

Deconstructing narrativity on the screen

Re-reading Don Quixote in Albert Serra's *Honor de cavalleria* (Spain, 2006)¹

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Abstract / Resumen / Résumé / Riassunto

This article deals with the reading carried out by the Catalan filmmaker Albert Serra in his film *Honor de cavalleria* of *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*. It analyzes the text in terms of interdiscursive translation/rewriting by arguing that what is adapted is not so much the plot as the enunciative logic that underlies the Cervantine novel.

Este artículo aborda la lectura llevada a cabo por el cineasta catalán Albert Serra en su película *Honor de cavalleria* de *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, analizándola en términos de traducción/reescritura interdiscursiva, donde no se adapta tanto la materia argumental cuanto la lógica enunciativa que subyace a la novela cervantina.

Cet article traite de la lecture effectuée par le cinéaste catalan Albert Serra dans son film *Honor de cavalleria* de *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la*

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Mancha, en l'analysant en termes de traduction/réécriture interdiscursive, où ce qu'on adapte n'est pas tant la matière de l'intrigue que la logique énonciative qui sous-tend le roman de Cervantes.

Questo articolo tratta la lettura del regista catalano Albert Serra nel suo film *Honor de cavalleria* de *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Analizza il testo nei termini di traduzione/riscrittura interdiscorsiva, sostenendo che ciò che il regista adatta non è tanto la materia della trama quanto la logica enunciativa alla base del romanzo di Cervantes.

Key words / Palabras clave / Mots-clé / Parole chiave

Albert Serra, *Honor de cavalleria*, Cervantes, *El Quijote*, interdiscursive translation, adaptation, rewriting.

Albert Serra, *Honor de cavalleria*, Cervantes, *El Quijote*, traducción interdiscursiva, adaptación, reescritura.

Albert Serra, *Honor de cavalleria*, Cervantes, *El Quijote*, traduction interdiscursive, adaptation, ré-écriture.

Albert Serra, *Honor de cavalleria*, Cervantes, *El Quijote*, traduzione interdiscorsiva, adattazione, riscrittura.

A sentimental reason is at the basis of my text. This reason is personal, and takes me back to Francoist Granada, where I grew up. I was 5 years old, and my parents decided to enrol me in the *Hermanos Maristas*' primary school, where I was supposed to learn writing, reading and arithmetics. And so I did. To make us learn how to read, the *Hermanos Maristas* used as an introductory book not the canonic *Catón*, but an adaptation for children of *Don Quijote*, published by Edelvives Publishing House. So the first words I remember having been able to recognize looking at a printed page were «En un lugar de la Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme...». From that time on, since the age of 10, instead of Jules Verne's, Salgari's or other typical narrations for children, I devoted my time before sleeping to read alone in my bedroom *La Galatea*, *El viaje del Parnaso* or the *Exemplary Novels*. Now I know that it was a rather uncommon habit for a boy at that age, but that's the way things went.

This is part of the reason why, even if I am not «officially» a cervantist, at least in the sense established within the tradition of Hispanism (I have published three books on Cervantes with no pretention to be a specialist), I feel, in a way, as part of Cervantes' family, since my relation with his writings has always been constant in time, and much of my theoretical convictions, as a writer, as a professor and as a translator (the three areas I have dedicated my life to) come from what I have been able to elaborate when pondering on his novels, his theater or his poetry. With this text I allow myself to refresh the blurred memories of my childhood.

It may not be easy to understand how a confessed sentimental follower of Cervantes has chosen *Honor de cavalleria* as a reference for an academic intervention. Yet I believe there can be an agreement about the fact that the film by Albert Serra is neither a blockbuster nor the kind of movie one would like to watch on TV, at home, by the fireplace during a snowy winter night. It has nothing to do with *Raiders of the Lost Ark* or *Back to the Future*. If you think it does, you are probably right, in a way, yet it is also true that this experimental

and unusual movie, made against the expectations of a common (and hegemonic) film audience, will allow us to deal with two theoretical problems that are at the basis of two of my main points: a) the first one is related to the concept of adaptation as a specific form of interdiscursive translation; b) the second one has to do with the possibility to think of cinema as a territory not specifically thought of for narration. To transform the Lumière Brothers' first representations into a narratological machine was not so simple when the new technology was invented, even if nowadays such a perspective is hegemonic and uncritically admitted by audiences and scholars all over the world. Cinema was not narrative at all in its very beginning; it became narrative much later by reasons that I shall expose.

