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Special Issue: Reinventing Don Quixote in Cultural Production

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Don Polindo, Don Quixote, and Cervantes's Transformation of the  
Knight Errant to an Erring Knight

William Worden  
University of Alabama

The most influential book of chivalry produced in Spain during the sixteenth century was undoubtedly Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo's version of *Amadís de Gaula* published in 1508. As Daniel Eisenberg explains: "It would be difficult to exaggerate the popularity of Montalvo's *Amadís* in sixteenth-century Spain. It had far and away the largest number of editions and copies printed, and has been, from its publication, the most widely read Spanish romance of chivalry, a distinction which it holds through the present day" (31). *Amadís de Gaula* was originally a medieval text that, as Montalvo notes in the prologue to his 1508 edition, he amended and then continued, writing both the fourth book of the original *Amadís* and then *Sergas de Esplandián* (published in 1510), a fifth book that recounts the adventures of Amadís's son. Deftly combining truth and fiction in the *Amadís* Prologue, Montalvo explains his efforts by first noting accurately that his work has consisted of "corrigiendo estos tres libros de Amadís, que por falta de los malos escritores o componedores muy corruptos y viciosos se léyan, y trasladando y enmendando el libro quarto con *Las Sergas de Esplandián*, su hijo," before quite inventively adding that *Esplandián* "por gran dicha pareció en una tumba de piedra que debaxo de la tierra, en una hermita cerca de Constantinopla, fue hallada y tráydo por un úngaro mercadero a estas partes de España, en letra y pargamino tan antiguo que con mucho trabajo se pudo leer por aquellos que la lengua sabían" (5). Even in his Prologue, then, Montalvo is already setting the stage for the fantastic tale that is to follow, one that is replete with exotic locales and extraordinary adventures.

The publication of *Amadís* and *Esplandián* sparked a boom in what Montalvo termed "hystorias fengidas."<sup>1</sup> Readers of the time were entranced by the texts and desirous of enjoying more chivalric tales. Moreover, before long other authors became interested in following the example offered by

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<sup>1</sup> Montalvo writes of "las hystorias fengidas, en que se hallan las cosas admirables fuera de la orden de natura, que más por nombre de patrañas que de crónicas con mucha razón deven ser tenidas y llamadas" (Prologue 5).

Montalvo's *Esplandián*, and decided to write their own continuations of the adventures of the descendants of Amadís. As a result, between 1510 and 1551 eight other books of chivalry continuing the stories of the progeny of Amadís were published in Spain.<sup>2</sup> The other great family of sixteenth-century chivalric works began with the publication of *Palmerín de Olivia* in 1511, which was followed by *Primaleón* (1512) and *Platir* (1533) in Spain, and by *Palmerín de Inglaterra* in 1547 as well as several Portuguese and Italian continuations.<sup>3</sup> The renown of these two families of chivalric works is evidenced in the first chapter of the first part of *Don Quixote*, where we learn that the work's protagonist "[t]uvo muchas veces competencia con el cura de su lugar –que era hombre docto, graduado en Cigüenza– sobre cuál había sido mejor caballero: Palmerín de Inglaterra o Amadís de Gaula" (I.1;38-9).<sup>4</sup>

Not every Spanish book of chivalry in the sixteenth century, of course, gained the fame or readership achieved by those that formed the *Amadís* and the *Palmerín* cycles. And even within those two families of works, later books were generally not as highly regarded by readers as earlier ones, with the notable exception of *Palmerín de Inglaterra*, a work that is greatly praised by the Priest during the investigation of Don Quixote's library.<sup>5</sup> Referring to these two cycles in his study titled *Spanish and Portuguese Romances of Chivalry*, Henry Thomas writes:

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<sup>2</sup> Continuations in the *Amadís* cycle after *Esplandián* include *Florisando* (1510); *Lisuarte de Grecia* by Feliciano de Silva (1514); *Lisuarte de Grecia* by Juan Díaz (1526); *Amadís de Grecia* (1530); *Florisel de Niquea* [Parts I and II] (1532); *Florisel de Niquea* [Part III; Part I of *Rogel de Grecia*] (1535); *Silves de la Selva* (1546); and *Florisel de Niquea* [Part IV; Part II of *Rogel de Grecia*] (1551) (Pellegrino and Coduras Bruna 152).

<sup>3</sup> *Palmerín de Inglaterra* is the Spanish translation of the original Portuguese work titled *Palmeirim de Inglaterra*. Chapter 3 of Henry Thomas's study, titled "The *Palmerín* Romances," discusses the Spanish and Portuguese works in the cycle (84-118). Information on *Palmerín's* Italian continuations can be found at [www.mambrino.it/spagnole/palmerin.php](http://www.mambrino.it/spagnole/palmerin.php), a website that forms part of the *Progetto Mambruno* initiative that studies Italian books of chivalry in the sixteenth century.

<sup>4</sup> All citations of *Don Quixote* refer to Francisco Rico's 1998 edition of the work.

<sup>5</sup> With reference to *Palmerín de Inglaterra* the Priest exclaims: "esa palma de Inglaterra se guarde y se conserve como a cosa única, y se haga para ello otra caja como la que halló Alejandro en los despojos de Dario, que la diputó para guardar en ella las obras del poeta Homero" (I.5;81-2). Most readers agree that *Palmerín de Inglaterra* is the best work of that cycle.

