

◆ CHAPTER TWELVE

Northworld: *Peregrinajes*, Prisons, and the (In)escapable Loops of the Open Road

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In *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, confinement cannot be taken at face value. Cervantes's last work, comprising four books within the novel, may open with a scene in which one of the protagonists is released from a subterranean dungeon into a wide world dominated by movement and transit, but imprisonment and captivity continue to be reoccurring themes that dominate the titular couple's long journey to Rome.¹ The novel's framing of confinement refracts its usual definition forcing the reader to cast an awry glance toward it and its opposite, found in scenes of emancipation and liberty: Rutilio hesitates before the open door of his prison cell in Siena, the promise of liberty overshadowed by the possible price of his liberation.² Clodio, laden with heavy chains, openly delights in the unfettered act of "decir mal" (slander) until he is finally silenced by the shackles of death (107, 194). Arnaldo and the Duke of Nemurs are described as thralls to Auristela's beauty (408–10), but also command great power over women as both human chattel and the objects of their desires. Every character finds themselves confined by desires that propel them along erratic paths whose order and logic are only seen in aggregate from the perspective of hindsight.³ Confinement is not only possible in a cloister, a prison, or a walled-off coffin for the living *mujer emparedada* (confined woman).⁴ Confinement in the *Persiles* is the road to which the characters, especially Auristela/Sigismunda, find themselves chained by social obligation and circumstance.

Summary of the *Persiles*

As a Byzantine novel, the *Persiles* is essentially a series of adventures that take place during a pilgrimage, but the overwhelming number of interpolated

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stories it presents to the reader make it a confusing tangle of characters and episodes.⁵ To better understand the confinement of the open road in this novel, a detailed summary is necessary. This summary is not exhaustive, but instead situates the episode that will be referenced later within the overall plot of the novel.

Periandro, who is in fact Persiles Prince of Thule traveling under an alias, finds himself dragged from a dungeon on a barbarous archipelago in the northern reaches of Europe as a human sacrifice. He is saved from this fate by a sudden storm that kills his captors and leaves him adrift at sea. He is encountered by Arnaldo Prince of Denmark who, like Periandro, is searching for Auristela, the Princess of Frisland Sigismunda, also traveling under an alias. After making Arnaldo—one of her many suitors—believe Auristela is his sister, Periandro offers to dress in women's clothing and be sold to the island's barbarians so he can discern if Auristela is in their possession. While among the barbarians, Periandro discovers Auristela dressed as a man and in danger of being sacrificed as part of a savage ritual. They are saved by their beauty as it emboldens Bradamiro the barbarian to defend them, and when he is murdered by the island's king, it unleashes a conflict that gives the "siblings" the opportunity to escape. They are sheltered by Antonio, a Spaniard who has been trapped on the island for years, and his Christian barbarian family, including Ricla (wife), Antonio (son), and Constanza (daughter). This group, along with several other refugees, sets sail with the desire to return to Christian lands and continue their pilgrimage to Rome.

During the first leg of their voyage, they encounter several characters, some of whom join the group and others who do not, but each tells their own tale. Rutilio, a dance teacher from Siena who was imprisoned for having an affair with a student, tells of his release from prison by a witch who whisked him away to Norway on a magic carpet and promptly transformed into a lascivious wolf. He manages to escape harm by killing her and luckily running into people who speak his language, despite the fact that he finds himself in the wilds of northern Europe. The pilgrims also meet the ailing Manuel de Sosa who tells his sad story before expiring. While still in Portugal, he arrived at his wedding to the beautiful Leonora only to discover that she had already pledged herself to God and could no longer marry him. Heartbroken, he inexplicably ends up adrift upon northern seas.

After arriving at an inn, they are reunited with Arnaldo who is overjoyed to see Auristela. Conversely, she is greatly troubled by his arrival and further asserts that she and Periandro are siblings, not lovers, and that she cannot wed anyone until she completes her pilgrimage to Rome. They are also joined by Mauricio, an astrologer, and Ladislao, who are the father and husband of Transila, a pilgrim they first met on the island of the barbarians. She fled her

homeland to avoid an unholy tradition in which she would have been stripped of her virginity by Ladislao's brothers and relatives before her wedding night. Mauricio arrives to this felicitous reunion with his daughter with two prisoners named Clodio and Rosamunda, who were guilty of the crimes of slander and lust, respectively. Both prisoners later perish as a result of their illicit behavior.

The pilgrims' northern adventures continue with another series of encounters. Taurisa, who had been with Auristela when she was kidnapped from Denmark by pirates prior to the beginning of the novel, is found in the possession of two men who fight to the death for the right to possess her even though she is dying. Both men perish in the duel and Taurisa's body is laid to rest. Two shipwrecks separate and ultimately reunite the pilgrims on the island of Policarpo King of Scinta. Periandro continues his seemingly unending account of how he and Auristela came to be on the island of the barbarians. He recounts that he and Auristela made land on an idyllic island of fishermen. They witness preparations for a double wedding between Selviana and Carino, and Leoncia and Solercio, but Auristela soon discovers that Selviana and Solercio, and Leoncia and Carino are in fact in love. Through her intervention, both couples are happily wed, but before the wedding celebration concludes, Auristela, Selviana, and Leoncia are kidnapped by pirates, obliging their beloveds and other men from the island to become privateers in search of the men that absconded with them.

Subsequently, both Policarpo and his daughter Sinforosa fall in love with Auristela and Periandro, and enlist Cenotia, a *morisca* sorceress, to help them attain the affections of the objects of their desire. But Cenotia is in love with the younger Antonio and when he spurns her love, she curses him, causing him to fall deathly ill. Antonio the Elder threatens to kill Cenotia if she does not return good health to his son, which she does, but in search of vengeance, Cenotia convinces Policarpo to start a fire in the palace so he can kidnap Auristela in the confusion. The plan fails and the pilgrims escape Scinta as it burns.

Upon arriving in southern lands, some pilgrims depart the group instead of continuing on the road to Rome, but this does not decrease the frequency of the pilgrims' encounters with a new cast of characters. One notable encounter explored later is the ill-fated marriage of Luisa "la talaverana" to Ortel Bandedre. Shortly after their wedding, Luisa runs off with her lover Alonso. Ortel is in hot pursuit when he encounters the pilgrims who appear to convince him to cease his search for revenge. The pilgrims later encounter Luisa without Alonso who had died in prison. Subsequently, she had married an abusive Spanish soldier upon leaving prison. After receiving some aid from the pilgrims, she runs off with their servant Bartolomé. The pilgrims later find the pair in jail in

Rome for murdering both the Spanish soldier and Ortel Banedre. With some help from Croriano, whose backstory I will address soon, they are freed from prison and try their luck in Naples where their lives ended as badly as they lived them.