About the first point, I want to clarify that I take as a point of departure a hypothesis that can be presented in the following terms: all theories of discourse are in fact theories of translation (from a spoken language to another, from a semiotic system to another, and so on). Writing, reading, teaching, establishing an everyday dialogue in a classroom or even in a love relationship have to do, in one way or another, with translation. We translate other people's signs into our particular system of values through our own codes of interpretation. If all communication systems are indeed continuous series of misunderstandings, it is precisely because of that (I never believed in communication, but in signification, which implies a very different perspective from a semiotic point of view). We never really know what the other says to us, we *interpret* what he or she is saying. In this sense, to adapt a novel to the screen, or compose a symphony using a poem as a reference, or establish a dialogue between a painting or a sculpture with a musical partition or a literary narration (as in Mussorgsky's *Pictures of an Exhibition* or Henry James's *The Figure in the Carpet*, for example) is always a problem of translating from a cultural and discursive space to another, and it has to be dealt with as such.

On the other hand, to translate is not simply to say or to do «the same» in a territory that is different from the original one; it implies to *produce* a new cultural artifact

by applying what one can call a «sameness» as an effect of equivalence. Translation creates correspondences, not an equivalence. The idea of «faithfulness to the original», therefore, has no sense at all. A translation always implies the construction of a different textuality, in which the traces of the interpreter, who is a mediator (screenplayer, reader, «translator», teacher, etc.) are always explicit, even if he or she tries to erase them.

It is in fact in the rhetorical mediation where the political, cultural and ideological reappropriation/re-writing is usually inscribed. From this point of view, Albert Serra's adaptation implies a re-reading not only of Cervantes' novel, but also of the film tradition from which the adaptation is brought forth.

The second question has to do with the idea of cinema as something not specifically thought of to tell stories. In fact, when the new medium was created, the objective was neither to photograph the movement (movement can never be captured by a machine) nor to visualize a story, but to produce a visual simulation of movement (through what is known as the *phi effect*) by projecting a sequence of 16, 18 or 24 recorded still pictures per second. This new technological medium had, at the moment of the birth of the technology, nothing to do with narrativity. To look at Lumière's child having breakfast or at a train's arrival at the station was the presentation of a kind of miracle, not the representation of a plot. There was not a story to tell, it was a way to fascinate innocents eyes, not accustomed to such spectacles and, let's not forget, a way to make people pay for the experience. As Jean-Luc Goddard ironically pointed out back in 1995, the cinema's anniversary was neither the centennial of an invention (some films existed since one year before) nor the first show (before the Paris event, *La sortie des ouvriers de l'usine* had been shown in Lyon). What was really absolutely new the night of December 28th, 1895 was the fact that people had to pay to see the spectacle. Godard ended his commentaries by underlying that what we were celebrating in 1995 was in fact the hundredth year of the ticket office. In some way, leaving apart Godard's provocative intentions, the truth is that in the beginning cinema was not a discour-