The initial success which made such large families possible led to the formation of a few smaller groups, and the gradual accumulation of a number of isolated romances. All these are frank imitations, and like the later books of the *Amadis* and *Palmerin* series, they reproduce the most striking features of the original founders, with less success in copying their merits than in exaggerating their defects. (119)

One such “isolated romance,” an anonymous book of chivalry published in Toledo in 1526 titled *Historia del invencible cavallero don Polindo*, is the focus of the present essay. This rarely studied chivalric text recounts—over its one hundred and one chapters—the adventures of Don Polindo, son of King Paciano and Queen Polimira of Numidia, who throughout the work alternates between fighting numerous battles accompanied by his squire Lavinio and demonstrating his love for Belisia, Princess of Macedonia. As one would expect in a book of chivalry, its pages are filled with castles, enchanters, tournaments, love letters, magic of all kinds, and seemingly endless battles against giants, evil knights, and a variety of fantastic beasts. Though at several points in *Polindo* the narrator refers to a continuation of the work, there is no evidence that a sequel to the 1526 text was ever published.

Since its publication almost five centuries ago, *Polindo* has rarely been the subject of critical analysis, and the scant attention it has garnered by critics, as we will see, has been mostly negative. After briefly reviewing past critical estimations of the work, I’d like to offer some observations on the style employed by the work’s anonymous author and then compare aspects of Polindo’s adventures with those undertaken by Don Quixote. We are told in the first chapter of 1605 text that Cervantes’s protagonist “vino a perder el juicio” because his mind was filled with “la fantasía de todo aquello que leía en los libros, así de encantamientos como de pendencias, batallas, desafíos, heridas, requiebros, amores, tormentas y disparates imposibles” (I.1;39), all elements found in abundance in the work that recounts Don Polindo’s adventures. My purpose in these pages is not to claim that Cervantes definitely read *Polindo* and was influenced by it, but rather to use the 1526 text as an example of the kind of book of chivalry with which both Alonso Quijano and readers of *Don Quixote* were familiar as they approached Cervantes’s work. Comparing Don Polindo’s adventures with those of Don

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Quixote will help us better understand how Cervantes parodied the “hystorias fengidas” that so enchant Alonso Quijano. Those same readers of *Polindo* who saw the book's title character as a model knight errant would have also perceived the protagonist of Cervantes's chivalric work as his parodic inversion: an erring knight.

*Polindo and Its (Few) Critics*

Because the name Polindo is similar to Polendos, one of the sons of Palmerín de Olivia, for a long time critics (without actually bothering to read the 1526 text) thought that *Polindo* formed part of the *Palmerín* cycle.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, up until the past thirty years, those few critics who did discuss the work did not treat it kindly. In his 1904 monograph on *Palmerin of England*, for example, William Edward Purser writes:

*Don Polindo* is one of the worst of its [sic] class. It has nothing to commend it, except that it contains a few strange words which might possibly interest the philologist. The style is very unequal. In places the author heaps up augmentatives, as Ferrer does in *Palmerin of England*; in others, the language is so inflated that, as life is short, I passed on without knowing what was meant. (438)

Purser goes on to complain about both the way the work is written and its content, asserting that in places “the style is homely” (438) and highlighting the ridiculous nature of several of Don Polindo's adventures.<sup>7</sup> This negative view of the anonymous work's literary qualities is echoed in 1920 when Henry Thomas writes of *Polindo*: “It is devoid of merit, and the second part it promises has rightly remained unpublished” (144).

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<sup>6</sup> Marín Pina's article offers a detailed description of what she terms the “confusión crítica” that resulted from incorrectly considering *Polindo* to be part of the *Palmerín* family of works (88-91).

<sup>7</sup> “Some of the incidents are outrageously absurd, as when an army is routed by more than ten thousand lions that rush out of a castle (f. 35. v.); the hero and a companion drive fifteen hundred knights out of the lists (f. 106); he raises a mace four men could hardly lift (f. 77); a giant is introduced thirty feet high and twelve broad (f. 139, v.); and so on” (Purser 438).



After centuries of being misunderstood, disparaged, and most often ignored, *Polindo* finally received some positive critical attention between 1989 and 2004 when the book of chivalry served as the subject of three major academic studies. In 1989 María Carmen Marín Pina, who consulted the copy of *Polindo* housed in the British Library,<sup>8</sup> published an insightful article titled “La recreación de los modelos narrativos caballerescos en *La historia del invencible cavallero don Polindo* (Toledo, 1526).” This quite helpful study provides a detailed discussion of the history of the book’s incorrect inclusion as a part of the *Palmerín* cycle, presents an overview of the work’s plot, and offers some observations on the work’s narration. Marín Pina makes clear in her essay that *Polindo* was not widely read in the sixteenth century,<sup>9</sup> but—unlike previous critics—does not dismiss the work’s quality entirely. Instead, she offers a more nuanced view of the anonymous author’s efforts, opining: “Evidentemente, la calidad de la obra no es ni mucho menos extraordinaria, pero tampoco es menor que la de otros libros del género que por las mismas fechas se publicaron para saciar una creciente demanda social” (97-8). In terms of a possible relationship between the anonymous work and *Don Quixote*, Marín Pina first explains that there is no concrete evidence that Cervantes knew *Polindo*, but also adds: “Es posible, sin embargo, que [Cervantes] pudiera tener noticia del mismo e incluso que lo hubiera leído” (88).

