

POETIC LANGUAGE AND THE DISSOLUTION OF
THE SUBJECT IN
LA GITANILLA AND *EL LICENCIADO VIDRIERA*

María Antonia Garcés
Cornell University

Textbook definitions are comfortingly simple: prose is one thing, poetry another. Nevertheless, the work of the Russian Formalists, followed by the dazzling expositions of the structuralist linguist Roman Jakobson, have made us rethink the concept of "poetic language," one that surpasses the notions of "poetry" or verse.¹ Coming close to what the Formalists called trans-rational language, poetic language stands in opposition to spoken language, whose basic purpose is communication (Roudiez, Introduction 2). Jakobson has demonstrated in another context, regarding the relationship between poetry and poetic language, that "any attempt to reduce the sphere of the poetic function to poetry or to confine poetry to the poetic function, would be a delusive oversimplification." Formulated another way, if the poetic function oversteps the limits of poetry, it is because it constitutes the "dominant, determining function" of verbal art (Jakobson, "Linguistics" 69).

Julia Kristeva's concept of "poetic language," however, transcends the realms of "literature" and linguistic codes as viewed by the Russian Formalists and Jakobson, among others.² By taking into account the role of the subject—a heterogenous, oscillating "*sujet en procès*" (subject in process/on trial)—in the creation of literary and artistic works, Kristeva explores the manner in which the text parallels the logic of the unconscious.³ In such inquiry, Kristeva follows Lacan, for whom the "Freudian thing" is not the ego or the "self" but the subject of the unconscious—the subject over which the unconscious holds sway. Her focus is the decentering of the ego and the subversion of consciousness, a process that also takes place within the realms of literature and art (Lechte 33-35). This approach distinguishes Kristeva's study of poetic language, whose meaning for the most part escapes the speaking subject since it includes a "heterogeneousness" to meaning—that is, a plurality of meaning—that threatens the collapse of the signifying function (*Desire* 124-35; *Revolution* 57-61). Furthermore, as Kristeva has brilliantly shown in her studies of Mallarmé and Lautréaumont, the literary, poetic text is the *mise en scène* of the unconscious.⁴

Kristeva's work concentrates on the physical, material aspect of language, namely, on the "musical" and nonsense effects—such as a particular rhythm or intonation—that destroy accepted beliefs and significations and, sometimes, even syntax itself. These heterogeneous textual operations signal the presence of poetic language (*Desire* 133). Defined by Kristeva as almost an otherness of language in which the dialectics of the subject is inscribed (*Desire* 25), poetic language reveals a rhythmic rapture, a repetitive sonority which thrusts within and against the system of language. The conflict between semiotic rhythms and symbolic constraints (the system of language) comes to the fore in two of Cervantes's best known works: *La gitanilla* and *El licenciado Vidriera*. While the first narrative exhibits in particular the musical or poetic side of language, the latter exposes the unsettling process brought about by the operations of poetic language, one that questions the identity—and nearly accomplishes the destruction—of the speaking subject.⁵ By focussing initially on Cervantes's relation to poetry, I propose to explore the crisis of meaning and the disorderly multiplicity that characterize poetic language in these novellas, both of which deal with questions of alterity and Cervantine poetics.

"Yo, socarrón; yo poetón ya viejo"

A cursory view of Spanish literature in the second half of the sixteenth- and first half of the seventeenth-century exposes such a concentration of poetic talent that warrants calling this period an age of poetry. Certainly, the major achievements of Spanish literature around the time of Cervantes's birth (1547) belong to poetry. It is poetry that is felt to be the pure canonical voice of literature, its perfect incarnation, in opposition to history. Cervantes's return to Spain after his release from captivity in 1580 coincides with the explosion of poetic forms that started with the appearance of Herrera's famous commentary on the poetry of Garcilaso. Such outbursts of poetic activity extended into the following decades with the work of Quevedo, Lope de Vega, and Góngora, among other luminaries who shared the limelight with Cervantes.⁶

Presumably, this poetic atmosphere with its aesthetic innovations opened the avenues for the creation of the great festival of Spanish prose inaugurated by Cervantes. In this sense, the writer's prose is not only that peculiar to an age of poetry: it is also the prose of a poet with its particular stamp. A first-hand witness to the artistic exploits of his age, Cervantes emerges as a genuinely talented poet who is finally overshadowed by his own fame as a novelist. "La pluma que escribió *El Quijote* es la misma que escribió los versos, los entremeses,

y las novelas" writes Ricardo Rojas in his *Cervantes*. Confirming this assertion, Gaos expands Rojas's views: "Así es, en efecto . . . Pero, a la vez, es gracias al *Quijote* y a sus demás obras maestras en prosa, como únicamente podemos percibir la grandeza de su obra en verso . . . La poesía cervantina posee las mismas cualidades esenciales de su prosa y el brillo y genio de ésta no dejan de traslucirse en su verso (Introduction to *Viaje* 14)."

References to Cervantes's love for poetry traverse his *obra*, from the opening lines of *La Galatea* (1585), which highlight "la inclinación a la poesía [que] siempre he tenido" (737), to his intellectual biography in *Viaje del Parnaso* (1614), which confirms that: "desde mis tiernos años amé / el arte dulce de la agradable poesía" (103; IV, 31-32).⁷ Don Quijote's niece was certainly right when, fearing a new onslaught of madness for her uncle, she imagined what his new whims would be like: "de hacerse pastor a andarse por los bosques cantando y tañendo, y, lo que sería peor, hacerse poeta, que es enfermedad incurable y pegadiza" (*Don Quijote* I, 6). Such illness indeed accompanied Cervantes till the end, as revealed by the closing lines of *Viaje del Parnaso*, where he humorously acknowledges his commitment to poetry and his decrepitude: "Yo, socarrón; yo poetón ya viejo" (*Viaje* 175; VIII, 409).