se, but an industry, that is to say, a kind of business. In order to dispute clients in the market of leisure, the new invention was forced to adapt itself to the dominant forms of spectacle in each culture, by sharing some of their particular characteristics as a way to get acceptance by audiences with the same open mind with which they accepted magicians or clowns in the circus. This is what explains that the first American movies were related to the stories written by journalists about the wild west—the western is not a dominant genre in the USA by chance—, or why the opera in Italy, the Zarzuela in Spain, the Nô theater in Japan, and so on, were the basis of each national cinematography of the origin. From this point of view, what characterized every cinematic tradition (since a universal film language never existed) was not *what to show or to tell* in each of them, but *how to articulate space, time and a false effect of movement* (what Wim Wenders called *Falsche Bewegung*) within each specific mode of perception interiorised within the imaginary of each and every tradition. It was a question of rhetorics, not of contents. Cinema became narrative (excluding and erasing the pregnancy of its original rhetorical horizon through what today we call transparent editing) at a much later time, and fundamentally in the USA, not necessarily in Europe. For industrial reasons, what Noël Burch defined as Institutional Mode of Representation (developped fundamentally by the industry in the USA) became hegemonic globally, and audiences were educated to look at these kinds of visual narrations not because they were better, but because they were the only ones shown in theaters property of American Majors production companies. Nowadays it is difficult to have students and audiences understand that cinema is a mechanical apparatus with which, through the transformation of time into space and of space into time, we can produce effects of reality, but we cannot indeed catch the real world around us. The idea of the screen as a big window opened so that one can look at reality is, probably, an attractive metaphor, but nothing more than that. What we usually perceive as reality is not exterior objectivity, but a creation of the camera's eye, which selects what to show and what to hide. We usually forget

that by pointing out to «what» is shown (the content, the plot, when it exists) we don't take into account the «how», the rhetorics, which is what produces the actual effects of the real. It is not by chance that, when a movie cannot be dealt with in terms of narration, it is defined as experimental, avant-gardist or something similar, which is a way to cast it to the margins of mainstream industry.

These two questions are important in order to address the adaptation of *Don Quijote* in Serra's film.

When back in 1964, the French Journal *Communications* published a volume devoted to the structural analysis of narration, in a brief but very provoking text Roland Barthes made a difference between what he called *nucleus* and *catalysis*. The former notion corresponds to the main actions or knots of the story, the skeleton of its formal architecture. The latter, complementary to the former, corresponds to secondary actions, whose function is usually that of inscribing the narrator's system of values, and to maintain the hidden contact between the narrator and the reader. All the implicit messages, ideological, cultural or political, subliminal as a rule, are never inscribed in the nucleus, but in the catalysis. This is why a story could apparently adopt, let's say, a particular political point of view because of the topic chosen to articulate the nucleus and, at the same time, be contradicted by opinions, judgement of values disseminated throughout the catalysis. Such was the case, for example, of Orson Welles's *Touch of Evil*, in which a progressive point of view is created about reactionary contents; it is also the case, in the other extreme, of Warren Beatty's *Reds*, a reactionary movie about a revolutionary plot.

The way I read Serra's movie assumes this mode of operation. In his adaptation, the Catalan filmmaker privileges the novel's catalysis and not its nuclear episodes. This position allows him to focus not on the novel's subject matter (Don Quixote's and Sancho's series of adventures) but on the rhetorical logic by means of which Cervantes conceives the genre he is inventing with his book. Therefore the question is not that of the adaptation of a plot, of the characters' fortunes and

misfortunes, but of Cervantes' process of *enunciation*. This choice can probably be justified by the fact that the catalan director did not title the film by using the name of the characters. With such choice, *Honor de cavalleria* distinguishes itself from the more than a hundred existing film versions of the novel.

In fact, the relation of Cervantes' novel to the big and small screen has been long and fruitful. At the end of the 19th century, since the beginning of the new medium, the adventures of the *hidalgo* of la Mancha and his faithful squire have been used as point of departure for multiple adaptations. In most of them, as a rule, the narration is structured around the two protagonists, who are dealt with as symbols for certain political, social or cultural positions, or around some specific chapters, among the better known of the characters' erratic pilgrimage through the Castilian territories of the 17th century (the episode of the windmills, for example) in order to metaphorize some other problematic. In short, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* has usually functioned as a pretext to approach other topics, not necessarily linked either to the argument or to the specific circumstances of the origin of the novel. From the German adaptation by Wilhelm Pabst in the thirties, through Rafael Gil's in Francoist Spain during the forties, Grigory Kozinsev's in Krushchev's Soviet Union, after Stalin's death, to the more recent *El caballero Don Quijote* by Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón in the new millenium, the novel's adaptations have taken into account, more or less manipulated, condensed or articulated, the story's subject matter as if, by doing so, the screenplay were more *respectful of* or *faithful to* «the original meaning» of the novel.