The second—and most important—step in making *Polindo* more known to modern readers occurred in 2003 with the release of Manuel Calderón Calderón’s edition of the work published by the Centro de Estudios Cervantinos as part of their “Libros de Rocinante” collection dedicated to producing modern editions of Spanish books of chivalry. The first subtitle

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<sup>8</sup> Copies of the original 1526 edition of *Polindo* can be found at the British Library, the Biblioteca José Mindlin in Río de Janeiro, the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, and the Newberry Library in Chicago (Suárez 97). *Polindo* first came to my attention when I came across the copy of it housed in the Newberry Library.

<sup>9</sup> Of the book’s “escasa acogida” among early-modern readers after its 1526 publication, Marín Pina writes: “[s]u parca historia editorial lo corrobora plenamente, pues la obra no conoció ninguna otra reedición, así como tampoco la continuación tantas veces prometida, ni ninguna traducción a otro idioma como era usual en otros muchos libros del género. Su paso por el panorama caballeresco peninsular fue, pues, relativamente discreto y pocas veces se esgrimió su título entre los moralistas y críticos de la época” (88).

of the Introduction to this extremely useful edition is quite appropriately titled “Un libro mal conocido” (IX). The edition’s extensive introduction goes on to discuss various aspects of *Polindo* including its structure and plot; the possible intention of its author; the courtly culture depicted in the work; the social function of the knight errant; and the work’s narration, which shows influences of the idealistic “modelos y motivos narrativos” that pervade *Amadís* and *Palmerín* as well as the more realistic tendencies found in *Tirant lo Blanc* (XXXIII). Of the relationship between *Polindo* and *Don Quixote*, Calderón Calderón points out the following: both works have a character known as “Caballero de los Espejos;” like Don Polindo, Don Quixote insists that he is “hijo de sus obras;” *Polindo* has an underground episode that shares some similarities with Don Quixote’s adventure in the Cave of Montesinos and both works have an “aventura del cuerpo muerto;” both narrations weave episodes focusing on secondary characters into the main plot; and some words spoken by the Queen of Tesalia share a resemblance to “las palabras de Marcela en el *Quijote* I, 14” (XXXIV). After highlighting a number of errors made by the anonymous author,<sup>10</sup> Calderón Calderón concludes that there are indeed a number of positive aspects of the work:

En suma, el *Polindo* es un libro de caballerías interesante por varias razones. En él influyen dos tradiciones: la amadisiana y la tirantiana; explota por primera vez en los libros de caballerías españoles la mitología como material novelesco; ofrece abundantes materiales sobre la cultura cortesana –entradas reales, hechos de armas, torneos e invenciones–, así como antecedentes de algunos motivos del *Quijote*; y combina el estilo retórico de las cartas de batalla y de amor con el coloquial y costumbrista de otros episodios. (XXXV)

The third of the recent critical works focused on the anonymous text is *Polindo: Guía de lectura*, written by Juan Luis Suárez and published in 2004 by the Centro de Estudios Cervantinos. This guide includes a detailed chapter

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<sup>10</sup> The editor notes: “Confunde a Bracidón no sólo con Bransidio (cap. 33), sino con Arbuto y Cecibón (cap. 34), lo cual es imposible porque Bracidón había muerto en el cap. 20. En los capítulos 34 y 35, Farmentes y el Conde de Osuna están presos, según el narrador, y muertos según don Polindo” (XV), and then continues pointing out several more textual incongruences.

by chapter summary of the work's plot, a dictionary of characters and places, a list of terms used in the work, *Polindo's* table of contents, and a bibliography. Since the very good work done by the three aforementioned critics between 1989 and 2004, no further studies on *Polindo* have been published. It is my hope that the observations in this essay might help spur others to undertake further research projects based on this often-ignored but quite interesting book of chivalry.

*The Anonymous Author's Readings*

In terms of texts that would have informed the writing of *Polindo*, it's quite clear that the work's author was intimately acquainted with the genre of books of chivalry. In this regard Marín Pina writes:

el libro toledano es una caja de resonancias, donde se escuchan orquestados los más variados ecos de la narrativa caballeresca anterior. El autor demuestra conocer las convenciones del género y haber asimilado los modelos narrativos amadisianos (*Amadís de Gaula*, *Las Sergas de Esplandián* y *Lisuarte de Grecia*) y palmerianos (*Palmerín de Olivia* y *Primalción*) en circulación. (94)

Beyond knowledge of previous chivalric works, the author was also most certainly familiar with Jorge de Manrique's "Coplas por la muerte de su padre" (written around 1476, published in 1494), and with *Cárcel de Amor* (published in 1492), the most widely read of the sentimental romances. Manrique's poem begins, of course, with these well-known verses: "Recuerde el alma dormida, / abive el seso e despierte, / contemplando / cómo se passa la vida, / cómo se viene la muerte, / tan callando" (147-8), and continues by noting that death comes to everyone: "a papas y emperadores / e perlados, / así los trata la muerte / como a los pobres pastores / de ganados" (157). When speaking to his friend Don Claribeo, who is the Prince of England, Don Polindo asks: "¿Pues si consideramos cómo esta vida tan callando se passa e la muerte se nos acerca? Un día, trayendo grandes galas e invenciones e otro día somos llamados de aquella cruel muerte que a nadie perdona" (183). As for *Cárcel de Amor*, in the first "Carta de Liriano a Laureola" the protagonist explains the process by which he has fallen in love, writing: "tu hermosura causó el afición, y el afición el deseo, y el deseo la pena, y la pena

el atrevimiento, y si porque lo hize te pareciere que merezco muerte, mándamela dar, que muy mejor es morir por tu causa que bevir sin tu esperança” (99), words that are echoed in the first “Carta del príncipe don Polindo a la princesa Belisia,” in which the knight errant writes: “tu fermosura causó mi afición y el afición, mi ossar. E si por lo fazer merezco pena, mándamela dar; que más quiero con la gloria morir que sin remedio vivir” (50). The anonymous author's readings clearly extended beyond chivalric works to both poetry and the sentimental romance. Let us now consider the ways in which Cervantes employs the style used in texts like *Polindo* in composing his burlesque version of a book of chivalry.