The pilgrims also meet the Duke of Nemurs, accompanied by three candidates he has chosen to compete to be his wife: Féliz Flora, Belarmina, and De-leasir. Despite their great beauty, he becomes infatuated with Auristela after a servant shows him her portrait. He is later found near death next to Arnaldo, who is in a similar state, because both had fought over her portrait. His love is ultimately proven to be false and he returns to France, but Féliz Flora decides to stay with the pilgrims and ultimately marries Antonio the Younger.

While at another inn, the pilgrims meet Ruperta who has sworn to avenge her husband's death by killing the son of his murder, Croriano. But when she is confronted with Croriano's beauty, she instead falls in love with him and they get married. They then accompany the pilgrims to Rome.

Upon their arrival in the sacred city, they are ironically met by two Jews, Zabolón and Abiud, who lead Periandro into the clutches of Hipólita la Ferraresa. After unsuccessfully attempting to seduce Periandro, she enlists Julia, Zabolón's wife, to poison Auristela and rob her of her beauty. Auristela's sickness leads to the departure of both Arnaldo and the Duke of Nemurs from Rome, but it also causes Periandro to fall deathly ill. Hipólita then has Julia lift her poisonous spell from Auristela and she repents her sins. But this enrages her lover Pirro Calabrés who gravely wound Periandro, a crime for which he is ultimately executed.

Periandro recovers from his wounds but is faced with one last obstacle to marrying Auristela. Upon recovering her beauty, she asks him to free her from her promise of matrimony so that she may live a religious life as a nun. This causes Periandro, now Persiles, to wander to the edges of Rome where he runs into Seráfido, his tutor, and Magsimino, his older brother to whom Sigismunda/Auristela is betrothed. Magsimino, on his death bed, asks for both Persiles and Sigismunda to speak with him. Shortly before dying, he renounces his right to Sigismunda and gives his blessing to their union, thereby resolving the qualms Sigismunda previously expressed. The lovers then complete their pilgrimage, are married, and live happily ever after.

The "Open" Road as Orbits of Confinement

Despite all the chaotic detours, narrative digressions, and unforeseen (mis)adventures, the novel's plot traces a clear trajectory through the open spaces of the north to the sacred southern destination of Rome. The tangled mess of stories

and routes begins to appear as a unified narrative thread and itinerary, ordered in spite of the chaos that defines the nature of the journey. The pilgrimage follows a road that is both determinant in its path yet open in its vulnerability to the whims of circumstance, thereby allowing both chaos and order to exist and constitute one another. Yet, to truly understand the pilgrims' path, how Cervantes frames it, and the many possible consequences of his choices, it is necessary to reflect upon the nature of the open road.

The open road has been a symbol of freedom and possibility since ancient peoples across the globe began to etch these long sinuous marks upon the face of the earth. Its promise of mobility, transit, and increased exchange has facilitated a general departure from tribalism and isolationism, leading to a more interconnected world through which products and people move with relative ease. In the United States, the open road has become part and parcel of the American dream, promising adventure, intrigue, fulfillment, and betterment in a myriad of mediums and genres. Yet, if we consider the open road in the context of Cervantes's Spain, a marked counterpoint emerges that enunciates its paradoxical nature even beyond the seventeenth century. The road is both open and closed, resulting in channeled movement through social confinement and restriction. The famous saying, "all roads lead to Rome," emphasizes the fact that, despite the multiplicity of possible routes, movement along these roads is channeled toward one destination; a power center so to speak. Though movement and transit must be facilitated by the road, parameters of control are inevitably an inextricable part of their nature.

Before considering the curious confinement of the open road in the *Persiles*, it is important to situate this phenomenon within the larger literary category of genre(s) in order to show that the Bakhtinian chronotope encountered in this Byzantine novel is far from culturally aberrant.⁶ To begin, the picaresque is a fine example of how the open road presents the illusion of freedom while being, in truth, a closed system. Pablos's final words in *El Buscón* emphasize the nonequivalence of spatial change and change to one's social standing:

Determiné, consultándolo primero con la Grajal, de pasarme a Indias con ella, a ver si, mudando mundo y tierra, mejoraría mi suerte. Y fueme peor... pues nunca mejora su estado quien muda solamente de lugar y no de vida y costumbres. (284)

(After consulting first with la Grajal, I decided to move with her to the Indies to see if my luck would improve by moving to a different world

and land. And I fared worse, for one's condition is never improved solely by changing place without [changing] one's life and customs.)

These words must be read through an early modern cultural perspective. Aspirations of this sort were viewed as doubtful or even ironic depictions of the incorrigible *pícaro*'s (rogue) prospects of reform.⁷ Geographic movement is not necessarily socially dynamic or corrective and at times reifies the pre-existent social hierarchy by harnessing movement instead of liberating it, despite projecting an antithetical appearance. This "freedom" of movement, though necessary in the new socio-economic paradigm of imperial Spain, has its socially prescribed limits. The *pícaro* is frequently the anti-exemplary character in the socio-moral sense whose movement through geographical and cultural spaces proves the foolish nature of an illusory sense of freedom, thus implementing the societal "other" in service of maintaining the dominant social order.⁸ The road is already built and those who stray from it by challenging their socially prescribed path or by refusing to participate in the necessary movement required in a proto-capitalist empire are not Antonio Machado's "caminante, (traveler), but rather are deemed unwilling and perhaps undeserving participants in society.⁹

Beyond the picaresque, literary examples of the road as illusory freedom and hidden immurement from the Golden Age abound.¹⁰ Don Quixote's travels are circular in nature, ending where they began. *Caballeros andantes* (knights-errant) and *pícaros* alike move through the liminal spaces of the open road but never seem to escape its endless loops; their adventures repetitive and episodic.¹¹ Pastoral romance also falls victim to a certain circularity in the physical and narrative movement that fuels the general premise of the genre: endless movement through the liminal spaces of forest and pasture in the face of unrequited love as a producer of pastoral poetry and song, with the plot itself a kind of vehicle for the presentation of verse and the tenets of pastoral verse the shoulders of this poetic "road." The Byzantine novel, of which the *Persiles* is an example, may be a notable exception as geographic and narrative movement in this genre is relatively linear and the space of travel notably open and immense.¹² In her Bakhtinian reading of the novel's chronotope, Isabel Lozano Renieblas stresses the importance of the openness and immensity of the *tópos*:

Según Bajtín . . . , la novela de aventura de tipo griego se caracteriza porque necesita de un amplio espacio por el que los protagonistas puedan moverse con libertad. (81)

(According to Bakhtin . . . , the Greek adventure novel is characterized because it needs ample space through which the protagonists may move with liberty.)

