of the utopian pastoral social construct that Jehenson, as well as Don Quijote, refer to. For Foucault Utopia is an unreal place, such as is the pastoral world, projected to appease male desire. The goatherds, Grisóstomo and Ambrosio attempt to mirror the pastoral world and in doing so misread astral influence on the microcosm since Marcela refuses to take part in the mirrored utopian image. For Grisóstomo and the goatherds this refusal to adhere to traditional gender roles signifies a dystopia. Notwithstanding, when Marcela disrupts this projection upon the mirror she creates a third space for herself. Foucault refers to these other spaces that are neither utopias nor dystopias as heterotopias:

The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens behind the surface . . . But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality . . . From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. (Of 24)

If the pastoral world is a male projected Utopia, and therefore cannot exist as a real space, then Marcela's rejection of that world calls attention to the absence of female voice in real spaces, in heterotopias, which are other spaces that are not traditionally recognized. Cervantes mirrors the pastoral world, but discovers the absence of female voice therein. Ultimately, the episode of Don Quijote, Marcela, Grisóstomo and the goatherds directs our perspective toward an idealized systematic organization of the Republic¹⁹, only to then shatter it with death—the result of an inharmonic balance of the humors and an incorrect dosage of female ideology, a misused *pharmakos* in the form of female voice. And just as the Derridean *pharmakos* is simultaneously absent and always present in the word chain, pastoral female actors exist and yet lack formal recognition.

¹⁸ According to Wilk the kibisis was "a bag of some kind, into which Perseus was to place the Gorgon's head" (21). Although it appears that the translation and etymology of the word from ancient Greek are ambiguous.

¹⁹ Republic should be understood in its original Latin form: *Res* "entity or concern" + *publicus* "of the people, public."

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