The preoccupation with the nature and excellence of poetry remains, in effect, constant throughout Cervantes's life.⁸ This is specially evident in *Viaje del Parnaso*, which constitutes both an ironic self-examination and a satire on the proliferation of good and bad poetry that circulated in Spain during the early seventeenth-century (Rivers 103). Whatever the problematic nature of Cervantes's praise for Lope and diverse contemporaries in this autobiographical composition, his genuine appreciation of the Argensola brothers, among others, proclaims his steady commitment to classical poetry. More enthusiastic is Cervantes's applause of Quevedo, whose burlesque works probably influenced *Viaje del Parnaso*, especially the *Adjunta* that closes this lengthy poetic work (Rivers 144). As "hijo de Apolo" and "de Calíope Musa," Quevedo is transformed by Cervantes's hand into "el flagelo de poetas mismos," whose function is to chase second-rate poets from Parnassus (*Viaje* 78; II, 305-310).

Viaje del Parnaso, however, offers other glimpses into Cervantes's poetics. Transcending his well-known devotion to Garcilaso, which remained unchanged throughout his career, Cervantes's praise of Góngora, among the truly creative poets valued in this work, make him one of the first to applaud the poetic changes introduced by the Baroque.⁹ Extraordinarily meaningful, in this sense, are Cervantes's allusions to the Cordovan poet in the great battle of the books that takes place in *el Parnaso*—where "el magno cordobés" defeats four

squadrons of bad poets with the powerful impact of one of his notebooks (*Viaje* 157; VII, 256-58). This move opens the way for the tribute to *Polifemo*, which follows in the same battle, constituting one of the first appreciations of Góngora's poem in early modern Spain (*Viaje* 159; VII, 322-27). Cervantes's appreciation of Góngora not only calls attention to his poetic insight, but also marks his position in regards to the Andalusian poet, despised by many in Madrid. In fact, one would be tempted to see a parallel between the fate of Góngora, who was literally and metaphorically exiled from the Spanish capital, and that of Cervantes, isolated and ignored by the petty literary world of seventeenth-century Madrid. The self-portrait that emerges in *Viaje* suggests how painful this alienation was for the writer:

Por esto me congojo y me lastimo
de verme solo en pie, sin que se aplique
árbol que me conceda algún arrimo (*Viaje* 103; IV, 43-45)

Even more, beyond his evident worth as one of the great poets of the Baroque, the prominence acquired by Góngora in *Viaje del Parnaso* may also be read in terms of an unconscious identification on the part of Cervantes with the bard from Córdoba. These affinities would illuminate Rivers's assertion that, in spite of his social and personal problems: "Cervantes era todavía capaz de reconocer desapasionadamente los auténticos valores poéticos de Góngora" (145).

Such commentaries, of course, point to the fortunes of Cervantes as a poet. We might recall, in this regard, Lope de Vega's scathing remarks on Cervantes, which appeared months before the publication of *Don Quijote*: "De poetas no digo buen siglo es éste. Muchos en cierne para el año que viene; pero ninguno hay tan malo como Cervantes ni tan bueno que alabe a don Quijote" (Letter to an unknown addressee, 4 August, 1604; *Epistolario* III, 4).¹⁰ This bitter judgement, which paradoxically announced the overwhelming success of *Don Quijote*, was corrected by Lope himself in his *Laurel de Apolo* (1630), years after Cervantes's death:

La fortuna insidiosa
Hirió la mano de Miguel de Cervantes
Pero su ingenio en versos de diamantes
Los del plomo volvió con tanta gloria,
Que por dulces, sonoros y elegantes
Dieron eternidad a su memoria . . . (Silva XVII, 218)

This praise notwithstanding, the Phoenix's early condemnation, fortified by further insults from envious contemporaries, gave rise to

"la leyenda negra" that colored the poetry of Cervantes since the times of Lope and Villegas (Rivers 120).¹¹ Much past and recent criticism, accordingly, has been devoted to proving, in often brilliant detail, that Cervantes was either an extraordinarily qualified or a dreadfully mediocre poet.¹² In addition, as Arthur Terry has noted (28), one of the difficulties in approaching Cervantes's poetry is that, apart from *Viaje del Parnaso*, the writer published no collection of verse, and that the majority of his poems and songs are contained in his works of fiction. A conscientious review of these works reveals—to use the felicitous expression of Gerardo Diego—that because of his primary condition as a novelist, Cervantes was also in verse: "un gran poeta de lo exterior, un paisajista, un marinista . . . , un maravilloso retratista, un humorista genial" (236). These views are upheld by Rivers in his remarkable study of Cervantes's *Viaje del Parnaso* and remaining disseminated poetry, one that surveys a range of Cervantine creations, from *La Galatea* to *Persiles*. Defending the poetry of Cervantes, Rivers states that the writer "sabía que él no era ningún Garcilaso; pero también sabía que entre los muchos poetas-tros contemporáneos suyos era él de los más serios y mejores" (120).

These words support the significant assertions made by both Gaos and Rivers in regards to the remarkable quality of various Cervantine sonnets. The song of Gelasia in *La Galatea*—"¿Quién dejará del verde parado umbroso?"—, the exquisite "Cuando Preciosa el panderete toca" in *La gitanilla*, as well as several sonnets from *Persiles*, speak to Cervantes's mastery of poetry. Some of these sonnets have elicited a notable commentary from Gerardo Diego:

Cervantes se traduce a sí mismo al componer en verso . . . el resultado es el verso memorable y de larga estela, el verso de gran estilo, el inequívoco de gran poeta que ni por casualidad puede cazar el poeta vulgar en la lotería de las palabras . . . : "Mar sesgo, viento largo, estrella clara . . ." (220-21)

But it is in his traditional compositions, such as the *romances* and *seguidillas* included in his *Novelas ejemplares* and his *Comedias*, that Cervantes excels and shows his admirable skills as a poet. The lovely *romances* of *La gitanilla*, the *seguidillas* from *Rinconete y Cortadillo*—"Por un sevillano rufo a lo valón. . ."—, the song of *El celoso extremeño*—"Madre, la mi madre . . ."—, the ballad of *La ilustre fregona*—"¿Dónde estás que no pareces?"—constitute evidence of Cervantes's mastery in these favored genres. These popular compositions achieve their richest expressions in Cervantes's *comedias*, turning the author into a match for the finest authorities in traditional lyrics—Lope, Góngora, Quevedo. Gaos's eloquent words make the

point: "Por su abundancia y excelencia a la par, nadie, fuera de Lope, supera aquí a Cervantes, ni puede ostentar un florilegio tan consumado como el que forman . . . [estas] composiciones" (Introduction to *Poesías II*, 18). Indeed, as various critics have maintained, the poetic compositions inserted in his *Novelas ejemplares* suffice to give Cervantes his due as an outstanding poet (Gaos, Introduction to *Poesías II*, 16).¹³ It is to these narratives that I shall turn, then, for an exploration of Cervantes's poetics.