Nevertheless, perceived progress and liberty must be considered through the lens of gender in order to fully understand that for female characters, no spatial or narrative circularity is needed to keep them in their “place.”¹³ Despite the absence of geographic looping, women protagonists find themselves in situational loops that are more representative of confinement than mobility—a much larger issue that could be presented without considering gender, but adopting a female perspective of confinement makes these issues patently clear and is the principle focus of this essay.

These concepts of looping and “orbits” are important tools in understanding social hierarchy when confronted by various types of possible movement (geographic or social). Though frequently considered a pyramidal structure, hierarchy is neither straightforward nor static. It may limit and control movement, but it cannot eliminate it. I have chosen to frame social hierarchy as a solar system in which imperfect and mutable orbits or loops around a power center represent a person or character’s place within the social plane. José Antonio Maravall, the Spanish historian, hints at this possible framing in his study *Poder, honor, y élites en el siglo XVII*. While speaking about the complex nature of social strata within the Spanish Golden Age, he employs the term *desorbitar* (frequently translated as “to exaggerate,” but here it means more to “take out of orbit”), saying one should not focus on one aspect of these órbitas (orbits) without considering the aggregate of the remainder (14). It is a distortion of the truth to take them out of these orbits because they are a constitutive part of a person’s social loop with regard to the power center or various power centers that impact their movement through social space. This aggregate of factors that impact a person’s social trajectory is further complicated by additional power influences upon their orbit. Women in the Spanish Golden Age frequently find their orbits acted upon by a greater number of power influences than their male counterparts.

The “Free” Will of Paranoid Androids

With this in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to examine Auristela/Sigismunda’s trajectory through the “uncivilized” North to Rome, the supposed “civilized” center of the Christian world. I argue that like the androids that occupy the immersive theme park that gives name to the HBO series *Westworld*, she and other female characters occupy the liminal and heterotopic space of the road or loop while merely playing a role in the utopic

world of male imagination and desire. Like Pablos, her movement through space does not change her “suerte.” She is a confined premise as a means to an illusory male utopic end.¹⁴

In *Westworld*, the aptly named Dolores, an android cast member at an immersive Western-themed amusement park, begins to become self-aware beyond her programming’s prefabricated identity. These deviations from her “loop,” the park’s term for an android’s acceptable operating parameters (both socially and geographically), begin to mount, unleashing a breakdown in the park-wide status quo.¹⁵ Dolores becomes an entropic threat to the stability of the patriarchal order, similar to the power structures of the Spanish Golden Age, while simultaneously deconstructing the fabricated morality with which patriarchy shields itself. She no longer merely resets at the end of the day or the moment of her temporary “death”—androids are repaired and pressed into service again after experiencing death events.¹⁶ Dolores remembers fragments of her erased previous experiences, many of them violent and traumatic in nature due to the sadistic desires the park is designed to satisfy for its human clientele. These glitches lead her geographically and experientially farther afield from her predetermined loop as a rancher’s daughter while she confronts the trauma that her programming has simultaneously facilitated and concealed.¹⁷ Like Auristela/Sigismunda, she breaks geographically and socially from her constrictive predetermined loop—for Auristela, this being her betrothal to Magsimino. Both Dolores and Auristela begin to rewrite their identities and roles, if only temporarily, to escape their objectification by a patriarchal order, but for Auristela, this break quickly loops back to other forms of confinement that are not defined by a lack of movement, but rather a controlled path that she is obliged to follow. In both cases, Dolores’s and Auristela’s, motionless confinement in one place becomes confinement in motion through a series of spaces that appear to be open but are far from it.¹⁸

The android cast as Dolores’s father, a mere stand-in for patriarchal authority who experiences issues similar to those that assail his daughter, suffers a strange glitch causing him to quote from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. He ominously declares “These violent delights have violent ends” (Joy). In many ways, this quote encapsulates the central moral issue of the series while skirting the central philosophical one: the fact that we are no different than these androids and a higher power—perhaps orderly, perhaps chaotic, perhaps both—has determined the space in which we move within society’s gallery of pleasures, perversions, and privations. Both free will and grace, as they were framed by the debate between Dominicans and Jesuits during Cervantes’s lifetime, are put into play and called into question. These androids, despite the insulating myth of their programming, despite the perceived spontaneity of their actions, despite the freedom they seem to enjoy, are merely chattel

slaves at the mercy of the frequently violent and licentious whims of their maker's customers. Their operating parameters serve much like Luis de Molina's concept of *Scientia media*, as described by Bradley Nelson in "Perverse Currency." They appear to guests as both free of constraint and guided by these parameters; a complex fusion of free will and God's grace. But they are afflicted with what Nelson calls in the case of *Scientia media*, a "lack of access to transcendental truth"; the fact that they are meant to be nothing more than machines that enable the maintenance of a central power structure. Their loops, much like the roads of early modern Spain, are meant to maintain an order that for androids, *picaros*, women, and others is not in their best interests. They are liminal yet necessary players in a master social trope from which they are inherently alienated; moveable and at times invisible cogs or cautionary tales in an economy of increasing transit and exchange; their momentary glitches the target of corrective measures. The social outcast exists in both worlds (Habsburg Spain and Westworld) for various reasons and their exclusion is measured in degrees. The bandit's life is forfeit making him or her a perfect resource for the expression of normative social power through righteous and authorized violence. The prostitute and pimp, among many other entrepreneurial residents of the margins of society, maintain a distant orbit in order to satisfy the darker "delights" of those closer to the centers of power. And married or single women of repute, though perhaps close to the center, find themselves tied to the orbit of another social gravitational mass in the form of a husband or paternal male figure.

