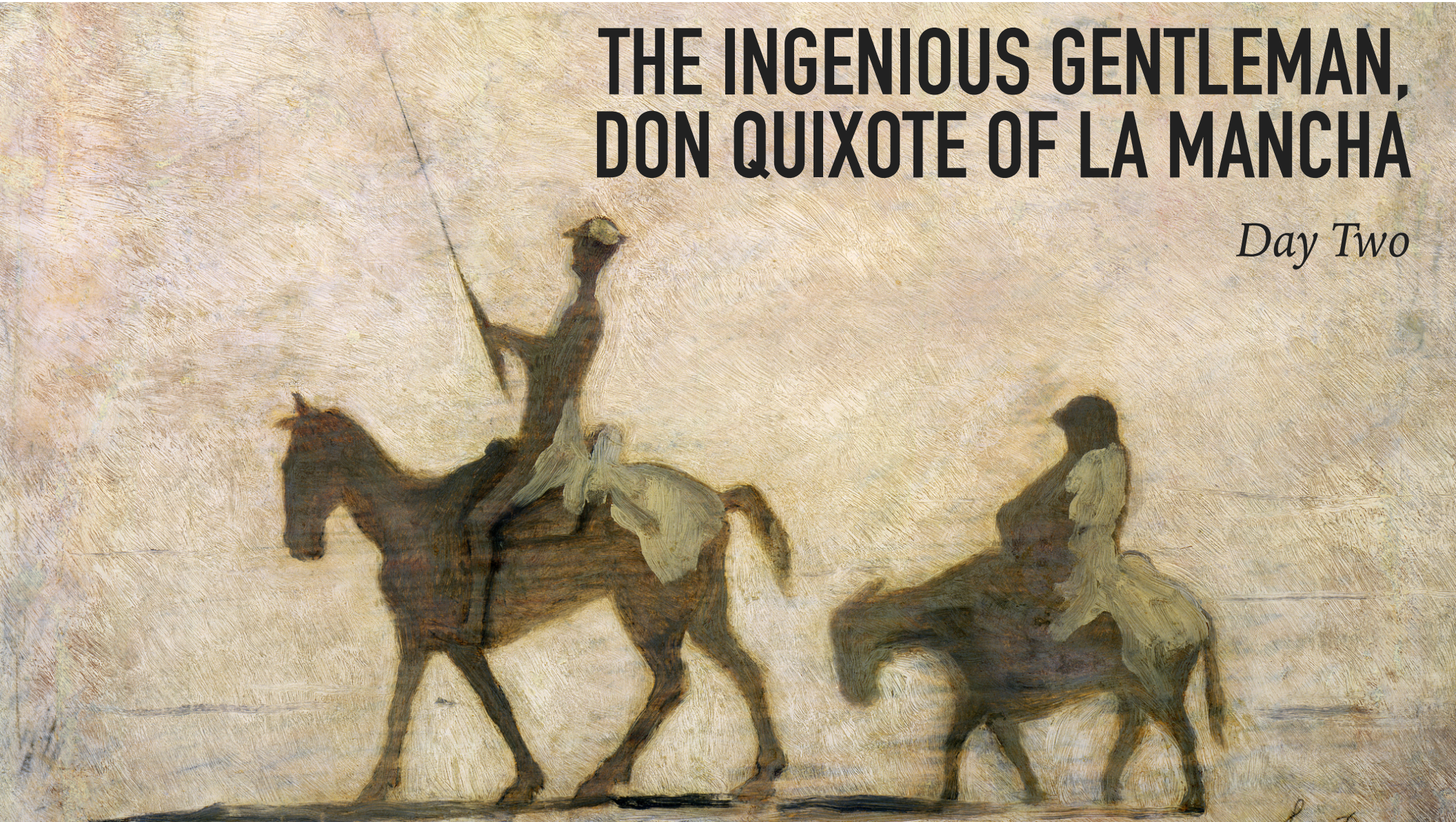


THE INGENIOUS GENTLEMAN, DON QUIXOTE OF LA MANCHA

Day Two





QUIXOTE: THEMES

- Truth or falsehood?
- Unreliable narrator who promises a truthful account. Will it be truth or a lie?
- Prologue: a simple honest account, or the mere *appearance* of authority via meaningless apparatus? Like: prologue, sayings in Latin, introductory poems...
- A choice between self-deception (the dream, illusion, fantasy) and cold, hard reality: Quixote or Sancho Panza?
- Fiction mediates this divide