*Mythological Sunrises*

The protagonist of *Don Quixote*, a great reader of books of chivalry, has a refined sense of how chivalric works are composed. As he leaves home at the start of the second chapter Don Quixote imagines how his own chronicler will recount this very first of what he is sure will be many great adventures. Speaking to himself as he begins this first sally, the self-proclaimed knight errant composes in his mind what he envisions this chronicler will write, saying:

Apenas había el rubicundo Apolo tendido por la faz de la ancha y espaciosa tierra las doradas hebras de sus hermosos cabellos, y apenas los pequeños y pintados pajarillos con sus harpadas lenguas habían saludado con dulce y meliflua armonía la venida de la rosada aurora, que, dejando la blanda cama del celoso marido, por las puertas y balcones del manchego horizonte a los mortales se mostraba, cuando el famoso caballero don Quijote de la Mancha, dejando las ociosas plumas, subió sobre su famoso caballo Rocinante y comenzó a caminar por el antiguo y conocido campo de Montiel. (I.2;46-7)

It is instructive to consider here not just the action that is taking place, but also the way in which Don Quixote imagines it will be written. What is emphasized in the protagonist's rendering is not so much the concrete details of what happens—Don Quixote wakes up, mounts Rocinante, and commences his travels through La Mancha—but rather the mythological description of the sunrise that precedes these actions, complete with the god

of the sun, florid language, and singing birds. This kind of detailed depiction of day's first light is quite often found in books of chivalry, making Don Quixote's imagined opening of the chronicle of his adventures stylistically of a piece with the descriptions found in other chivalric texts.

The anonymous author of *Polindo* offers several examples of just the kind of prose that inspires Don Quixote's literary imagination here.<sup>11</sup> The first chapter of the 1526 text, for example, begins:

Cuando en aquel tiempo que más la fermosa Platona sus encorvados cuernos hinchendo e su linda redondez con aquella aureada color <que> a la escura tiniebla da claridad; e cuando aquel Apolo, padre del triste Faetón, el curso del cielo rodea estando en el gemíneo signo que a la natura humana cálida hace, con la fermosura del florido campo [...]. (5)

Similarly, Chapter 18 begins:

Cuando aquel lucido Febo la escuridad de la noche aumentando con sus claros rayos el universo alumbrava, se levantó de su lecho el noble don Polindo e vistiéndose de ricas ropas donde su continua divisa de la sierpe llevaba, <e> así se fue alegre al gran palacio donde el rey con sus altos hombres estava, que en Consejo quería entrar. (50)

Both of these chapter descriptions are the kind of prose that inspires Don Quixote as he begins his first sally.<sup>12</sup> Like Don Quixote, Cide Hamete

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<sup>11</sup> Marín Pina notes four examples of *Polindo* chapters that begin with mythological sunrises. She also points out that the prolific Feliciano de Silva was one of the authors of chivalric texts who liked to begin chapters with “amaneceres mitológicos” (97). Other critics who have mentioned mythological sunrises in *Polindo* include Calderón Calderón (XXVI) and Martín Romero (109).

<sup>12</sup> Further examples of mythological sunrises in *Polindo* can be found at the start of Chapter 47: “Cuando los rayos del clarífico Febo la escura sombra de la noche del orbe mundano alcançavan; cuando las brutas animalias, cada una desperezándose del sueño, comunican cada una con su natural, las aves con su dulce canto alabando al que las crió ...” (136), and at the start of Chapter 68: “Como ya la hermosa Platona, que las noches con su resplandeciente claridad alumbrava, oviesse ya su redondo cuerno hasta la meitad crescido, que es en aquel tiempo que los

Benengeli himself includes a detailed description of the sunrise in his narration. As the conversation between Sancho and the squire of the Knight of the Mirrors draws to a close in the 1615 text, the Moorish historian writes:

En esto, ya comenzaban a gorjear en los árboles mil suertes de pintados pajarillos, y en sus diversos y alegres cantos parecía que daban la norabuena y saludaban a la fresca aurora, que ya por las puertas y balcones del Oriente iba descubriendo la hermosura de su rostro, sacudiendo de sus cabellos un número infinito de líquidas perlas, en cuyo suave licor bañándose las yerbas, [...]. (II.14;740)

As narrators, both Alonso Quijano and Cide Hamete Benengeli follow in the stylistic tradition of previous chivalric writers like *Polindo's* anonymous author.