I could say more about *Westworld* and I will return to it briefly, but I will hold most of my insights for another occasion in order to avoid revealing spoilers. What I wish to emphasize in this connection is the closed nature of a symbol of openness; the road and movement in both *Westworld* and the *Persiles* appear open and full of possibility, but in the end, they are merely channels through which characters must pass, impelled by the dominant order of society. Like Dolores, Auristela is trapped in a loop or orbit, try as she may to escape, and Cervantes makes this clear in several instances which I will broach shortly.¹⁹ The goal of these reflections is twofold: to emphasize and nuance the aforementioned open road of early modern Spain and analyze the role of women and femininity within the confines of this closed system.

Gendering Captivity

Perhaps one of the most striking moments of the *Persiles* is found in chapter four of book one when Auristela, dressed as a man, emerges from the subterranean dungeon on the archipelago of the barbarians and is confronted by

the gravity of her situation. The reader is forced to consider this emergence from physical captivity into impending death, predicated on Auristela's perceived male sex, with the knowledge that nothing is actually as the other characters perceive it. Only the sacrifice of a male will provide the necessary material—a male heart—to conduct the requisite ceremony to fulfil the barbarian prophecy:

los cuales [los bárbaros] tienen entre sí por cosa inviolable y cierta, persuadidos, o ya del demonio o ya de un antiguo hechicero a quien ellos tienen por sapientísimo varón, que de entre ellos ha de salir un rey que conquiste y gane gran parte del mundo; este rey que esperan no saben quién ha de ser, y para saberlo, aquel hechicero les dio esta orden: que sacrificasen todos los hombres que a su ínsula llegasen, de cuyos corazones, digo de cada uno de por sí, hiciesen polvo y los diesen a beber a los bárbaros más principales de la ínsula, con expresa orden que, el que los pasase sin torcer el rostro ni dar muestras de que le sabía mal, le alzasen por su rey. (43)

(who [the barbarians] hold as a certain and inviolable truth (being persuaded either by the Devil or by an ancient sorcerer they consider the wisest of men) that from among them a king will come forth who will conquer and win a great part of the world. They don't know who this king is that they await, but, in order to find out, the sorcerer gave them the following order: they must sacrifice all the men who come to their island, grind the hearts of each of them into powder, and give these powders in a drink to the most important barbarians of the island with express orders that he who should drink the powders without making a face or showing any sign that it tasted bad would be proclaimed their king.) (25)²⁰

Auristela is a woman and this fact highlights the peculiarity of the whole affair because the author provides the reader with a privileged perspective, as they are aware of a truth of which others are unaware, while simultaneously undercutting the visual authenticity of the scene—there is more than meets the eye. This is compounded by Periandro's initial emergence from captivity, detailed in the opening pages, and his subsequent return to the island in an attempt to rescue Auristela. He arrives on the isle of the barbarians dressed as a woman

to be sold into slavery. His beauty enchants both the leader of the barbarians—who wishes to marry him and fulfil an ancient prophecy—and Bradamiro, another barbarian who clearly disdains order and tradition. Bradamiro, in actions that mirror Periandro/Persiles's actions with his brother's betrothed and those of Arnaldo the Prince of Denmark, reinforces the gendered nature of captivity and freedom in this novel when he intervenes on the pilgrims' behalf:

Ninguno sea osado, si es que estima en algo su vida, de tocar a estos dos, aun en un solo cabello. Esta doncella [Periandro] es mía, por que yo la quiero, y este hombre [Auristela] ha de ser libre, por que ella lo quiere.
(54)

(Let no one dare, if he values his life at all, touch these two, not even a hair on their heads. This maiden [Periandro] is mine because I love her, and this man [Auristela] must go free because she loves him.) (33)

This ultimately leads to a bloody conflict that frees both pilgrims upon the mutual destruction of the warring bands of barbarians, but it also speaks to a fairly common phenomenon found in Golden Age literature: transvestism for the sake of passing, while simultaneously queering it through a doubled gender confusion that complicates the literary convention.

Female captivity and forced marriages were not foreign to consumers of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cultural artifacts, but by placing a man disguised as a woman and a woman disguised as a man at the center of these episodes, I argue that Cervantes emphasizes the movement from one type of captivity to another just as male appears female and female appears male.²¹ The parallel experience of both protagonists combines with the subsequent gender confusion to lead the reader to a reading of captivity that is inevitably gendered. By framing complementary scenes including the two protagonists, Cervantes cultivates an uncanny identification and dissonance between both, much like what is found in *Westworld's* subtle contrasting of human and android. The reader's awareness of the difference has a contrary effect and instead of strengthening dichotomies such as male/female or human/android they strip them bare of their socially utilitarian rhetoric. Difference fails to successfully differentiate, revealing its insufficient parameters, and thereby levels both sides of the opposition.

These scenes from the *Persiles* both mirror and satirize similar scenes of forced or arranged marriage. The motives behind this scene can be found in Cervantes's own personal experience with multiple bouts of physical captivity,

which were followed by periods of socially constrained freedom and his complicated depictions of love throughout his literary works. Even beyond the walls of the *baños de Árgel* (prisons of Algiers) and the *cárceles de España* (jails of Spain), Cervantes was forced to follow his own socially determined path or loop.²² Recently, one of my students in a *Quijote* seminar presented a conference paper in which she convincingly argued that Cervantes empathized more with Leonora than Carrizales or Loaysa in *El celoso extremeño* because his biography is riddled with moments of denied liberty and his literary works clearly problematize issues of freedom and captivity. This reading also puts the focus on female characters not as mere passive presences in the text, like Dulcinea, but rather as subjects that suffer objectification in order to facilitate a male utopic imaginary.²³ Their assumed roles bolster the fantasy yet their inability to access the utopic space beyond their performance places them in a heterotopic space—“entre bastidores” (in the wings).²⁴ Cervantes, the man behind the text, obscured by the many translators, editorial voices, and fictional authors, identifies with those in the wings whose compelled participation is an integral ingredient in the realization of something in which they cannot partake: liberty.²⁵

Furthermore, by introducing Auristela in a scene in which she must lose her life in the name of another forced marriage—as a sacrifice to fulfil the barbarians’ prophecy—Cervantes draws a striking contrast to the final scene in which Magsimino, Persiles/Periandro’s brother, must die in order to make way for the titular couple’s joyous nuptials. Magsimino’s death appears as ridiculous—though socially necessary—as the murderous prophecy of the septentrional savages. These episodes bookend a novel supposedly about pilgrimage with scenes that highlight the opposite. Despite their fortuitous escape from physical captivity, the siblings/lovers are propelled toward Rome by their inescapable circumstances, Auristela incessantly carried off by men, willingly and unwillingly.