"También hay poetas que se acomodan con gitanos"

Two marginalized characters—a gypsy girl and a madman—in *La gitanilla* and *El licenciado Vidriera* offer us some of Cervantes's most explicit views on poetry.¹⁴ Dealing with questions of alterity and of boundaries, these novellas serve as a vehicle for the writer's poetics at the same time that they exemplify his dictum that "la Poesía verdadera . . . [tiene un] no sé qué de inexcrutable" (*Viaje* 110; ch. IV, 213). And inscrutable she is, as we follow her transformations in these two different narratives. The gypsy-girl's appearances, in *La gitanilla*, among outbursts of music, song, and dance, confirm her identification with "la doncella Poesía," as suggested by the famous lines: "Salió Preciosa rica de villancicos, de coplas, seguidillas y zarabandas, y de otros versos, especialmente de romances" (62).¹⁵ For a multiplicity of reasons, this phrase resounds with suggestive connotations: on the one hand, the popular genres ascribed to Preciosa are those in which Cervantes particularly excels and, on the other, these are some of the very genres deployed with fanfare in *La gitanilla*—a novella that offers a splendid illustration of seventeenth-century romances and traditional compositions.

Likewise, if the musical ambiance of *La gitanilla* seems to be a projection of the gypsy-girl's "romances y seguidillas," it also operates as a magic scenario on which Cervantes displays the dance of his prose. This prose glides to the melodies of Preciosa's songs, soaring to altitudes seldom attained before. No other Cervantine fiction possesses the entrancing appeal and infectious gaiety of this novella, which vibrates with the charms of the heroine's *gaia sciencia*. The Dueña Dolorida's words in *Don Quijote II*, concerning the seductive powers of song and verse, seem to have been written to describe the atmosphere of *La gitanilla*: "Allí era el brincar de las almas, el retozar de la risa, el desasosiego de los cuerpos, el azogue de todos los sentidos" (II, 38).

The magical aura displayed by this novella infiltrates the narrative to the effect that, beyond the relationship between Preciosa and Juan de Cárcamo, or between Preciosa and the poet Clemente, the

love story recounted in this fiction seems to be that of the maiden with the narrator of her story, in other words, between Preciosa and "su autor." More important, as a fountain of songs and a remarkable singer of the *romances y seguidillas* that Cervantes particularly admired ("que los cantaba [ella] con especial donaire") (62), Preciosa seems to personify the poetic essence of her creator. Alban Forcione (118-19) has suggested, in fact, that the gypsy-girl's command of language, her amazing worldliness, tactful irony, and consistent ambiguities turn her into an artistic surrogate of Cervantes. Emerging as an alter ego of the poet, Preciosa confirms Don Quijote's dictum that "la pluma es la lengua del alma" (*Don Quijote* II, XVI).

These allusions perhaps explain the narrator's adoption of a combined parental image regarding his heroine in *La gitánilla*, one that recalls the ambiguous parthenogenic role performed by Cervantes in the Prologue to his *Novelas ejemplares*: "éstas [novelas] son mías propias . . . mi ingenio las engendró, mi pluma las parió, y van creciendo en los brazos de la estampa" (I, 52). In *La gitánilla*, the writer abandons the part of "el padrastra" that characterized his approach to *Don Quijote* in order to play that of a symbolic father who whispers instructions into Preciosa's ear. The parenthetical intrusion of the narrator, which surfaces when the gypsy-girl attempts to revive Juan de Cárcamo from a fainting spell caused by jealousy, poses some questions, such as: "Who is speaking in this passage?" Indeed, the author's identification with his characters becomes even more complex in the scene in which Preciosa's grandmother—"la abuela putativa"—recounts her misadventures in Seville. At this moment, the narrative voice merges with that of "[la] taimada abuela," attributing her misfortunes to an "embuste mío" and, then, more clearly, to "mi embuste" (116). These displacements—which disrupt syntax and grammar—point to the displaced positions of the author-narrator who infiltrates the indirect discourse of the gypsy grandmother in order to assume full responsibility for her lies.

Corresponding to what Kristeva calls the "materiality of language" (Lechte 48), these vicissitudes of narration raise some questions in regard to this novella, for instance: Who, or what is speaking in Cervantes's text? More precisely, between the narrator, Preciosa, Clemente the poet, the mysterious paternal figure who coaches the gypsy-girl, "la taimada abuela," and Cervantes himself, who is really speaking? Is it possible to suggest that the subject of Cervantes's writing in *La gitánilla* is a divided subject which comes to occupy all discursive instances? Could we not say, then, following Kristeva, that this plurality of voices, these multiplications of the discursive instances are evocative of the unconscious—that the *mise en scène* as such is speaking: "ça parle"?¹⁶

Furthermore, if the literary, poetic text is the *mise en scène* of the unconscious, the narrator's love affair with Preciosa could only be illuminated by his affinities with the gypsy grandmother who literally "created" *la Gitanilla*: "a quien puso por nombre Preciosa, y a quien enseñó todas sus gitanerías y modos de embelecocos, y trazas de hurtar" (61).¹⁷ The writer's identification with "[la] gitana vieja graduada en la ciencia de Caco" (61)—an *other*, renowned for her fictions, her tricks, her artfulness, and, especially, her thieveries, is not fortuitous. Poetry, Cervantes appears to tell us, is nourished by such attributes. Likewise, the radical alterity of the old gypsy-woman, and her marginality in regard to society, seem appropriate to describe the position of the poet-writer since, as Kristeva reminds us, writing is impossible without some kind of exile ("A New Type of Intellectual" 298).¹⁸

On the hither side of representation, poetic language involves contradictions which bring to light the heterogeneity of language, one that illuminates the "subject in process" (in process/on trial)—a bodily subject that surfaces as transgressive practice. Undermining the sovereignty of the symbolic subject, the subject of consciousness, this oscillating, "subject in process" speaks with the multiple voices of the poet. The knot is tied at the closure of *La gitanilla*, when Cervantes bequeaths his novella to the poets from the city of Murcia: "los poetas de la ciudad, que hay algunos, y muy buenos, tomaron a cargo celebrar el extraño caso, juntamente con la sin igual belleza de la Gitanilla" (134). This meaningful ending confirms the relevance of Poetry in the art of Cervantes, at the same time that it exposes his view of himself as a poet (Forcione 220).