#### *Castles and Giants*

In Chapter 2 of the 1605 text the narration explains Don Quixote's way of understanding the world and its implications for his travels in La Mancha: "como a nuestro aventurero todo cuanto pensaba, veía o imaginaba le parecía ser hecho y pasar al modo de lo que había leído, luego que vio la venta se le representó que era un castillo." The text soon adds that there is even more going on in our protagonist's mind: "Fuése llegando a la venta que a él le parecía castillo, y a poco trecho della detuvo las riendas a Rocinante, esperando que algún enano se pusiese entre las almenas a dar señal con alguna trompeta de que llegaba caballero al castillo" (I.2;49). Though a reader could quite reasonably laugh at Don Quixote's fanciful imagination at this early stage of the novel, this episode, in fact, provides concrete evidence that what the protagonist thinks, sees, and imagines is indeed based on "lo que había leído." Consider what happens to Don Polindo, in a scene like many others found in chivalric works, as he goes in search of the evil giant Lergeso: "E no ovo mucho por el camino andado cuando a un hermoso castillo fue a dar. Y como le vio, dio más prisa a su caballo. E allegó donde una cerca estava. E luego un enano que a la puerta

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enamorados sirven a sus señoras con estramados servicios; y cuando el amenguado Sol más a la Tierra dava calor ..." (177).

estava tañó muy fuerte un cuerno” (260). While seeing castles that are not castles, and anticipating horns and dwarfs where there are none, does give an indication of Don Quixote’s madness, the knight’s imaginings also show him to be an adept reader of books of chivalry.

Much like castles, giants are a fundamental presence in Don Quixote’s imagined existence. When Cervantes’s protagonist returns home badly injured after his first sally, his housekeeper immediately suspects what has happened, announcing: “¡Malditos, digo, sean otra vez y otras ciento estos libros de caballerías, que tal han parado a vuestra merced!” In explaining what has happened to him, the new knight errant explains “que todo era molimiento, por haber dado una gran caída con Rocinante, su caballo, combatiéndose con diez jayanes, los más desaforados y atrevidos que se pudieron fallar en gran parte de la tierra.” Upon hearing this, the Priest first quips: “¿Jayanes hay en la danza?” and then, like the housekeeper, comes to the conclusion that books of chivalry are to blame for his friend’s madness, adding “que yo los quemé mañana antes que llegue la noche” (I.5;76). Don Quixote, who knows from his readings that knights errant quite often prove their courage and their strength by battling giants, has his most famous adventure when he tilts at “treinta o cuarenta molinos de viento” that for him, as he insists to a doubtful Sancho, “son gigantes” (I.8;94-5). As is typical in a book of chivalry, giants appear in episode after episode throughout the 1526 work. Polindo’s father, King Paciano, is known as the Caballero del Jayán, and his son shows no hesitation in battling giants time and again. Suárez’s *Polindo: Guía de lectura* gives the names of eleven giants that appear in the work, in addition to the twelve Jayanes de Pasmaria, and two giantesses; in addition to these, the book also features numerous unnamed giants. Perhaps Polindo’s success in defeating giants is best portrayed in Chapter 66 when the narration describes a grand tournament that is about to take place; among the participants at the tournament: “vinieron del reino de Pasmaria doze jayanes de gran esfuerço. Y estos vinían por matar a don Polindo, aviendo oído la nombradía de su fama, que avía muerto muchos jayanes” (185). Knights like Don Polindo, and their many successes in battling giants, most certainly serve as models for Don Quixote. Cervantes’s protagonist is so sure that he, like Polindo, will slay numerous giants that he is not surprised when his enemies are transformed into windmills. His explanation to Sancho highlights his certainty that he would have vanquished his massive foes:

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“aquel sabio Frestón que me robó el aposento y los libros ha vuelto estos gigantes en molinos, por quitarme la gloria de su vencimiento” (I.8;96).

*Fame and Love*

In the first part of the novel after considering “cuán poco se gana y granjea de andar buscando estas aventuras que vuestra merced busca por estos desiertos y encrucijadas de caminos,” Sancho suggests to his master that it would be better “si fuésemos a servir algún emperador o a otro príncipe grande que [...] por fuerza nos ha de remunerar a cada cual según sus méritos.” Don Quixote agrees with Sancho, but explains that first:

es menester andar por el mundo, como en aprobación, buscando las aventuras, para que acabando algunas se cobre nombre y fama tal, que cuando se fuere a la corte de algún gran monarca ya sea el caballero conocido por sus obras, y que apenas le hayan visto entrar los muchachos por la puerta de la ciudad, cuando todos le sigan y rodeen dando voces, diciendo: «Este es el Caballero del Sol», o de la Sierpe, o de otra insignia alguna, debajo de la cual hubiere acabado grandes hazañas. (I.21;228-9)

Don Polindo himself is known throughout the 1526 work as the Caballero de la Sierpe,<sup>13</sup> and the renown he achieves in *Polindo* is typical of that achieved by his counterparts in books of chivalry. Indeed, the way in which Don Polindo's feats become celebrated in the work dedicated to his adventures gives an indication of how Cervantes's protagonist would likewise expect his “nombre y fama” to spread throughout La Mancha and beyond. Don Polindo's exploits begin to attract notice in an early chapter after he slays a

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<sup>13</sup> Don Polindo is just one of several literary knights known as El Caballero de la Sierpe. In his extensively commented edition of *Don Quixote*, Diego Clemencín notes: “El Caballero de la *Sierpe* era Palmerín de Oliva, que tomó este nombre por la que mató en la montaña Artifaria, al ir a buscar el agua de la fuente que guardaba la Sierpe, y con la cual debía sanar y sanó su abuelo Primaleón, Rey de Macedonia (*Palmerín de Oliva*, cap. XX)” (1183). El Caballero de la Sierpe is also a name that appears in *Cirongilio de Tracia*, published in 1545.