This so because, in most cases, when filmmakers have sought to translate the novel into images, they have used as referent the plot or the characters, not its structural enunciative logic. With his unfortunately unfinished version, Orson Welles was possibly the only one who tried to do so, by locating the action in 20th century Francoist Spain, that is to say, in the cultural and political time of the audiences he was supposed to be addressing, and not in Cervantes' time. He did not attempt to modernize the novel's characters or subject

matter, he had Don Quixote and Sancho face everyday life in contemporary Spain. Besides him, even though with a different purpose, we have Albert Serra's work. The director of *Honor de cavalleria* does not share with Welles the will to maintain, *malgré tout*, the aura of the classical filmmaker. By making an unusual and original reading of Cervantes' novel, his goal is to make a film not *about Don Quixote*, but *stemming from the Don Quixote*.

To begin with, the movie is shot completely in Catalan and the landscape used as the territory for the non-existent (or at least *unseen*) adventures is not the dry and desert 17th century La Mancha, but the almost jungle-like greenery of El Ampurdán (Photogram n° 1).

All possibilities to film them in a naturalistic way is systematically put aside. The actors (a tennis instructor and the butcher of the little village of Serra's Girona) are not professionals, so they do not act as such. On the contrary, they function only as a presence to lend their characters a body and a face (in the way actors play in Bresson's or Kaurismäki's films), far from any temptation of internalization as in accordance with the tradition of Stanislavski or Lee Strasberg's *Actor's Studio*. On the other hand, the sparse dialogues provide information about nothing but the banality of everyday life, and the rhythm, with its exasperating and patent slowness, never pretends to correspond to the development of a non-existent action.

Even the generous individuals who populate the novel (family, herders, traveling actors, priests, bachelors, barber, etc.) are nothing but a mere backdrop, inconspi-

cuous in the frame, as if the director had sought to strip the two main characters of everything superfluous, to show them in all their radical *presence*, without a trace of *representation* (Photogram n° 2).

In one of his most recent books (*Le Rideau*, [The Curtain] 2005), the Czech novelist Milan Kundera wrote that one of the features of what he calls the "particular history of the novel" from Cervantes to our days, was the will to substitute 'lyrical' writing for the 'prose' of life, something that would definitely become naturalized by two of the most exalted heirs of the author of Don Quixote, Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne. The former with *Tom Jones* (1729), the latter with *Tristram Shandy* (1760-1767), express their will to not reduce the story to a mere causal chain of acts, gestures or words. This is why digressions, halting the development of the plot action at the most unexpected moments, bring to the fore the insignificance of everyday life, which results to be as important as the "big events" in the life of the characters; they also bring to the fore the banality which is the largest part of human life. In the last chapter of *Don Quixote*, the novel, while the *hidalgo* dies, (I quote) «The house was all in confusion; but still the niece ate and the housekeeper drank and Sancho Panza enjoyed himself; for inheriting property wipes out or softens down in the heir the feeling of grief the dead man might be expected to leave behind him.»

In opposition to what has been the tradition of Cervantes' classic adaptations to the screen, Albert Serra chooses the element of digression as a starting point

Photogram 1



Photogram 2



for his reading and, even more radically than the aforementioned British authors, he focuses not on banal or secondary anecdotes (it was the case of Sterne), but in the time-outs separating one adventure from the other. Don Quixote and Sancho move continuously in a kind of double parallel journey, one is physical, the other is an inner one. The identification of both journeys is what articulates the film, transforming the story of an adventure into the adventure of a story.

The journey thus metaphorizes the search for a utopia. In the film there are neither windmills nor innkeepers. More importantly, Dulcinea is totally absent. We only have Don Quixote, his faithful and silent squire Sancho (who has lost even the verbal incontinence he shows in the novel) and an undefined goal that seems to be awaiting the characters at the end of their pilgrimage. A pilgrimage to where? What for? The film does not provide any answer at all.

Honor de Cavalleria has the structure of a road movie in which, for nearly two hours, Don Quixote and Sancho wander erratically along a number of trails in the Pyrenean foothills of El Ampurdán (Photogram n° 3), through a landscape deprived of all referentiality, and thus functioning as a merely plastic element. We do not see any of the hero's famous adventures. The screen shows what *appears to be* the life of the hero, between one adventure and the next one.