**TWO
READINGS:
TRAGEDY, OR
COMEDY?**

I think it's comedy





BACKGROUND TO CAPTIVE'S TALE

- ▶ Don Quixote and Sancho Panza meet a group of travelers who have had romantic and melodramatic adventures
- ▶ Rather than abuse Quixote for his madness, they *facilitate* it (mocking, and hurting, him in the process)
- ▶ They stop at an inn, where travelers tell their tales, and the priest reads a novella, *The Man Who Was Recklessly Curious* (a version of Quixote himself?)
- ▶ Quixote attacks the inn's supply of wine, believing wine skins are giants' heads, and the wine, blood (Christ?)



COYPEL, 1716







INTERPOLATED TALES

- A story within a story
- Famous Western examples: Boccaccio's *Decameron*; Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*
- A frame narrative and individual tales; has always been an alternative to the normal form of storytelling
- Always self-referential, meta-fictional (stories about stories)
- Originally, however, not from the West, but from the Islamic world: *1001 Nights* (9th C?) (and before that, India, the *Panchatantra*, 3rd C. A.D.)

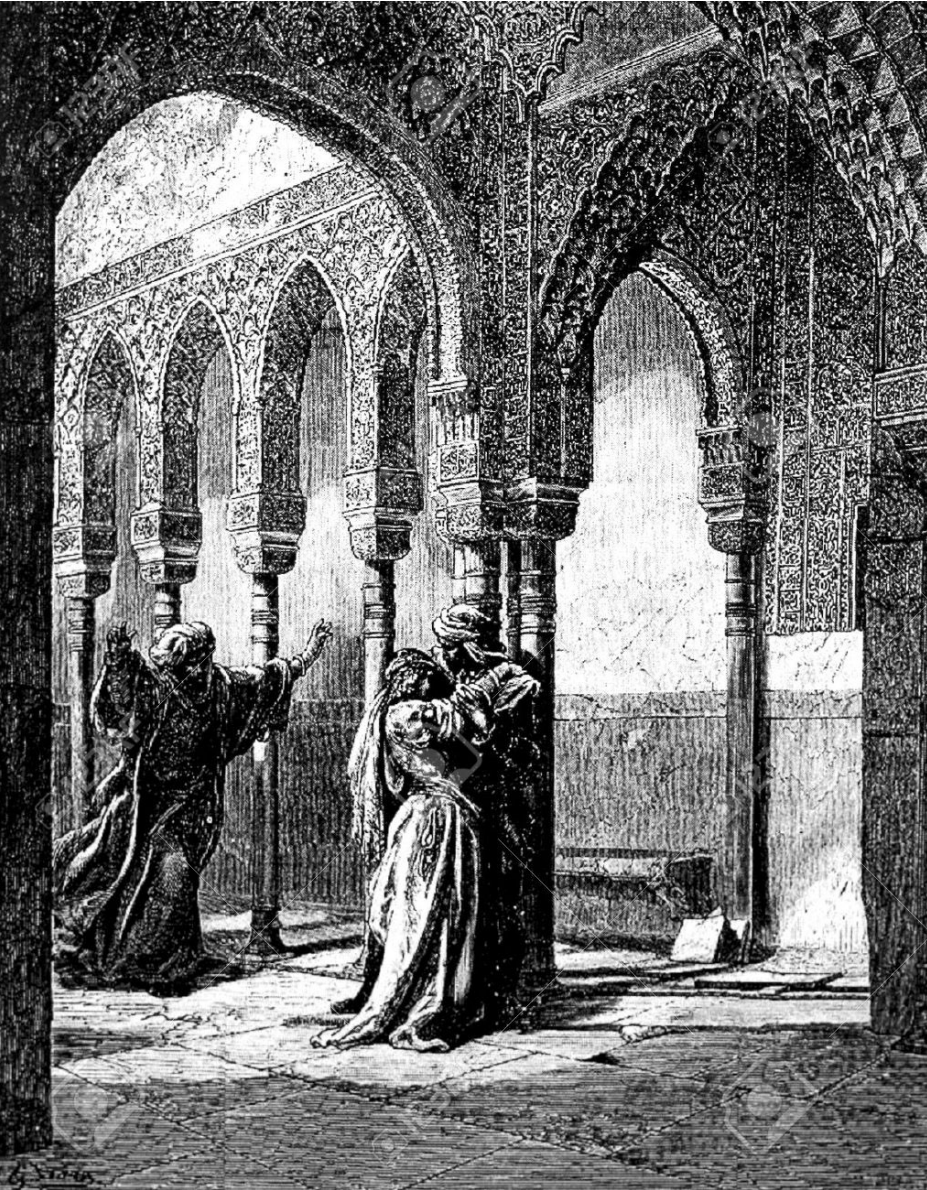






FRAME VS. CONTENT

- Structural opposition between “frame” narrative and the interpolated tale
- Not just an opposition, but a gap—yet another form of ironic conscience
- In *The Decameron*, the irony is at the level of content; the frame is serious, reflecting Medieval power: subversion from below, power above