cruel giant named Bransidio el Enojado, whose nephews he had already slain. Of the knight's success in defeating his enemies, the narrator explains:

Tanto volava por estas partes el esfuerzo de don Polindo, y más por la muerte de Bransidio e sus dos sobrinos, que en todas aquellas partes no se hablava de otra cosa sino de don Polindo. (35)

When Don Polindo later visits the city of Paris, the Prince of France welcomes him by saying: “Bienaventurado cavallero, bien publicada está la fama de vuestra nobleza por el mundo” (82). In a later episode a squire who needs Don Polindo's help to free his master explains to the knight: “Señor, aqueste es el castillo donde mi señor está preso. Por esso, hazé tanto que vuestra bondad sea más loada; que la fama de vuestras obras más vuele por el mundo, dando testimonio de lo que, señor, ay en vós” (112). The fame of Don Polindo does indeed grow and news of his heroic actions spreads around the world. Near the end of *Polindo*, after the protagonist has killed the giant Lergeso and is on his way to Macedonia with other valiant knights, the narration explains: “Y por las provincias y reinos que ivan publicavan las extrañezas en armas del invencible don Polindo. Por lo cual esta gran fama por todo el mundo bolava” (262). The fame achieved by knights errant like Polindo is the kind that Don Quixote fully expects for himself as well when he begins his adventures and, in fact, later believes he has achieved as a result of his exploits. When he meets Don Álvaro Tarfe, a character who first appears in the false *Quixote*, Cervantes's protagonist takes pains to distinguish himself from Avellaneda's creation, explaining: “yo soy don Quijote de la Mancha, el mismo que dice la fama” (II.72;1207).

As for the presence of love in *Don Quixote*, in the very first chapter the work's protagonist cleans his armor, names his horse, names himself, and realizes that “no le faltaba otra cosa sino buscar una dama de quien enamorarse, porque el caballero andante sin amores era árbol sin hojas y sin fruto y cuerpo sin alma” (I.1;43). What is striking in *Polindo* is not simply how important love is as a motivator of action, but also how quickly knights fall in love. *Polindo*, like *Amadís de Gaula*, begins by describing how the protagonist's parents meet. Soon after the work begins, Polindo's father, King Paciano, meets Polimira, who soon will be his wife. The text in the very first chapter explains:

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En este comedio, vino la reina e consigo traía a la infanta Polimira, la cual era la más vella que jamás Paciano avía visto. Y como así la vio, en aquella ora no fue más en su libre libertad. Que en aquel punto fue preso del amor de la infanta Polimira, qu'él parte de sí mismo no era. (9)

Don Polindo himself is born in Chapter 6, grows up with the Hadas de la Clara Fuente—who have kidnapped him from his parents—and eventually returns to his parents' kingdom and is knighted by his father, who does not realize that Don Polindo is his son. Before long Polindo's identity is revealed to his parents, and the young knight begins fighting giants and evildoers. In Chapter 14 the protagonist meets Belisia, and the two fall madly in love at first sight. As for Belisia's feelings for Don Polindo: "Como le vido tan hermoso e tan gentil hombre, le pareció que una saeta le había traspasado el corazón." Don Polindo, for his part, is treated very well in the castle, "[m]as todo no le era nada para su querer sino mirar aquella en quien su vida pendía. E nunca su pensamiento de ella se apartava. Y con aquesto se esforçava él para querer tomar aquella aventura" (40). Not only does love blossom immediately for the young knight errant (as it had years earlier for his father), but his beloved will inspire him to do great deeds. When the protagonist defeats Claribeo, the Prince of England who is destined to become his good friend, Don Polindo says: "Lo que yo quiero que hagáis es que os vais a la corte del Rey de Macedonia e os presentéis a la princesa Belisia de parte del Cavallero de la Sierpe" (76). Don Quixote, then, is appropriately following chivalric custom when he decides to serve Dulcinea before embarking on his first sally and to use his love of her as inspiration for his valiant actions.

*Enchantment and Disenchantment*

Don Quixote is convinced that enchantment is as common in La Mancha as it is in the many books of chivalry he reads. Consider, for example, how his niece explains to him that his books have disappeared. She tells her uncle that the house was filled with smoke as the result of "un encantador que vino sobre una nube una noche, después del día que vuestra merced de aquí se partió, y, apeándose de una sierpe en que venía caballero, entró en el aposento" (I.7;90). Though this image of an enchanter arriving in a cloud while riding a serpent might seem unbelievable to the niece herself (who has

been instructed on what to say by the Priest and barber), it is not at all unusual to someone who has read many books of chivalry. Consider a dangerous moment in *Polindo* when Belisia's mother, the Queen of Macedonia, is about to be thrown into a fire and burned to death. At this moment a fairy

muy ligeramente cubriéndose de una nube, vino a aquel lugar donde los fuegos estaban. Y como la reina fuesse llegada, luego la hada hizo e obró de sus encantamentos e hizo aquella escuridad que ya os hemos contado. E como no pudiessen ver la hada, tomó a la reina e metióse a sí e a ella en una nube. E se tornó a su castillo. (51)

Fairies and enchanters abound in *Polindo*, and this sort of magical travel in clouds occurs repeatedly in the work as well.