"Sacó la grandeza de Roma por sus despedazados mármoles "

As if sanctioning the inscrutable nature of the poetic venture, Poetry appears under a radically different guise in *El licenciado Vidriera*. We all know the story of the unfortunate scholar who eats a *membrillo toledano* offered by an ardent female lover, a feast from which he emerges raving mad. Vidriera's scathing remarks on social characters and professions, pronounced under his experience of madness, constitute the most extensive part of this novella, which takes its name from that of the madman. Like Preciosa, who alludes to the subject of Poetry in the midst of her songs, Vidriera confronts the topic of Poetry in the midst of his ravings. In effect, the passage that discusses Poetry in *El licenciado Vidriera* departs from the distinctive pattern of maxims and fragmented phrases that characterize Vidriera's alienation, in order to occupy a lengthy segment of the madman's discourse. By citing Plato, who describes poets as "intér-

pretes de los dioses" (58), Vidriera implicitly evokes the Bacchic transports peculiar to lyric poets: possessed by a sort of demonic frenzy, the wretched artists are inexorably condemned to comply with the raging demands of harmony and rhythm (Plato, *Ion* 147). Vidriera's emphasis, however, is not on those "intérpretes de los dioses" that Plato praised in his tribute to the *Iliad*, but on "los malos, los churrulleros, . . . que son la idiotez y la arrogancia del mundo" (58-59). Most of Vidriera's critique, in effect, centers on the ludicrous defects of false poets, who are bitterly ridiculed by his tongue. There is an *other*, however, filed away among the "objects" of scrutiny of Vidriera's cutting eye, an *other* which escapes the irony of the madman: "la poesía . . . que en[cierr]a en sí todas las demás ciencias" (58), namely, the poem, in the sense that it is rhythm, death and future.

Significantly, if Vidriera's language, hardened along the rigid lines of the aphorism, murders the poem, the first part of Cervantes's tale, which recounts Tomás Rodaja's Italian pilgrimage, is distinguished by its "poetic language." I am referring to the eruption within the order of language of an anteriority of language that evokes a mythic time, receptive to the cadence of rhythms and their forms. More strikingly, poetic language appears in this novella through the incessant repetition of names and toponyms that punctuates this part of the narrative. Recall, for instance, the rhythmic journey through the melodic list of Spanish and Italian wines which bear the names of the villages and towns that generate them: "Allí conocieron la suavidad del Treviano, el valor del Montefrascón, la fuerza del Asperino, la generosidad de los dos griegos, Candía y Soma, la grandeza del de las Cinco Viñas, la dulzura y apacibilidad de la señora Guarnacha" (48). Becoming pure cadence, the rhythmical accentuation and repetitive sonority of Cervantes's prose reveal the presence of poetic language.

The journey continues through the melodious enumeration of European cities and sites arranged in a symmetrical order, and the lyrical inventory of the streets of Rome "que solo con el nombre cobran autoridad sobre todas las ciudades del mundo." "Roma, reina de las ciudades y señora del mundo" (49), thus invokes the most expressive descriptions of the erudite narrator. Swayed by the rhythms of his prose, we follow the character's appraisal of a grand civilization through the vision of its ruins: "Sacó la [grandeza] de Roma por sus despedazados mármoles, medias y enteras estatuas, por sus rotos arcos y derribadas termas, por sus magníficos pórticos y anfiteatros grandes, por su famoso y santo río, que siempre llena sus márgenes de agua" (II, 49).

The eloquent cadence of these phrases recalls Gerardo Diego's words on the delicate acoustic and musical receptivity of Cervantes,

whose texts speak to his appreciation "de la rítmica del arte y de la naturaleza, de la música sonora y la música del silencio" (227).¹⁹ This musical sonority resounds in the moving recollection of Rome, the ancient city that left an indelible mark on Cervantes. Let us evoke, for instance, the beautiful sonnet of *Persiles* which describes "[el] tier-no afecto" and the marvelous wonder experienced by the pilgrim/poet who contemplates Rome for the first time:

!Oh grande, oh poderosa, oh sacrosanta
alma ciudad de Roma! A tí me inclino,
devoto, humilde y nuevo peregrino
a quien admira ver belleza tanta . . . (*Persiles*, IV, iii, 426)

In *El licenciado Vidriera*, however, the lyrical citation of the streets and monuments of Rome suddenly gives way to another scenario. The eye now confronts the sight of Naples, a view that immediately shifts to that of Palermo and Messina, in a jarring litany of sites that does away with human beings. In fact, the melodic continuity that distinguished the first part of Tomás Rodaja's trip literally collapses under the uncontrollable diffusion of heterogeneous elements that infiltrates poetic discourse. In this crisis of enunciation—which is also a crisis of identity for the subject—Tomás Rodaja fades, pulverized, as it were, by the avalanche of place names unleashed by the poet/narrator.²⁰ The protagonist's name actually disappears under the series of verbs that describe the primary action(s) of an implied, third-person subject: *vió, notó, miró*.²¹ The cryptic activities of this wandering Eye assuredly deserve some attention:

Llegó a Florencia, habiendo *visto* primero a Luca, . . . [donde] son bien *vistos* . . . los españoles; . . . [En Roma], todo lo *miró, notó* y puso en su punto . . . A la admiración que traía de *haber visto* a Roma añadió la que le causó *ver* a Nápoles, ciudad, a su parecer y al de todos cuantos la *han visto*, la mejor de Europa; . . . Fue a Sicilia, y *vio* a Palermo, y después a Micina . . . Fue a Nuestra Señora de Loretto y no *vio* paredes ni murallas . . . Llegó a Amberes, ciudad no menos para maravillar que las que había *visto* en Italia. *Vio* a Gante y a Bruselas y *vio* que todo el país se disponía a tomar las armas . . . Y habiendo cumplido con el deseo que lo movió a *ver* lo que había *visto*, determinó volverse a España y a Salamanca. (50-51, emphasis added)

The character, in these pages, seems to shrivel under the aegis of the insatiable eye that holds sway over the narrative. Cut out by the tyranny of the eye, the human body disappears from this panorama

of relics and historical landmarks that constitutes the solitary journey of Cervantes's peculiar traveller. Through this shattering of language which is, as well, a shattering of the body, Tomás literally vanishes from the text, demolished, so to speak, by the unsettling operations of poetic language. In fact, Tomás does not reappear as a proper name—that is, as a character—until the episode of the infamous *membrillo* which gives rise to his madness.