- In the *Quixote*, the irony is at the level of the frame; the internal stories are serious; the “hidden” desire is for belief



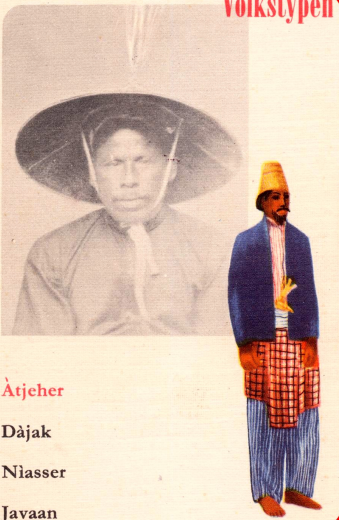
THE CAPTIVE'S TALE

- why the interpolated tale? Well, let's look at the captive's tale...
- ...unlike the other narratives, based on Cervantes' own experience.
- most of the characters are real, even if the events are not (Agi Morato, his daughter Zohara, etc.)
- makes the book about current, urgent events, both personal and universal: race, religion, politics, slavery, the Other, family, wealth

THE CAPTIVE AS ETHNOGRAPHER

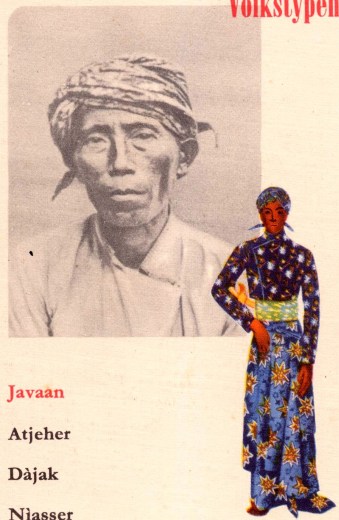
- Initial travels in Europe (Genoa, Flanders, Lepanto); captivity in North Africa is an “ethnographic journey” (the world is a globe)
- He explores differences, and his binary system (Christian, Moor) begins to break down:
 - Turks vs. Moors (both Islamic, very different)
 - Christians; renegades; French
 - Agi Morato and Zoraida (same family, but split)
- Especially true at the level of language: Tagarinos, pidgin, Ladino, Lela Marién, Allah, the “true Allah”
- *traduttore, traditore*; all communication passes through an unreliable translator (Cide Hamete...)

Volkstypen



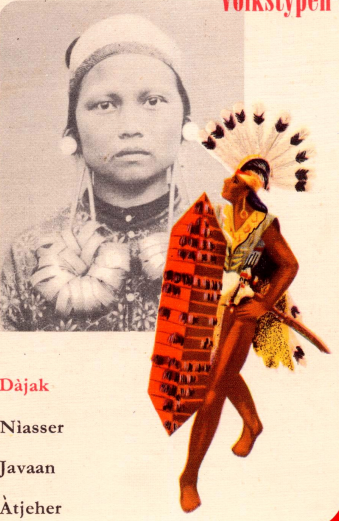
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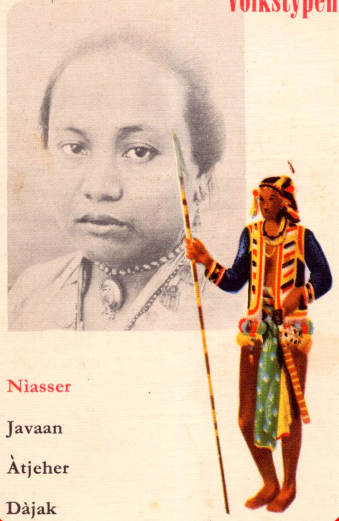
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TRANSLATION AS TRAVEL / TRAVEL AS TRANSLATION