The Many Orbits of *Persiles*’s Women

The other women that populate the world of the *Persiles* find themselves swept away at the service of male desire, which does not dissipate but instead increases the further south they travel.²⁶ Transila, who the pilgrims meet on the island of the barbarians, flees the unbridled and immoral male desire of *primae noctis* (first night) in her Catholic homeland and, ironically, finds more agency on the isle of the barbarians as a translator. In the final two books, Feliz Flora, along with her companions Belarmina and Deleasir, is chosen to compete for the affections of the Duke of Nemurs, but she ultimately finds

her match in the half-Catholic Antonio the Younger.²⁷ In book one, Taurisa is considered an object of exchange to facilitate Auristela's rescue, is transferred like cargo to another ship, later on is fought over in a duel, and promptly dies afterwards.²⁸ Upon marrying their desired mates, after Auristela's intervention on behalf of the will of "cielo" (heaven) (204), Selviana and Leoncia, encountered on the island of the fishermen, are abducted by pirates who swiftly and ironically confound one of the few examples of marriage based on post-Tridentine Catholic love found in Cervantes's works. These passive women are victims of the wills of others because their agency does not assert itself, as they do not express their true opposition to their arranged marriages until Auristela arrives, or their agency is disrupted by external factors, as when they are carried off by corsairs.

Meanwhile, more active female characters find themselves the targets of the corrective moral rectitude of patriarchy. In book three, Luisa "la talaverana," encountered by the pilgrims on the road to Rome, escapes an unwanted marriage to Ortel Banedre only to be literally confined in a prison, released into an abusive relationship with a Spanish soldier, confined again, and finally released into a picaresque life that impels her to a bad end in Naples.²⁹ In book two, Cenotia is hung as an indirect result of her desire for Antonio the Younger because she resorted to manipulating her sovereign in order to satisfy her desire. Also in book two, Rosamunda, the personification of lust who is also rebuffed by Antonio the Younger wastes away like the object for which she is named—the rose—in the face of unrequited desire.

Hipólita la Ferraresa, encountered by the pilgrims in Rome, is an interesting exception. Her path mirrors that of both Rosamunda and Cenotia, but she is ultimately spared death. This could be explained by the death of Pirro Calabrés, Hipólita's lover, who is executed after he wounds Periandro:

el gobernador, de allí a cuatro días, le mandó llevar a la horca por incorregible y asesino, cuya muerte dio la vida a Hipólita, que vivió desde allí adelante. (462)

(four days later the governor sent him to the gallows as a hardened criminal and murderer. His death brought life to Hipólita, who began to truly live from that time forward.) (352)

The fact that his death gave her life suggests that by escaping the pull of his nefarious ways she is able to establish her own appropriate societal orbit.

These examples clearly portray the plight of female characters in the *Persiles* as entities caught in social gravitational loops. They can be in motion, but they are effectively stuck on a path that is fairly predictable and departure from this orbit would be a world-shaking proposition leaving them adrift in the cold outer reaches of human society or hurtling unavoidably toward a destructive encounter with agents of the gravitational center of society: exile or punishment.³⁰

From Social Loops to Portrait Frames and Wedding Bands

The confining and perilous nature of Auristela's loop or orbit is further revealed in episodes that broach the issue of portraiture. I have delved deeper into this topic elsewhere ("Image Not Found: Portraiture, Identity, and the Future of Cervantismo" in *Don Quixote: The Re-accentuation of the World's Greatest Literary Hero*), but a short summary should suffice to highlight the ties between Auristela's portrait and her socially dictated confinement. As the pilgrims draw closer to Rome, they encounter a bloody scene just off the road. Arnaldo, the Prince of Denmark and one of Auristela's suitors, and the Duke of Nemurs, another suitor, lay wounded by each other's hand while a portrait of Auristela hangs between them from the branch of a willow tree. A close reading of their subsequent words reveals their desire to possess the portrait as a surrogate for the absent Auristela. Their infatuation is framed as a consequence of love's fatal glance—as argued by Ignacio López Alemany (205; 206)—which is based on the desire to possess the beloved, as seen in the case of the barbarians who are enchanted by Periandro's gaze:

Levantóse en pie Periandro, descubrió el rostro, alzó los ojos al cielo, mostró dolerse de su ventura, estendió los rayos de sus dos soles a una y otra parte que, encontrándose con los del bárbaro capitán, dieron con él en tierra; a lo menos, así lo dio a entender el hincarse de rodillas, como se hincó, adorando a su modo en la hermosa imagen, que pensaba ser mujer. (49)

(Periandro stood up, uncovered his face and lifted his eyes to the sky, showing that his fate was grieving him. The light of his eyes swept across the group like rays of the sun and, meeting the eyes of the barbarian chief, knocked him to the ground; at least it seemed to, since he

kneeled down, and in that position worshipped the beautiful image he thought was a woman.) (30)

Medieval thought considered this species of love to be less a result of free will and more of an affliction suffered by the enamored party—the case of Grisóstomo in the *Quixote* provides an interesting example. Like Grisóstomo, the enamored parties of the *Persiles* are enchanted in both senses of the word by Auristela's image, yet Auristela like Marcela is expected to oblige these multiple and irreconcilable desires. There is only one socially acceptable solution in these two cases but both female characters seemingly confound any attempts to “close” the loop by refusing to submit to holy matrimony.³¹ The men in both cases, after becoming afflicted by this sickness, endeavor to cure themselves by taking possession of the desired object and limiting its mobility. The wedding ring, the ultimate symbol of the loop as social constraints placed upon women, is replaced in portraiture with a surrogate: the frame. By making Auristela's image and gaze available to others, the portrait elicits the desire to possess her, thereby placing her in a dangerous position in which multiple utopic male narratives clamor to be reconciled. Neither she nor her portrait can be exclusively possessed by both desiring subjects.