Accordingly, the crisis of signification brought about by poetic language is accompanied by a concomitant crisis of identity for both the narrator and the character. This crisis also affects the subject's identity, or, if you will, the "I" of the "poet." In order to examine the constitution of this poetic "I," let us look more closely at Cervantes's poetics. However rich and refined Cervantes's metaphors may be, they are not what determines and guides the lyric quality of poetic language in *El licenciado Vidriera*. It is the metonymical, not the metaphorical, passages that lend this work its poetic quality. Cervantes's lyricism, both in poetry and in prose, is imbued with metonymy. In contrast with Quevedo's poetry, the first person in this text—that is, in the travel section of Cervantes's tale—is banished to the background.²² But it is only an apparent relegation: here too, the poetic "I" is present—that is, metonymically present, or presented. I shall turn for an illustration to another poet, a writer celebrated for her poetic language.

We know that the death of Jacob Flanders, in Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, is never mentioned in the novel. This death is obliquely alluded to through a journey around the missing man's room, and a visit to the places and friends that he used to frequent, in the series of metonymic displacements that serve to express the inexpressible. Similarly, in *El licenciado Vidriera*, images of the surrounding world function as contiguous reflections, or metonymical representations of the character's psyche—and, indeed, of the subject. Hence, instead of entering the protagonist's mind, we get a depiction of a cultural voyage and a view of the objects that surround Tomás Rodaja: a catalog of wines, a list of place names, a fragmentary enumeration of European cities and towns, an index of ruins and famous archaeological sites and, among other things, the unmovable and shattered remnants of historic Rome.

Another writer, four centuries later, invoked the image of historic Rome as a metaphor for the workings of the psyche. Ancient Italy, in effect, had enormous symbolic repercussions for Freud, who demonstrated a keen interest in the excavations that were in full swing at the time that he began his self-analysis. Archaeology, then, became a metaphor for the process he called "psychoanalysis," which now developed into "a kind of archaeology of the individual psyche"

(Anzieu 178-79). The archaeologist, Freud tells us, so much resembles the student of primitive mental life that, upon arriving at a site, he may, "beginning from the visible remains, uncover what is buried: . . . the ruined walls are parts of the ramparts of a palace or treasure house, the fragments of columns can be filled out into a temple . . . : *Saxa loquuntur!* [Stones talk!]" (SE III: 192). Malcom Bowie (19) suggests that the speaking stones unearthed by the archaeologist's spade provided Freud with a promise of completeness and accuracy in his own scientific explanations. Beyond these phantasies of unitary and undefeated knowledge, however, Freud's dream stresses the symbolic import of the archaeological model—the image of the half-buried city that must be reconstructed from its ruins—as a metaphor for the psychical apparatus, an image already adumbrated by Cervantes in *El licenciado Vidriera*.²³

Like Cervantes, Freud had an intimate attachment to Rome, which for years he imagined as some kind of inaccessible city, both enticing because of its ancient associations, and menacing because it was the seat of the Church that persecuted the Jews (Anzieu 12). Freud referred to Imperial Rome in the elaborate fantasy that inaugurates *Civilization and its Discontents*, where he imagines what Rome would be like if it were not a physical entity but a psychical one, "in which nothing that has come into existence will have passed away":

This would mean that in Rome the palaces of the Caesars . . . would still be rising to their old height on the Palatine . . . In the place occupied by the Palazzo Caffirelli would once more stand—without the Palazzo having to be removed—the temple of Jupiter . . . and this not in its latest state, as the Romans of the Empire saw it, but also in its earliest one, when it still showed Etruscan forms . . . Where the Coliseum now stands we could at the same time admire Nero's vanished Golden House. On the Piazza of the Pantheon we should find not only the Pantheon of to-day . . . but, on the same site, the original edifice erected by Agrippa . . . And the observer would perhaps only have to change the direction of his glance or his position in order to call up one view or the other. (SE XI: 700)

Bowie pertinently notes (28) that, in this Roman fantasy, power increases exponentially as the imaginary observer "changes the direction of his glance or his position" and sees, as if magically rising before him, phase upon phase of Roman history. Like the wandering Eye ("I") of *El licenciado Vidriera*, Freud places himself in the position occupied by his imaginary observer of the ancient city. Nevertheless, while in Freud "the mind in turn is pictured zoologically, archaeologically, and anatomically," and each analogy is displaced yet pre-

served (Bowie 29), in Cervantes, the Roman fantasy does not prevent the speculative edifices from ruin, as the structural yet already fragmented model of the psychical apparatus crumbles under the disturbing operations of poetic language.

This deviation through Freud's archeological dreams take us back to *El licenciado Vidriera* and, specifically, to another panorama, that of the scene of Loretto which closes the Italian trip of the protagonist. A necessary sojourn in the Renaissance cultural journey, Loretto was, according to tradition, the place where the "House of the Virgin" was set by the angels who transported it from Nazareth at the end of the thirteenth century.²⁴ Mary was presumably born and Jesus Christ, conceived, in this *Santa Casa*.²⁵ The popular shrine was visited by innumerable pilgrims, as recounted by Michel de Montaigne in his *Journal de voyage* (246-52), which relates his 1580-1581 trip to Italy. For Cervantes's traveller, Loretto represents the last stop in his Italian expedition before returning to Spain via the Low Countries. The passage is reminiscent of others, marked by their poetic language: "Fue a Nuestra Señora de Loretto, en cuyo santo templo no vío paredes, ni murallas porque todas estaban cubiertas de muletas, de mortajas, de cadenas, de grillos, de esposas, de cabelleras, de medios bultos de cera y de pinturas" (II, 50).