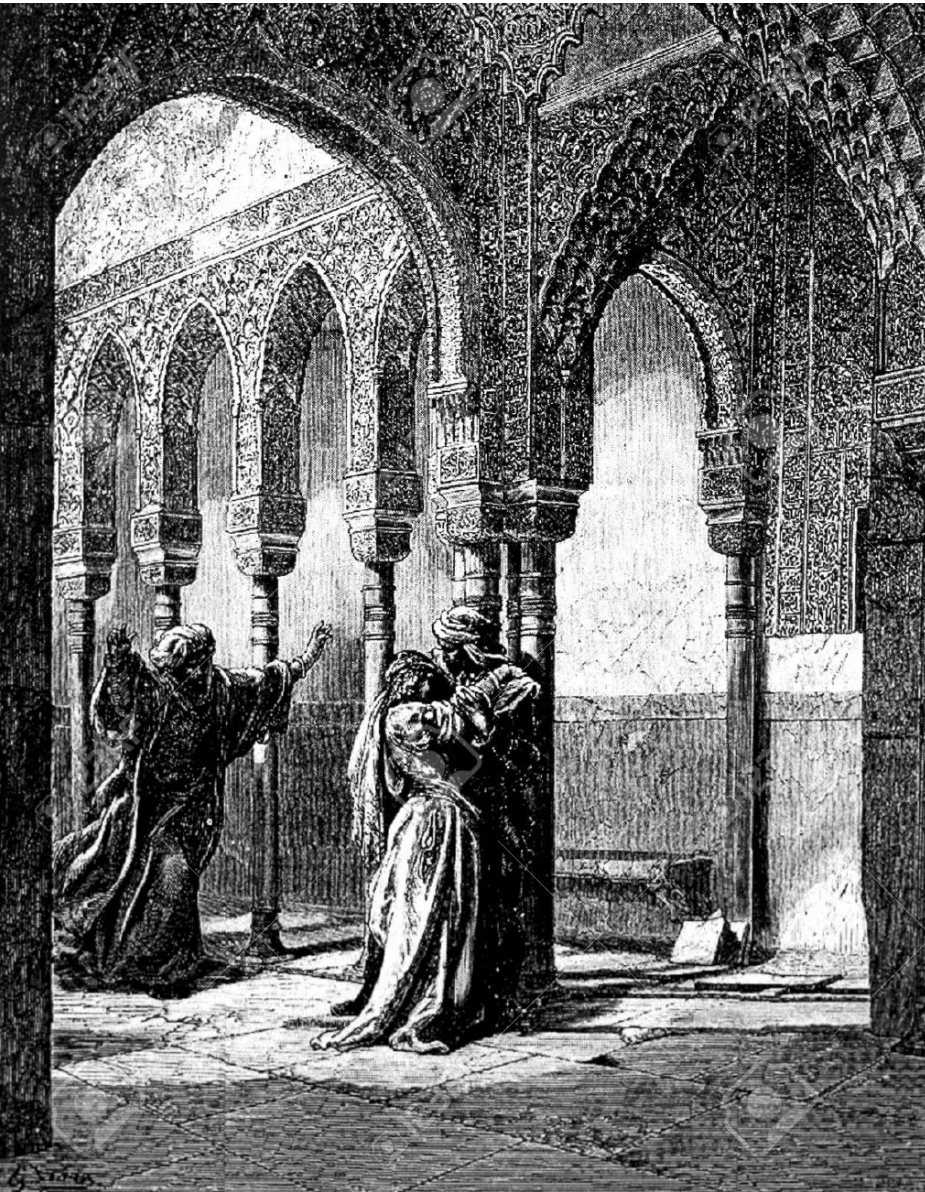
- *Trans + ducere* = to lead across, over
- *Trans + latio* = cross from one side to another
- *Trans + dire* = to speak across (to betray)
- *Meta + phora* = to carry across
- μεταφορά = shuttle bus (modern Greek)

“ A reed appeared, with a handkerchief tied to the end, and the reed was moving about, almost as if it were signaling that we should come and take it... I took the money, looked at the window and saw *an extremely white hand* emerge... A short while later a small cross made of reeds was dangled... This confirmed a Christian woman...