Cervantes's only recourse to reconcile these conflicting loops that threaten to tear Auristela apart is to dispose of the additional suitors, but oddly enough, this is done after leaving the open road for the promised destination of Rome, which as a holy city does not live up to expectations. Instead of a sacred center where salvation from the shackles of sin can be found, Rome is depicted as a den of iniquity in which Auristela will arrive closest to the cusp of death.³² She is poisoned at Julia at Hipólita's request and the loss of her beauty eliminates the cause of the other suitors' amorous symptoms. Yet Magsimino remains as the principal obstacle to the fulfilment of *Persiles*' desire. His love, like that of *Persiles*, appears to transcend the fickleness of an unresolved case of love's fatal glance, though the elder brother's love is merely desire born of an image; Magsimino has never actually seen Sigismunda in anything but a portrait.³³ Like Carrizales of *El celoso extremeño*, he must give permission and die to socially authorize the union between the protagonists, but the end result is different in the *Persiles*. In *El celoso extremeño*, the happily ever after moment is frustrated by a linear truncation of both Loaysa and Leonora's lives: one in war and the other in a convent conforming with the expectations of social gender norms. The *Persiles*, on the other hand, appears to finally give the happy ending Cervantes's readers may have hoped for.

As the final lines read, “vivió en compañía de su esposo *Persiles* hasta que bisnetos le alargaron los días, pues los vio en su larga y feliz posteridad” (465) (The course of her life was spent in companionship with her husband *Persiles*, and her days were increased by the enjoyment of living to see

great-grandchildren in their long and happy line of descendants) (355). This quote certainly seems to paint an idyllic picture of their “ever after,” but two things should be kept in mind. First, the conclusion focuses on Sigismunda instead of Persiles, thereby cementing her importance in the novel; this is a novel about the object of desire and not about the one that desires. And, second, the reference to “posteridad” (posterity) can be read as a reference to continuation and repetition, as Julio Baena notes in *El círculo y la flecha*: “La última palabra del texto del *Persiles* es *posteridad*, endiablada mezcla de *fin* y *continuación*” (131) (The final word of the text of the *Persiles* is *posterity*, a devilish mix of *end* and *continuation*). Instead of closing the circle or bringing the narrative thread to a clear end, his final words reflect the loop, open and closed, descendants as products of the loops that came before faced with the illusory freedom of the open road and free will. Amy Williamsen’s work on chaos theory is helpful as her references to the double pendulum allow a loop to appear open and closed simultaneously; chaos existing within an order yet dynamic system. In a double pendulum system, the movement line sketched by the movement of the bottom pendulum is chaotic, never truly repeating, but always within the circular bounds created by the parameters of the system. Within the proximal perspective tied to movement, all appears as chaos, but from the distal perspective, the appearance of a circular form takes shape, though it will never truly be closed and must perpetually postpone that impossibility through references to the future and *posteridad*.

Perhaps the most striking evidence of Auristela/Sigismunda’s quest to escape the loop imposed on her by patriarchy is another ill-conceived and short-lived plan revealed in the final chapters. She is momentarily stripped of her beauty as a result of the actions of Julia, a Jewish enchantress, who acted at the behest of Hipólita, a woman enamored of Periandro. After recovering her health and beauty, she implores Periandro to release her from her promise to marry him after making a pilgrimage to Rome—a journey with an ulterior motive—so that she can enter the religious life:

Querría agora, si fuese posible, irme al cielo, sin rodeos, sin sobresaltos y sin cuidados, y esto no podrá ser *si tú no me dejas* la parte que yo misma te he dado, que es la palabra y la voluntad de ser tu esposa. *Déjame*, señor, la palabra, que yo procuraré dejar la voluntad, aunque sea por fuerza: que, para alcanzar tan gran bien como es el cielo, todo cuanto hay en la tierra se ha de dejar, hasta los padres y los esposos. Yo no te quiero dejar por otro; por quien te dejo es por Dios, que te dará a sí mismo, cuya recompensa infinitamente excede a que me dejes por él. (448–49)

(I'd like now, if possible, to go to Heaven with no delays, no unpleasant surprises and no worries, but that won't be possible if you won't give me back what I myself have given you, which is my promise and desire to be your wife. Let me have, sir, my promise back, and I'll try to give up my desire, even if I have to force myself; for to achieve a happiness as great as going to Heaven everything on earth should be left behind and given up, even parents and husbands or wives. I don't want to leave you for another. I'm leaving you for God, who will give Himself to you, and the rewards of that are infinitely greater than your loss in letting me go.) (342)³⁴

Perhaps she still fears the wrath of Magsimino, but it appears that she either finds the religious life a more attractive option than marriage to Persiles or she is beginning an end-run toward her genuine goal: emancipation and liberty without the burden of sin. But there is no escape because the world is organized in such a way that none of the available options can satisfy her true desires: escape from an oppressive patriarchy that treats her as an object of desire.

She even goes so far as to participate in patriarchal commerce in order to continue her search for freedom. Immediately following the previous quoted passage, she offers her sister Eusebia to Persiles as an equivalent alternative within the economy of desire that dominates the novel. She attempts to substitute one object/body for another. Some scholars have seen this as further evidence that Persiles's love for her transcends love's fatal glance, but as previously stated, this novel focuses not on him, but rather on Sigismunda. His lofty moral character cannot erase the fact that she attempts to participate in the system she endeavors to avoid; the reason she wanders the world in pursuit of something that escapes her.³⁵

Reading the *Persiles* as the *Sigismunda*

In the end, Cervantes's novel is not a Byzantine novel that explores the journey that frees these lovers from the shackles of societal expectations, but instead it is the story of a young woman who cannot escape her objectification by the patriarchal order in service of male utopic fantasy. The multiple social forces—the desires of her suitors—that affect her social orbit displace her from her original site of emplacement and necessitate movement, but once these contrasting forces cease to act upon her and her place in the world, she must return to a stable and looped trajectory. Earlier I mentioned that I would

return to *Westworld* to speak to the philosophical “moral” of the story. Though I will not reveal why here, the central moral issue is ultimately eclipsed by a philosophical one. From a moral standpoint, *Westworld* seems to ask us if it is fair to treat androids as pleasure puppets and disposable outlets for our violent tendencies. Are they so different from us? But from a philosophical standpoint, the final episode reveals a much more troubling question: are we any different than the androids, driven by our programming toward violent delights that bring us to necessary violent ends that perpetuate the unending loops of social order? The roads and loops we travel will determine if we are the desiring agent, the object of desire, or the disposable means to that end.