The list refers to the tributes left by the pilgrims as an acknowledgement of the favors received through the intervention of the Virgin Mary. Yet the contrast of this description with the previous registers of the travelogue is striking. Deprived of the usual landscape of walls and structures ("no vío paredes, ni murallas"), the eye is forced to apprehend another scene. Like a monstrous repository of human refuse, the "Virgin's House" opens up to reveal heaps of debris and dismembered forms, emblems of mutilation, captivity, and disease that confront the viewer with the magnitude of their horror.²⁶ The eye is now riveted by the eery display of inanimate objects that make up this *tableau macabre*—the crutches, shrouds, chains, shackles, manacles, swatches of hair, wax busts, and paintings that lie scattered around, pointing to a reality that defies language.²⁷

One is tempted to ask now: "to whom does this I/Eye belong?" Ruth El Saffar fittingly observed the critical closeness of the narrator and the character of *El licenciado Vidriera*, especially in certain sections of the tale where their voices seem to merge (*Novel* 54-56). It is this collapse of the distance between the narrator and the protagonist's voices, joined to the perception of the world as an inanimate reality, that turn the scene of Loretto into one of the most disturbing passages of the Cervantine *obra*.²⁸ This scene drives the nameless subject to the limits of being, foreshadowing the future collapse of the signifying system in the commotion introduced by the encounter with the

membrillo.²⁹ If the ensuing, fragmented discourse of the madman exposes the workings of psychosis, the poetic language that surfaces in the first part of novella certainly generates what Kristeva denominates an outright destruction of meaning and of the speaking subject, one that also recalls the operations of psychosis (*Desire* 125).

As suggested in this essay, the ruins and shattered remnants of ancient Rome that appear in the first part of *El licenciado Vidriera* reflect, through a metonymic displacement, the state of the character's psyche—that is, of his mental apparatus. In the same way, the scene of Loretto, with its virtual textual disintegration, nearly accomplishes the demolition of the subject—the subject of discourse, the subject of the unconscious. Functioning as a powerful intimation of Tomás Rodaja's breakdown, this scene prefigures the painful fragmentation of the subject, illustrated through the delusional metaphor represented by the epithet *Vidriera*.

From a textual perspective, moreover, the panorama of Loretto operates as a *mise-en-abîme* of the narrative, one that simultaneously incarnates the perturbing operations of poetic language in their most disruptive form. In this perturbing process in which rhythmic bliss and sonorous repetition thrust within and against the system of language, the speaking subject goes through an infinite, repeated, multipliable dissolution that brings with it the destruction of transcendental meaning. These questions may hold a key for the production of a new space of significance in relation to the structure and meaning of *El licenciado Vidriera*, a text that, by the very economy of its poetic language—that is, by the crumbling logic of "the rhythmic, fundamental language"—borders on psychosis.

As paradigms of alterity and otherness, *La gitanilla* and *El licenciado Vidriera* speak of the conflicts between sense and nonsense, between language and rhythm, that bear the marks of the poet. This struggle that poetic language alone carries against death—a struggle that harries, exorcises, and invokes it at the same time—is expressed best of all by Cervantes himself in the lines that reveal his ultimate desire: "cantar con voz tan entonada y viva, / que piensen que soy cisne y que me muero." (*Viaje* 122; IV, 564-65).

Notes

¹The concept was introduced by the Russian Formalists, especially by Ossip Brik, founder of the Society of Poetic Language in Moscow (1916), whose members worked in conjunction with the Moscow Linguistic Circle. On poetic language, from another position, see Jakobson's classic "Linguistics and Poetics" in *Language in Literature* (62-94); of related interest are his "Language in Operation," on Edgar A. Poe (50-61); "On a Generation that

Squandered its Poets," on Majakovsky (273-300); and "On the Prose of the Poet Pasternak" (301-17), in the same volume.

²While acknowledging the import of Jakobson's contributions toward establishing phonology and structural linguistics in general, Kristeva pays tribute to the uniqueness of his research on poetic language, research that advances the theory of the unconscious. The ethical dimension of Jakobson's work is explored by Kristeva in *Desire* 26-35.

³For Kristeva's definition of the "subject in process," see *Desire* 135-36; and also, "Le sujet en procès," in *Polylogue* 65 ff.

⁴See Kristeva's analysis of Mallarmé's poetry in *Revolution*, especially 226-34; for her study of Lautréaumont's prose poems, see also *Revolution*, particularly 217-23; of related interest is her "Poésie et négativité," in *Séméiotiké* 247-77.

⁵For a cursory view of Kristeva's concept of the "semiotic" [*le sémiotique*], which introduces wandering or fussiness into language, and, *a fortiori*, into poetic language, see *Desire* 133-34, 136-37. From this viewpoint, poetic language would be a disposition that constitutes a mark of the working of drives in the text, one that constantly threatens the symbolic order.

⁶The seventeenth-century will come to its term with the work of another two great poets: Calderón de la Barca (1600-1685), and, across the Atlantic, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-1695).

⁷All quotations from *Viaje del Parnaso* are taken from Gaos's edition. In my text, the page number in this edition will be indicated first, followed by the chapter and line number of *Viaje del Parnaso*, i.e.: *Viaje* 132; [ch.] IV, [lines] 31-32. For an elegant study of Cervantes's fortunes as a poet, see Gaos's Introduction to *Viaje*, 7-37.

⁸For the import of the poetic concepts of the Renaissance on Cervantes's theory of the novel, see Riley, *Teoría de la novela en Cervantes* 104-07.

⁹The graceful stanzas dedicated to Góngora end with these meaningful verses: "aquel que tiene de escribir la llave / con gracia y agudeza de grado extremo, / que su igual en el orbe no se sabe; / es Don Luis de Góngora a quien temo / agraviar en mis cortas alabanzas, / aunque las suba al grado más supremo" (*Viaje* 69; IV, 55-60).

¹⁰The date of this letter—which has been questioned by Astrana Marín—certainly suggests that in the summer of 1604 Lope had already heard—or read—about the Knight from La Mancha and alluded to him five months before the story of his adventures appeared in print (Canavaggio 203).