The most famous enchanted item in Cervantes's novel is Don Quixote's *yelmo de Mambrino*, a magical piece of armor that protects its wearer from harm.<sup>14</sup> Of the enchanted helmet, Don Quixote explains to Sancho their good fortune that “esta famosa pieza deste encantado yelmo por algún extraño accidente debió de venir a manos de quien no supo conocer ni estimar su valor” (I.221;226). In the case of Don Polindo, early in the 1526 text he is given an enchanted helmet by the fairies that raised him, one of whom says to him: “Señor cavallero, mis señoras las hadas vos ruegan que toméis este yelmo, que bien menester lo avréis” (33). The helmet immediately proves its worth in Don Polindo's very first encounter against a knight named Galicón, who during the fight “con gran saña que ovo, alçando su hacha le dio un muy fuerte golpe [a don Polindo] por cima del yelmo que lo aturdió. E cierto si el yelmo encantado no tuviera, aquí perdiera su vida don Polindo, que mal se sintió del golpe” (33). This is just the first time of many in the work that the enchanted helmet keeps Don Polindo from being

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<sup>14</sup> Clemencín explains the literary origin of the *yelmo de Mambrino*: “Yelmo encantado que ganó Reinaldos de Montalbán matando al Rey Mambrino que lo llevaba, y que usó después en varios combates, como los que tuvo con Gradaso (Garrido de Villena, *Orlando enamorado*, libro I, canto 4.º), con Roldán (Ib., canto 27) y con Dardinel (*Ariosto*, canto 18)” (1177).

killed.<sup>15</sup> Cervantes's protagonist, a reader of works like *Polindo*, understands well how useful an enchanted helmet can be during combat.

Clearly one of the driving forces of Cervantes's 1615 text is Don Quixote's desire to disenchant the enchanted Dulcinea. As soon as Sancho whips himself three thousand three hundred times, as announced by Merlin, Dulcinea will be transformed from an ugly peasant girl back into the beautiful princess she was before she was enchanted. This notion of needing to disenchant someone is quite familiar to readers of chivalric works and, in fact, occurs a number of times in *Polindo*. The protagonist himself is responsible first for disenchanting King Naupilio of Macedonia, the father of Belisia and then, much later in the work, for disenchanting Belisia herself.<sup>16</sup> Early in the 1526 text, after King Naupilio and others from his court have been enchanted by Loroës la Sabia, Don Polindo defeats a basilisk, three men, a giant snake, and various wild beasts in order to disenchant them all. As he arrives in Macedonia, after these great victories "todos venían por ver al cavallero que desencantó a su rey" (47). Many chapters later the giantess Obelia, in order to avenge the deaths of many giants killed by Don Polindo, announces with reference to the knight: "yo encantaré de tal manera a su señora, la princesa Belisia, que pase mucha pena" (210). True to her word, Obelia enchants Belisia, who becomes gravely ill. The question then becomes, of course, what steps must be taken to disenchant Belisia? In this regard, a fairy explains to Don Polindo: "sabed que el encantamiento es hecho por tal arte que hasta [que] quien lo hizo muera, no puede ser deshecho salvo por aventura que agora os contaré" (217). She then explains that to disenchant his beloved Don Polindo will need to travel to the Ínsula de Sernia, slay a giant that no other knight has defeated, and then kill

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<sup>15</sup> Other examples that demonstrate the magical power of the helmet to protect Don Polindo include the following: "Y el jayán le cargó de otro muy fiero golpe de encima del yelmo encantado que, si él encantado no fuera, mucho gran mal passara nuestro buen cavallero" (34); "Que cierto si no truxera el yelmo encantado, mucho mal passara nuestro cavallero" (73); "E dióle un golpe a don Polindo por cima del yelmo con tanta fuerça que, si el yelmo no fuera encantado, lo matara" (144).

<sup>16</sup> In a different adventure Don Polindo also disenchants his squire Lavinio and his good friend Don Claribeo.

un muy fiero animal llamado Cerviferno. El cual es tan espantoso e fuerte que de un aullido mata un cavallero por esforçado que sea. Y este Cerviferno ni de día ni de noche duerme, mas antes vela. Y es tan fuerte el jayán que de fuera está que nunca cavallero á podido dentro entrar para con este Cerviferno provarse. (217)

If Don Polindo can do all this, he can find the golden apples that will disenchant Belisia. As he travels to undertake this great feat, the text explains: “E así por el camino en muchas cosas e varios pensamientos su ánimo ocupavan. Mayormente, en las cosas para desencantar su señora convenían” (249). Don Polindo succeeds in killing the giant and Cerviferno, and the golden apples he finds first cure him of his wounds,<sup>17</sup> and then prove equally effective in disenchanting Belisia. We are told the happy conclusion to the adventure in Chapter 91: “E la princesa, como la [manzana dorada] tomase, començó de la comer. Y el rey e todos los cavalleros esperando estaban, mirando al rostro de la princesa por ver qué le aprovecharían. Y como la mirasen, les parecía qu’el rostro de muy hermosa e clara color se le tornava. Y así era la verdad” (280). Like the protagonist of the 1526 work, Don Quixote is ready to do what is needed to disenchant his beloved. In fact, compared to what Don Polindo must endure to disenchant Belisia, Sancho’s flogging most likely would seem to Don Quixote a small price to pay to return Dulcinea to her original beautiful self.