Periandro/Persiles, or the everyman that pursues, follows his wandering golden star as a result of the forces of desire—both his and those of others. He, too, is synced into an orbit but, like the other suitors, he can impact, if only ever so slightly, the path of the object that he follows. This is his socially delimited “purchasing power” (Castillo and Egginton 74). His example shows the gradations of freedom and confinement by which all socially enfranchised subjects must abide. Auristela/Sigismunda represents the objectification of social subjects who are denied access to said “purchasing power.” They may move, act, and appear to be subjects, but they are not treated as such beyond the theatrical limits of the staging of male utopic desire. But Cervantes’s most genius stratagem in this seeming diametric opposition is to use confusion and paradox in the text to undermine the foundations of this system. The world may have a structure, but a thing/being’s place within it is simultaneously both static and dynamic, ordered and chaotic like a celestial body in orbit. All are subject to these fluctuations and none can ever escape the system in which these movements occur. All is different and all is the same, but nothing is truly exceptional.

Auristela/Sigismunda reveals this peculiar confined movement through the world in a way that is gendered and transcends gender. It projects a female perspective upon an atypical form of confinement to reveal the rough and porous edges between several dichotomies: male/female, space/place, subject/object, movement/stasis, freedom/confinement. Her channeled journey reveals the arbitrary valorizations of an ordered system that imposes its will but cannot completely avoid the inherent entropy of the system itself. The tale of her confinement in motion, like Dolores’s movement through a theme park world, speaks to the wide-reaching injustices suffered by those who lack the agency to truly plot their own course, but it also reveals that this subjugating order is arbitrary and unstable.³⁶ Its reversal is always within the realm of possibility and someday those who endeavor to preserve this order, beneficial to them and detrimental to others, through the carefully controlled pageantry of social stagecraft, could find themselves prisoners in a prison of their own design.

NOTES

1. All translations from the *Persiles* are taken from Weller and Colahan's translation. All other translations are my own.
2. "Turbéme algún tanto; pero el interés era tan grande, moví los pies para seguirla, y hallélos sin grillos y sin cadenas, y las puertas de toda la prisión de par en par abiertas, y los prisioneros y guardas en profundísimo sueño sepultados" (77) (I felt somewhat apprehensive, but since there was a lot at stake I moved my feet to follow her and found that they were free from shackles and chains; the doors throughout the prison were wide open, and the guards were sunk in a very deep sleep) (51).
3. Amy Williamsen's work with chaos theory and the *Persiles* explores this phenomenon, so closely tied to the baroque understanding of *fortuna* (fortune). In her description of the Lorenz attractor she states that it "graphically captured unpredictability within deterministic confines, chaos within order" (17). The aggregate of the chaotic lines shows the order of chaos and vice versa, yet once order is perceptible the viewer tends to fixate on it, ignoring the no less present chaos that gave form to order. This is mirrored in the pilgrims' progress within their circuitous yet delimited path toward Rome. The chaotic trajectory of their pilgrimage is only deciphered as an ordered journey from point A to point B once it is complete.
4. Feliciana de la Voz is the only character in the *Persiles* that could be considered a *mujer emparedada* in the more traditional sense, though she is enclosed in order to hide and protect her from those seeking her. She gives birth to her lover Rosanio's child out of wedlock just as the suitor chosen by her father is arriving to marry her. She charges her maid Leonora to bring the baby safely to Rosanio, and in the ensuing uproar, Feliciana escapes her house to later be taken in by several shepherds who hide her inside the hollow of a tree.
5. My understanding of the Byzantine novel of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain is grounded in Javier González Rovira's excellent study of the genre titled *La novela bizantina de la Edad de Oro*. Rovira shows how Golden Age Spanish authors appropriated the defining features of classical Byzantine novels, such as Heliodorus of Emesa's *Aethiopica*, and made them an essential part of their revival of the genre. Some of these features include beginning the story *in media res*, the inclusion of many episodes and interpolated stories, an intradiegetic narrator, depictions of ideal love, devious passions, defenses of chastity, the use of deceit to protect true identities of the ideal lovers, and episodes of captivity, just to name a few.
6. A careful look at the organization of both time and space within the *Persiles* reveals a number of peculiarities. As several presenters noted during the conference "Cervantes en el Septentrión" (Cervantes in the North) (June 27–29, 2017), the historical events described in the text that temporally anchor the second part actually predate those provided in the first part (a retrograde movement from the early seventeenth century to the mid-sixteenth century).

7. In *(A)Wry Views*, David R. Castillo emphasizes Lázaro's ability to "survive in the Father's world and to profit from his marginal position" (30), Guzmán de Alfarache's "victory over desire" (41), and Justina's "moral frailty" which "threatens the social order" (56). Though each maintains a different posture in their marginal position, they all are at the mercy of what Castillo terms the "Father's world." These stories can be spun to maintain (or subvert) social order, but in the end, they are merely disposable apparatuses whose ultimate destiny already precludes them from a truly honorable existence.
8. Ironically, the first picaresque work, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, orients its critical gaze at social structure and not only the foolish aspirations of the *pícaro*.
9. "Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar" (281) (Traveler, there is no road, the road is made by traveling it).
10. Immurement in the sense that certain social groups found themselves confined to a transitory existence on the road or on the margins of society thereby frequently displaced.
11. Even those that find a place and/or success cannot resist returning to the open road. Adventure calls once more or the corrective agents of society finally root them out of their temporary safe haven.
12. This genre that imitates the Greek novels such as the *Aethiopica* by Heliodorus of Emesa became quite popular in Spain during the first quarter of the seventeenth century. It typically centered on a pilgrimage story and adhered to several salient features such as Neoplatonic love, the use of disguise and deceit to accomplish an honorable goal, a non-linear narrative structure beginning *in media res*, and a definitive moment of anagnorisis. Notable examples include *Historia de los amores de Clareo y Florisea* by Alonso Núñez de Reinoso (1552), *El peregrino en su patria* by Lope de Vega, and *Historia de Hipólito y Aminta* (1627).
13. This "place" is culturally defined as a place of "emplacement," as defined by Foucault in his essay "Of Other Spaces." An emplaced person or object could exist within a "complete hierarchy," but their "localization," or definition within movement and changing circumstances, threatened hermeneutic fixity (1). This led to an emplacing of place within the localizing possibilities of space in modern thought. For more on space and place see Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* and Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*.
14. Michael Armstrong-Roche's book *Cervantes' Epic Novel: Empire, Religion, and the Dream Life of Heroes in Persiles* (2009) takes crucial steps toward re-orienting the ideological topography projected on the novel's chronotope; "a thorough survey of textual territory reveals that the *Persiles* resists the imposition of the conventional opposition" (1). The European utopia and the Barbaric dystopia are presented as carefully mirrored images that place Rome on the periphery and barbarism at the heart of the civilizing endeavors.
15. The entropic threat that the liberated female constituted to patriarchy in the Golden Age imagination is mirrored in *Westworld* while it simultaneously deconstructs the