¹¹For the bitter criticism of some of Cervantes's contemporaries, like Lope and Villegas, one that created "la leyenda negra" which tainted his poetry, see Gaos, Introduction to *Viaje* 14-19.

¹²See, among others, the work of Rojas, Cernuda, Gerardo Diego, Rivers and Gaos. The topic of this essay has not permitted me to mention some of Cervantes's most significant poetic compositions, such as his burlesque sonnets. For a lucid and comprehensive study on the subject, see Martín's *Cervantes and the Burlesque Sonnet*.

¹³See, for instance, the opinions of Valbuena Pratt and Blecua on the subject, cited by Gaos, Introduction to *Poesías II* 16.

¹⁴Quotations from *La gitanilla* and *El licenciado Vidriera* are taken from Harry Sieber's edition of Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares*.

¹⁵The definition of poetry that the poet Clemente gives to Preciosa stresses the similarities between the qualities of the gypsy-girl and those of "la doncella Poesía": "La poesía es una bellísima doncella, casta, honesta, discreta, aguda, retirada, y que se contiene en los límites de la discreción . . . Es amiga de la soledad. Las fuentes la entretienen, los prados la consuelan, los árboles la desenojan, las flores la alegran, y, finalmente, deleita y enseña a cuantos con ella comunican" (*La gitanilla* 91).

¹⁶The scope of this essay does not allow me to examine this unconscious dimension of the text in *La gitanilla*. For the text as *mise en scène* of the unconscious in Cervantes, see Garcés, "Zoraida's Veil: The 'Other Scene' of the *Captive's Tale*," and "Berganza and the 'Abject': The Desecration of the Mother."

¹⁷And again: "Y así, el águila vieja determinó sacar a volar su aguilucho y enseñarle a vivir por sus uñas" (*La gitanilla* 62).

¹⁸The radical otherness and exclusion of the gypsy woman from society contributed to turn her into the marginal being *par excellence* in early modern Spain. On the feminity, alterity, and errancy of the gypsy woman, see the suggestive article by Guillaume-Alonso, "Images de la femme gitane," 319-30. Consult also, Leblon, *Les Gitans D'Espagne*, and "Les gitans dans la Péninsule Ibérique," 1-24.

¹⁹Expanding his comments on the relation between Cervantes and music, Gerardo Diego states that: "[Cervantes] supo de orquestación de toda clase de instrumentos y se deleitó tantas veces con las voces purísimas desnudas en el bosque y vivió los ritmos de bailes y danzas con . . . garbo, ceñimiento y alegría contagiosa" (227).

²⁰On the "subject of enunciation," see Benveniste 217-18, and Kristeva, *Desire* 94, 127-28; for a discussion of these theories in the context of Benveniste's influence on Kristeva, see Lechte 69-73.

²¹El Saffar keenly observed in her study of *El licenciado Vidriera* that, during Tomás Rodaja's trip to Italy, the character "becomes pure transparency, simply conveying reactions and impressions" (*Novel* 54).

²²I am thinking of Quevedo's metaphysical and amorous poems, such as: a) "¡Ah de la vida!" . . . ¿nadie me responde?"; b) "¡Fue sueño ayer, mañana será tierra!"; c) Salmo IV: "¡Que tenga yo señor atrevimiento / (¿y quién me lo oye decir que no se espanta?) / de procurar con los pecados míos / agotar tu piedad o tu tormento!"; d) Salmo XVII: "Miré los muros de la patria mía / si un tiempo fuertes, ya desmoronados"; and d) "Cerrar podrá mis ojos la postrera / sombra que me llevare el blanco día : . . ." (*Poesías completas*).

²³On Cervantes as a cultural ancestor of Freud, see Grinberg and Rodríguez, in *Quixotic Desire* 23-33.

²⁴La "Santa Casa" was presumably flown by angels from Nazareth to Dalmatia; then, to Ancona (near Recanati), before being placed in a laurel grove [*lauretum*], which gave rise to the name of Loretto. See Montaigne, *Journal* 463, n. 22.

²⁵Montaigne's *Journal de voyage*, ed. Garavini, 246-52, and ed. Rigolot 138-43. On pilgrimage in the Renaissance, with a focus on Montaigne's journey to Loretto, see Bergé 597-607.

²⁶Contrast this representation with the extraordinarily similar description of the Shrine of Guadalupe in the *Persiles* (III, V: 305)—one not devoid of humor—and, again, with what seems to be a tongue in cheek portrayal of Catholic relics expressed through Sancho's mediation in *Don Quijote* II, 8.

²⁷This portrayal of the Sanctuary differs from Montaigne's depiction of the shrine in 1581, a few years after Cervantes's sojourn in Italy (1569-1575). Describing the tiny house that sheltered the image of the Virgin, Montaigne states that the statue was surrounded by a proliferation of gold and silver offerings that completely covered the walls (*Journal* 246-52).

²⁸Following El Saffar, Smith argues that it is the sameness of "El licenciado Vidriera"—namely, the lack of a clear distinction between the voice of the character and that of the narrator, and the lack of a consistent distance between the writer and his creation—that produces the most unsettling effects in this tale ("The Erasure of Rhetoric" 172-201). The perturbing processes, described by Smith, precisely allude to the displacements of the voice—or to the plurality of voices—which, when music is perceived, reveals the presence of poetic language.

²⁹Maurice Molho (402) recently remarked that the dissociation between thing (objective representation) and word (verbal representation) that characterizes psychotic discourse clearly appears in the discourse of the madman Vidriera.

Works Cited

- Anzieu, Didier. *Freud's Self-Analysis*. Trans. Peter Graham. Madison, Connecticut: International Universities, 1986.
- Benveniste, Emile. *Problems in General Linguistics*. Trans. Mary E. Meek. Miami Linguistic Series, no. 8. Coral Gables, Florida: U of Miami P, 1971.
- Bowie, Malcolm. *Freud, Proust and Lacan: Theory as Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987.
- Canavaggio, Jean. *Cervantes: En busca del perfil perdido*. Trad. Mauro Armiño. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1992.
- Charles Bergé, "Humanistes et pèlerinage au XVIème siècle: Montaigne à Lorette." *Montaigne e l'Italia. Atti dei Congresso internazionale di Studi, Milano-Lecco, 26-30 ottobre 1988, [CIRVI]*. Genève: Slatkine, 1991. 597-607.