—*Don Quixote, I: XL*

“ Our desire to know what the paper said was immense... and the difficulty of finding someone to read it to us was greater. Finally, I decided to trust a renegade, who claimed to be a great friend, and made pledges...

—*Don Quixote, I: XL*



THE INTERPOLATED TALE

- communication with Zoraida replicates the structure of the *Quixote*; Arabic origin that must be translated with no certainty as to its *fidelity* (central concern of these chapters is *trust*): romance + international relations
- tells a story that is also urgently *personal*: money, sex, suffering
- we *believe* this story (it's not true, but it is *direct*, not metafictional, not ironic, not farcical like *Quixote*)
- modernity obviates belief; with science, you don't need to believe—you just need to *know*. But we *want to believe*; a form of trust

“ I am very beautiful and young, and I have a good deal of money to take with me. I wrote this; be careful who you ask to read it: do not trust any Moor, for they are all false.

—Don Quixote, I: XL

“Write to me, and I shall always reply, for Almighty Allah has given us a Christian captive who can speak and write your language. Without any fear, you can tell us anything. I give you my word as a good Christian that [I will marry you], and you should know that Christians keep their promises better than Moors.

—Don Quixote, I: XL

“ I cannot begin to describe for you the great beauty and grace, or the elegance of the rich attire, [of] my beloved Zoraida. [A page describing her jewelry]. She appeared so richly attired and so exceedingly beautiful that she seemed to me the loveliest woman I had ever seen... considering all that I owed her...

—*Don Quixote, I: XLI*



THE CAPTIVE'S TALE

- ▶ The captive's tale is literally a *fantasy*: it's Cervantes' own story, but with an insanely rich, super-hot Muslim-who-decided-to-turn-Christian-who-just-happens-to-think-I'm-super-cute-and-whoa-just-asked-me-to marry-her-and-a-young-virgin added in
- ▶ So, what's up, C? Is this *just* a Marty Stu character?
- ▶ No. C is smarter than that. Because what happened to you when you read the captive's story?



THE CAPTIVE'S TALE

- ▶ You *cared*: the moment there was a cute rich girl and a poor, handsome young soldier...
- ▶ And then, the *father*! And the melodrama! He's basically a good guy who loves his daughter, but they have to strand him on an island — and sail away, forever
- ▶ And the renegade! Will he betray them?
- ▶ And *French pirates*? And then, OMG, the *brother* shows up?
- ▶ This is soap opera: melodrama + extraordinary coincidences. Pure narrative.