### *Use of Money*

We have seen throughout this essay the many ways in which *Polindo* is exactly the kind of book of chivalry that inspires the transformation of Alonso Quijano to Don Quixote. Before concluding, I’d like to point out just one textual moment where *Polindo’s* author deviates from generic conventions. *Don Quixote’s* second paragraph explains that Cervantes’s protagonist “se daba a leer libros de caballerías, con tanta afición y gusto, que [...] vendió muchas hanegas de tierra de sembradura para comprar libros de

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<sup>17</sup> The knight “tomó una de aquellas mançanas e la comió. Y luego que la acabó de comer, fue de todas sus llagas guarido. ¡Quién os podría decir el plazer e alegría que tenía el noble don Polindo en ver cuán bien e cuán verdaderas le salían todas las cosas y palabras que las hadas le habían dicho!” (273).

caballerías en que leer” (I.1;37). While Alonso Quijano needs money in his world, things change once he becomes a knight errant. When the innkeeper in Chapter 3 asks Don Quixote “si traía dineros” to pay for his stay, “respondió don Quijote que no traía blanca, porque él nunca había leído en las historias de los caballeros andantes que ninguno los hubiese traído” (I.3;56). As we have seen in other contexts, Cervantes's protagonist is correct when referring to his readings: knights depicted in books of chivalry do not need to pay for goods or services.<sup>18</sup> This established convention of the genre makes all the more curious the opening paragraph of *Polindo's* Chapter 48, which describes how four noble knights who are friends of Don Polindo—Don Felisandro, Don Narciso, Don Polimestro, and Don Pindamio—recover after a fierce battle with four evil knights:

Seis días estuvieron estos cavalleros en la casa del florastero, curándose de sus llagas. E al sétimo día, hallándose cada uno en despusición de caminar, pagando muy bien al florastero su albergamiento, <muy bien> tanto que se tuvo por muy satisfecho, e armándose de sus armas, se partieron camino de Constantinopla.  
(139)

At this moment in the text *Polindo's* anonymous author quite surprisingly departs from literary convention and has the knights pay for their lodging. I call attention to this anomaly because in my reading of the work this is the only place where *Polindo* differs markedly from other books of chivalry. In terms of Cervantes's text, after hearing Don Quixote explain that he's never read of a knight errant with money, the innkeeper explains to him that “se engañaba” because he knows that “todos los caballeros andantes, de que

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<sup>18</sup> Daniel Eisenberg explains: “The knight never seeks money; indeed, money is so seldom mentioned, as Don Quixote correctly points out to Sancho, that it seems that the protagonists of the romances live in a primitive era, outside the money economy altogether. The only times we find money mentioned at all is in terms of a prize or reward (more often a valuable object), or as a tribute or tax demanded by an evil ruler (as, for example, in *Cirolingio de Tracia*, III, 10). The knight expects and receives hospitillity [sic] from those he meets along his way; similar to the modern Indian holy man, it was considered both a duty and an honor to provide for someone as valuable to society as the knight” (63).

tantos libros están llenos y atestados, llevaban bien herradas las bolsas” (I,3;56). On the one hand, the innkeeper’s desire to be paid explains his self-serving description of how knights do indeed carry money when, in fact, that is almost never the case in books of chivalry. On the other hand, perhaps the innkeeper’s words are inspired by this quite unusual chapter opening in *Polindo* in which the work’s author introduces money into the chivalric world.

### *Conclusion*

Though not a widely read book of chivalry—either in the sixteenth century or in modern times—*Historia del invencible cavallero don Polindo* does include the kinds of fantastic adventures that made the genre so popular in Spain in the sixteenth century, with battles, giants, enchantments, lovers, and magic omnipresent in the work from start to finish. It must be said that the style of the anonymous author is at times repetitive, with seemingly endless battles, and other times illogical. Consider, for example, this description of fierce combat: “Y aquí se comienza la más cruda y áspera batalla que en el mundo podía ser” (145). So the battle is not only harsh, it is the harshest that is even possible in the world. Until, on the very next page we are told of a different combat, described as follows: “Y aquí se comienza la batalla muy más cruda y rezia que de antes” (146). On the other hand, at times the anonymous author’s prose conjures up fantastic images that are exactly why readers choose to read “hystorias fengidas.” The fierce Cerviferno on the Ínsula de Sernia, for example, is described as follows:

Ella era tan grande como un cavallo, y hechura tenía de serpiente. E el lomo, como de camaleón, salvo que unos burullones redondos como huessos de espinazos tenía. E de cada uno d’ellos una espina negra muy aguda [salía]. E tenía los enerizados e su cabeça, de hechura de tigre. E una muy larga nariz, que trompa de elefante significava. Y tenía unos muy agudos e muy grandes dientes. E tenía la cola de gamo. Tenía dos cuernos como de toro, muy agudos. Y las piernas tenía como de oso. E tenía en cada dedo una uña muy fuerte e su color d’ella era de serpiente. Y tenía el cuer<n>o duro. (272)

Or consider the following felicitous description of what happens in the reino de Ungría: “Y no tardó que vino un jayán, cavallero encima de un osso, e tras

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sí traía dos leones” (135). A giant, on a bear, followed by two lions! That sort of extraordinary happening helps explain the popularity of chivalric works both with Alonso Quijano and with the seventeenth-century readers of *Don Quixote*. José Manuel Lucía Megías writes that the genre of books of chivalry has been “uno de los géneros castellanos que más repercusión ha tenido en toda Europa, y que ha sido, en el fondo, el que ha hecho posible el nacimiento de la narrativa moderna” (par. 6). A careful reading of *Polindo* helps explain what is happening in the mind of Don Quixote, the protagonist of the work that marks the dawn of the “narrativa moderna,” and allows readers to understand more fully the difference between a knight errant and an erring knight.



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