- Cervantes, Miguel de. *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Ed. Martín de Riquer. 1968. Barcelona: Editorial Juventud, 1975.
- . *La gitanilla*. *Novelas ejemplares*. Vol. I. Ed. Harry Sieber. Madrid: Cátedra, 1985. 59-134. 2 vols.
- . *El licenciado Vidriera*. *Novelas ejemplares*. Vol. 2. Ed. Harry Sieber. 41-95. 2 vols.
- . *Poesías completas, II*. Ed. Vicente Gaos. Madrid: Castalia, 1973.
- . *Viaje del Parnaso*. *Poesías completas, I*. Ed. Vicente Gaos. Madrid: Castalia, 1973.
- Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de. *La Galatea*. Vol. 1 of *Obras completas*. Ed. Angel Valbuena Pratt. Madrid: Aguilar, 1975. 733-917. 2 vols.
- Cernuda, Luis. "Cervantes, poeta." *Poesía y literatura*, II. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1964. 45-57.
- Diego, Gerardo. "Cervantes y la poesía." *Revista de Filología Española* XXXII (1948): 213-36.
- El Saffar, Ruth. *From Novel to Romance: A Study of Cervantes's Novelas ejemplares*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974.
- El Saffar, Ruth, and Diana de Armas Wilson, eds. *Quixotic Desire: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Cervantes*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992.
- Forcione, Alban K. *Cervantes and the Humanist Vision: A Study of Four Exemplary Novels*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982.
- Freud, Sigmund. "The Aethiology of Hysteria." Vol. 3. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Ed. and Trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953-74. 192. 24 vols.
- . *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Vol. 21. *Standard Edition*. 57-140.
- Garcés, María Antonia. "Berganza and the 'Abject': The Desecration of the Mother." El Saffar and Armas Wilson: 292-314.
- . "Zoraida's Veil: The 'Other Scene' of the *Captive's Tale*." *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* XXIII (1989): 65-98.
- Grinberg Léon and Juan Francisco Rodríguez. "Cervantes as Cultural Ancestor of Freud." El Saffar and Armas Wilson: 23-33.
- Guillaume-Alonso, Aracelli. "Images de la femme gitane au Siècle D'Or." *Images de la femme en Espagne au XVIe et XVIIe siècles*. "Travaux du Centre de Recherche sur L'Espagne des XVIe et XVIIe Siècles" (CRES). Ed. Augustin Redondo. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994. 319-30.
- Herrera, Fernando de. *Anotaciones*. *Garcilaso de la Vega y sus comentaristas*. Ed. Antonio Gallego Morell. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1966.
- Jakobson, Roman. *Language in Literature*. Eds. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy. Cambridge: Belknap of Harvard UP, 1987.
- Kristeva, Julia. "A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident." Trans. Séan Hand. *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. New York: Columbia UP, 1986. 292-300. Trans. of "Un nouveau type d'intellectuel: le dissident." *Tel Quel* 74 (1977): 3-8.

- .*Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art.* Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1980.
- .*Polylogue.* Paris: Seuil, 1977.
- .*Revolution in Poetic Language.* Trans. Margaret Waller. Introd. Léon Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1984.
- .*Séméiotiké, Recherches pour une sémanalyse.* Paris: Seuil, 1969.
- .*The Kristeva Reader.* Ed. Toril Moi. Columbia UP, 1986.
- Lechte, John. *Julia Kristeva.* London: Routledge, 1990.
- Leblon, Bernard. *Les Gitans d'Espagne.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985.
- ."Les Gitans dans la Péninsule Ibérique" I. *Etudes Tsiganes* 1-2 (1964): 1-24.
- Lope de Vega Carpio. *Laurel de Apolo.* Colección escogida de obras no dramáticas. Ed. Cayetano Rosell. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1856. 218.
- .*Epistolario de Lope de Vega.* Ed. Agustín González de Amezúa y Mayo. Vol. 3. Madrid: Real Academia Española, 1935. 4. 4 vols.
- Martín, Adrienne Laskier. *Cervantes and the Burlesque Sonnet.* Berkeley: U of California P, 1991.
- Molho, Maurice. "Una dama de todo rumbo y manejo. Para una lectura de *El licenciado Vidriera*." *Erotismo en las letras hispánicas: aspectos, modos y fronteras.* Eds. Luce López-Baralt and Francisco Márquez Villanueva. Publicaciones de Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica VII. México: El Colegio de México, 1995. 387-406.
- Montaigne, Michel. *Journal de voyage.* Ed. Fausta Garavini Paris: Gallimard, 1983.
- .*Journal de voyage de Michel de Montaigne.* Ed. François Rigolot. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992.
- Plato, *Ion, o sobre las ideas.* Trans. Francisco de P. Samaranch. *Platón, Obras Completas.* Ed. José Antonio Miguez. Madrid: Aguilar, 1969.
- Quevedo, Francisco de. *Poesías originales completas.* Ed. José Manuel Blecua. Barcelona: Planeta, 1981.
- Riley, Edward C. *Teoría de la novela en Cervantes.* Trans. Carlos Sahagún. Madrid: Taurus, 1966. Trans. of *Cervantes's Theory of the Novel.* Oxford UP, 1962.
- Rivers, Elias, L. "Viaje del Parnaso' y poesías sueltas." *Suma cervantina.* Eds. J. B. Avallé-Arce and E. C. Riley. London: Tamesis, 1973. 119-146.
- Rojas, Ricardo. *Cervantes (Cervantes, poeta lírico. Cervantes, poeta dramático. Cervantes, poeta épico).* Buenos Aires: Losada, 1948.
- Roudiez, Leon S. Introduction. *Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language:* 1-20.
- Smith, Paul Julian. "The Erasure of Rhetoric in Cervantes." *Writing in the Margin: Spanish Literature of the Golden Age.* Oxford UP, 1988. 172-201.

Terry, Arthur. *Seventeenth-Century Spanish Poetry: The Power of Artifice*. London: Cambridge UP, 1993.

Woolf, Virginia. *Jacob's Room* and *The Waves*. New York: Harcourt, n.d. 1-176.