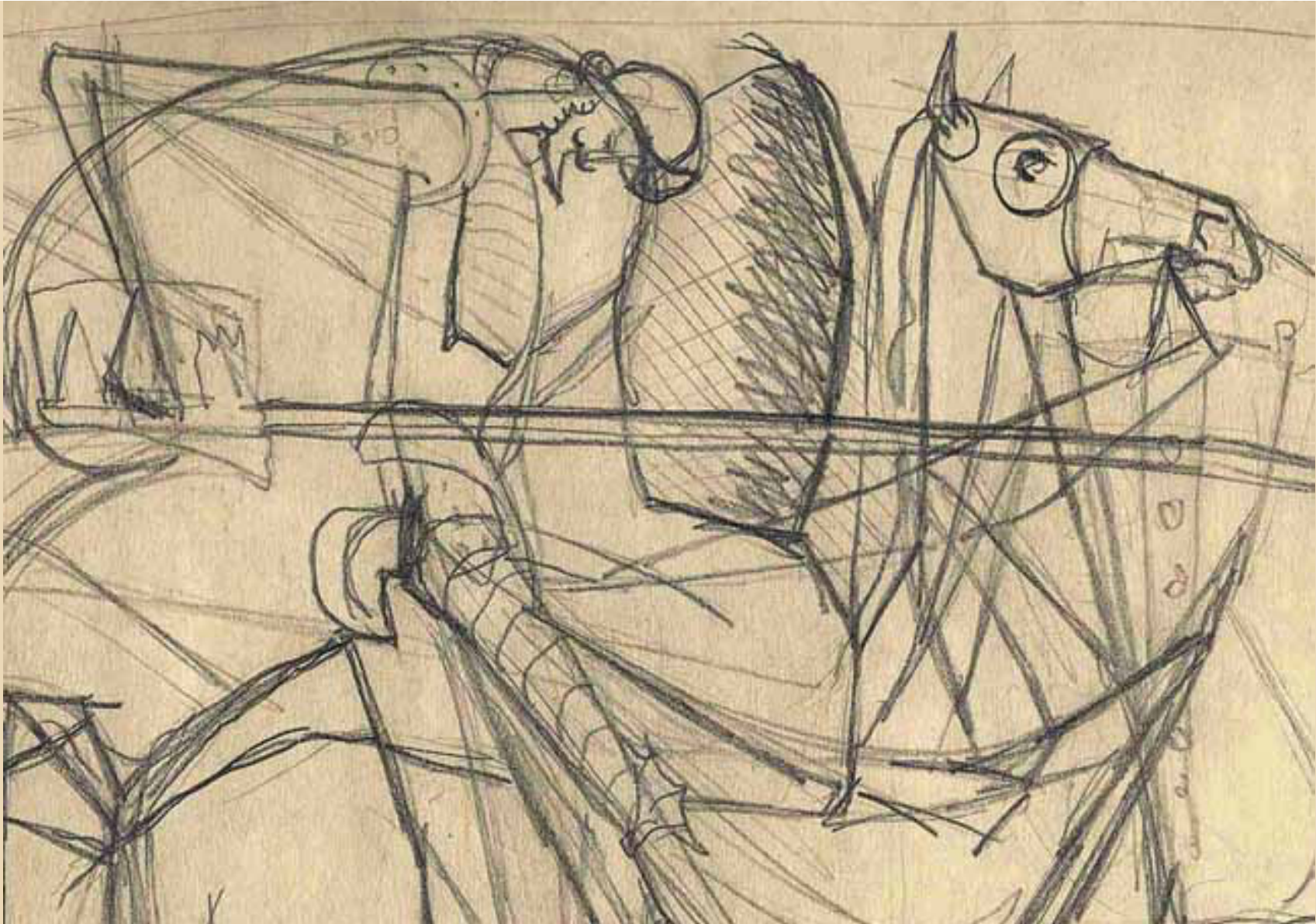






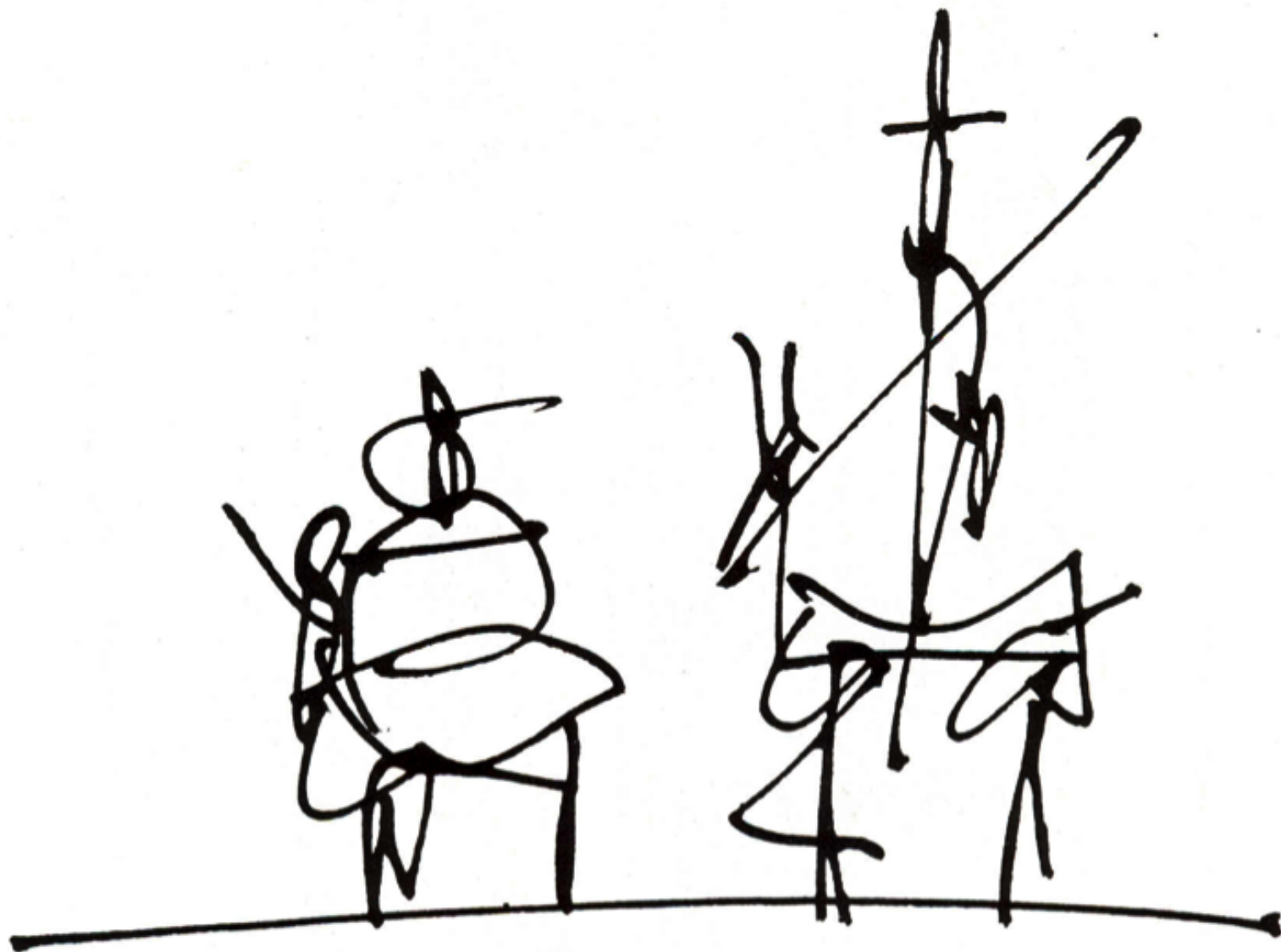
NARRATIVE

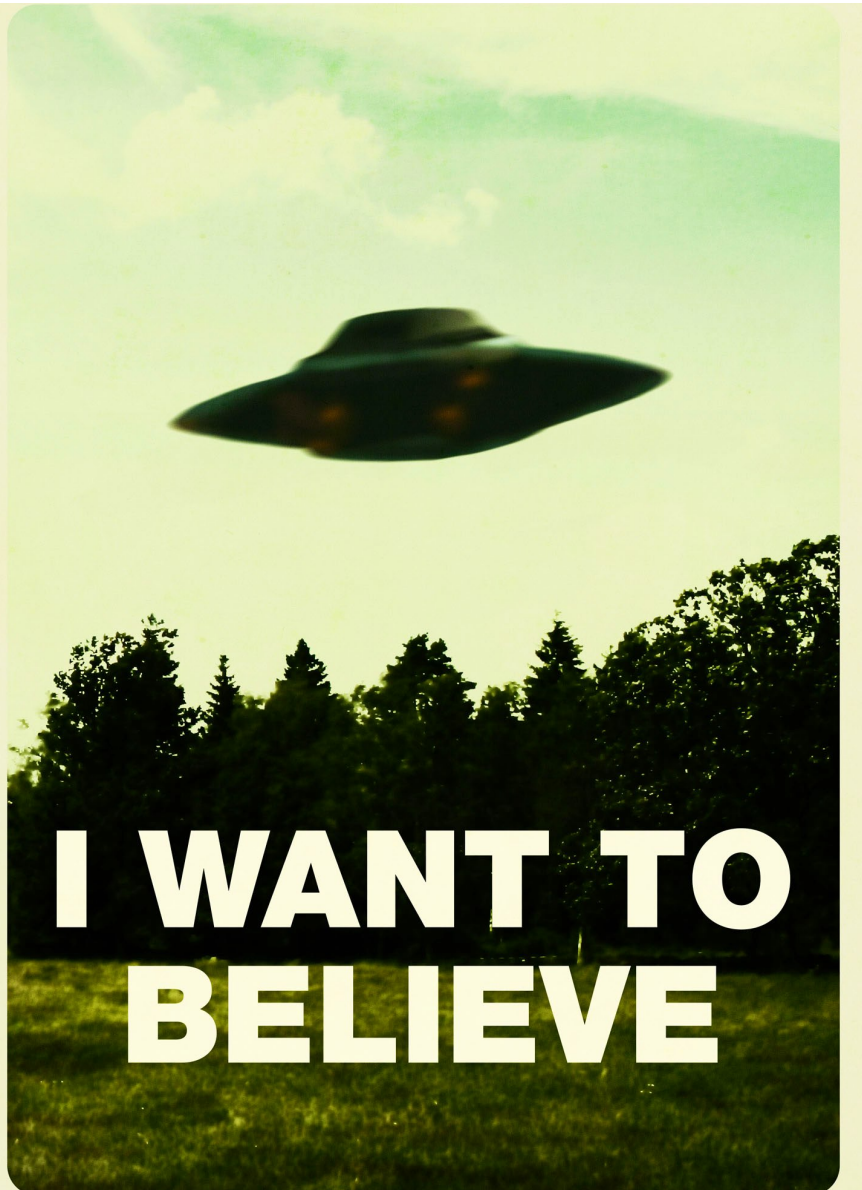
- What is narrative?
- narrative < *narrare* < *gnarus* ('knowing'), i.e., ignorant, gnostic, cognitive, know, ken, canny, uncanny, etc. To tell a story is to find a way to know something: what happened?
- What do I mean by "pure narrative"?
- I mean every event leads to other events, an endless series of complications. It *unfolds* (the literal meaning of *evolution*).
- Pure narrative is event, and much less psychological depth: characters are icons, silhouettes, and action is everything











BELIEF VS. KNOWING

- ▶ In other words, the *Quixote*'s interpolated tales aren't precisely "digressions"
- ▶ Within our modern cynicism (the tragic reading), there is an urgent need to believe—just like Quixote wants to believe
- ▶ Within the satirical narrative of the *Quixote* are real human stories in which there is, in fact, honor, love, dedication, courage, duty—unspoiled by the greed and cruelty that are always turned against Quixote (the comic reading: a better world)