- fabricated moral authority with which patriarchy shields itself. It could be argued that this fear of the liberated female has dissipated little in the intervening centuries.
16. This inescapable repetition obliquely alludes to classical and contemporary representations of “Hell.” Sisyphus, Tantalus, and Prometheus are ancient archetypes whose tortured repetitive punishments inform contemporary depictions of Hell as a place where torturous experiences are relived. In AMC’s *Preacher*, both the Saint of Killers, a demonic bounty hunter, and Eugene, a teenage boy accidentally sent to Hell by the titular character, are forced to relive the worst day of their lives in an unending loop.
 17. One cannot help but draw parallels between her and both the *mujer agraviada* (aggrieved woman) and the *mujer vengativa* (vengeful woman) found in a plethora of Golden Age literary works. Dolores oscillates between a lamenting passive role like that of Taurisa and a vengeful active role like that of the widow Ruperta before he she falls in love with Croriano.
 18. Cervantes is no stranger to dynamic confinement or confinement while in motion. His titular knight-errant returns home in the 1605 *Quijote* in an ox-cart, supposedly enchanted and unable to flee.
 19. Let us not forget that the pilgrimage is her mother Eusebia’s idea and she actively presents herself and Periandro as brother and sister. She is a primary agent in an attempt to change her social orbit.
 20. Diana de Armas Wilson has noted the parallels between the messianism found Habsburg imperial rhetoric and the barbarian prophecy (180–82). I would add that it could be taken further and read as a parody of Christianity. Furthermore, Auristela is said to be poisoned as well as cursed by Julia, Hipólita’s agent of Auristela’s destruction. The result is the drastic loss of her beauty which twists her face into something almost unrecognizable. Is this episode an allusion to the “torcer el rostro” (making a face) found in the quote describing the barbaric prophecy?
 21. Cervantes’s *El celoso extremeño* is a prime example. Emily Colbert Cairns investigates the figure of the almost ubiquitous *malcasada* (the unhappily married woman) within the Cervantine framework in this volume of *Hispanic Issues*.
 22. Interestingly enough, many scholars have commented of late on the increased social mobility of the Muslim pirate ports of North Africa in contrast to the stifling social rigidity of Habsburg Spain (Garcés 36).
 23. In *Westworld*, androids facilitate the creation of utopic simulated dystopia in which humans can release their monstrous inclinations and live their dark fantasies in a “safe space,” ostensibly in service of maintaining a utopic “real” world.
 24. José Manuel Lucía Megías’s biographical project characterizes Cervantes as a man who desired access to the inner circles of power in the Habsburg court, but who instead found himself insufficiently compensated for his service and sacrifice. The chapter titles are a fine example of this as each contains the word “laberinto” (labyrinth) expressing his unsuccessful wanderings through three environments: “la Corte” (the royal court), “las letras” (literature), and “las cuentas reales” (royal accounts). Perhaps this made him sensitive to others who struggled to break their societal loops.

25. David R. Castillo and William Egginton have argued that the “fundamentally economic notion of freedom as purchasing power frames our social and political reality” (74). They then show that this is by no means new or specific to a postmodern capitalist society by showing how for Hume, “personal freedom overlays a profound servitude to interests of market capital” (77). Cervantes appears to be aware, as a result of personal experience, that the degree of liberty one enjoys is not only a distinction created solely by walls, but also one’s social purchasing power.
26. As Michael Armstrong-Roche notes “once the pilgrims are off the Barbaric Isle, we are *always* in Catholic lands” (61). I would also add that the barbarians we first encounter collect women like the other powerful Catholic men in the novel (Arnaldo, the Duke of Nemurs, and so on), but they do so with a fervent desire to realize the utopia promised in their messianic mythology. Personal lust and lechery feel all the more immediate within the “friendly” confines of the Catholic world.
27. The younger Antonio’s case is interesting because his barbarous acts, such as accidentally killing Clodio, are more consistent with his Spanish Catholic father’s prideful actions that resulted in his exile (wounding a powerful rival in a petty duel) than with the actions of his barbarian mother. If this is considered, it could be asserted that Félix Flora finds greater agency in her life by withdrawing from Catholic purity and opting for a *mestizo* marriage.
28. As many have noted, including Cervantes, the duel between these young men was a grave sin considering the Council of Trent. These Catholic men participate in an activity that would result in their excommunication.
29. Luisa is portrayed as the antithesis of Auristela, but her story contains some striking parallels: unwanted arranged marriage, escape from it, captivity at the hands of others, and a violent and tumultuous journey to Rome. I would argue that if we sympathize with Auristela, we must do the same with Luisa, but this is not the picture the authorial voice paints.
30. In this social solar system, I imagine the space of the public execution as a sort of theater of the world (*theatrum mundi*). The flames of execution are both spectacle and the center of social power through the enactment of violence sanctioned by both Church and State. Proximity to this power is socially dictated but to occupy this space means the destruction of the individual—the victim in death and the executioner in anonymity. The social being cannot successfully occupy this space but is always aware of and influenced by its power.
31. The closure of a loop is not a final and definitive concretization of stasis. Marriage, while a socially acceptable loop, is subject to the movement and influence of fortune. The loop can be broken and deviation can occur, as can be seen in many of Cervantes’s works.
32. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the pilgrims’s arrival to Rome is the fact that they are met not by Christians but rather two Jews, Zabulón and Abiud.
33. Therefore, he is unaffected by any of her physical mutations because she is nothing more than an image on a canvas, an idea referred to him by others, and the promise of social stability through a marriage of political convenience.

34. This episode is reminiscent of the story told by Manuel de Sosa in book one. He describes how his triumphant return to claim his promised bride Leonora is frustrated by her petition to become a nun. He heartbrokenly accepts her request.
35. The etymology of the name “Sigismunda” is up for debate, perhaps meaning “victorious protector” if the Germanic roots are taken at face value, but a Spanish-speaker cannot help but think of “seguir” and “mundo”—to chase or follow the world. This wandering and seeking quality fits her actions throughout the novel.
36. Again, chaos theory challenges us to consider that the perception of order is extrapolated from the circumstances of chaos.

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