- ▶ This can be "true" only in fiction, in between true and false



THE MEDITERRANEAN

- ▶ A Mediterranean understanding of the world
- ▶ Nations don't count; water—the space between them—does
- ▶ Everything is “contaminated” in this sea: languages, religions, races, identities. They mix and can't be extricated (What is Zoraida? What is her father?)
- ▶ Genoa, Flanders, Lepanto, Constantinople, Algiers, Cava Rumía; inverts Spain's encounter with Muslim World





“ We saw a young shepherd... we called to him and he looked up and saw the renegade and Zoraida, and since they were wearing Moorish clothing, he thought all Barbary was attacking.

“Moors! Moors have landed! Moors! Moors! To arms! To arms!”

—*Don Quixote, I: XLI*



THE ATLANTIC

- This is true in a much broader sense: the Atlantic.
- The end of the world: Europe was bounded by the Mediterranean; Atlantis was not just hidden, but *forbidden*
- For the first time, the New World appears, called “the Indies”: Mexico and Peru
- The three brothers show something about geography and destiny. One goes East (the soldier/captive), one stays put (the lettered man/judge), one goes West (the merchant); capitalism is going West

“ This information convinced him that this was brother, the one who had pursued letters... The servant told him that his honor was going to the Indies to serve as a judge on the Royal High Court of México...

—*Don Quixote, I: XLII*

“My younger brother is in Perú, and so wealthy that with what he has sent home to my father and me he has more than repaid the position that he took... because of him, I was able to pursue my studies and achieve my current rank.

—*Don Quixote, I: XLII*



THE THREE BROTHERS

- ▶ three brothers, each demonstrating a different fortune: poverty (the East), comfort (Europe) and prosperity (America)
- ▶ beginning—like this course—in the Middle East, and always moving West
- ▶ past, present and future of Western culture? From arms to letters to commerce?