Proud of belonging to the Order of Chivalry, the main character seems to be tired of his ongoing confrontation with a world he no longer understands, since he is unable to distinguish what is really experienced from what is merely dreamt of; yet, at the same time, he is imbued with a strong will to remain within his dreaming. During the long and monotonous moments that fill the intervals between adventures, he looks at the horizon, sits on the grass, walks through the bushes and speaks to himself in front of Sancho who, apparently, is a quite simple person and very seldom answers the questions addressed to him by his master; he is a poor illiterate peasant who does not seem to understand anything of what happens around them, or why they do what they are doing. Nevertheless he takes on



Photogram 3

the task, with the animal devotion of a pet, of staying at his master's side to offer him, at least, a point of balance and a little human heat. Sancho is a character that is hard to define outside of his relationship with Don Quixote, whom he follows driven by the belief in their shared position as losers rather than by the hope of a hypothetical future reward.

Walter Benjamin once wrote that «being a man or being a horse does not matter; the important thing is to free oneself of the burden placed on one's back.» The wandering and gathering of both characters, Don Quixote and Sancho, in the solitude of the countryside, with no other roof than the stars in the sky, is the way the characters in Serra's film choose to get rid of the weight of their perplexity.

The film starts with a pathetic Don Quixote collecting the remains of his armor from the ground (Photogram n° 4a & 4b), after having been defeated –we can imagine– in a (one more) useless battle that Serra carefully does not show, leaving it off-screen.

After this initial sequence and during about one hundred and forty-seven minutes, we are invited to look at what basically constitutes the essence of cinema as I have defined it before: space becoming time, time becoming space. Nothing more, nothing less. No action is shown; nothing really happens, in conventional terms, except the dripping of hour after hour. What happens on the screen is the passing of time, and its passing is, in its absolute and radical nakedness and in its terrifying futility, the one thing that ultimately matters.

In the film, the past is always told in the present tense. And the present of this non-narration is very contradictory in regard to what is shown, especially in regard to how what is shown is displayed on the screen. In a world organized around speed and the tyranny of the action, and characterized by the predominance of urban contexts, as is the case of the alleged viewers the film is addressing, the falsely idyllic, rural universe in which the *non-events* unfold and the extreme slowness of their unfolding are explicit forms of anachronism.

This was, moreover, one of the most important novelties of Cervantes' book at the time of its first appearance, at the very end of 1604/beginning of 1605. The anachronistic nature of both the main character and of his adventures has been rarely underlined, even if much of the text's critical and parodic force resides precisely in its being anachronistic. It is so not only because the *hidalgo* was trying to apply to his present real life the logic of a past and almost forgotten literary genre (what pushes other people to believe Don Quixote is crazy).

Photogram 4a (above), Photogram 4b (below)



The comical eccentricity of the *hidalgo* comes mainly from the fact of being someone who lives according to the rules of a past that had been dead and buried for a long time. When Alonso Quijano decides to become an errant knight, the world of knighthood was as old and *démodé* for the readers of the time as the world of 19th century romantic comedy can be for readers of the 21st century. And it is the anachronism of the situation what makes the story of the knight and his squire as incongruous and incomprehensible to those around them. Even more than the idea of madness.

The anachronism of the situation, as part of the plot's basic elements, is chosen by Albert Serra for his own project. On this regard, as anticipated above, the director does not seek to adapt *the argument*, that is to say, the characters' adventures, but the *logic* that articulates them. *Honor de cavalleria* can thus be understood as a reflection both on that logic and on the very notion of adaptation. It poses the question and makes one ponder about how to transform a literary text into a filmic one (a different text, not an ancillary one). The intertextuality the movie presents (Serra's dialogic reference to film tradition) is therefore a constitutive part of his project.

In Cervantes' novel, the cumulative technique threading the different episodes, «like penitents in a procession»^{2**} as Tirso de Molina wrote referring to the *Exemplary Novels*, derives from the romance of chivalry; yet Cervantes transformed such technique and turned the thread into a more complex structure. It is a structure that allows him to build a metanarrative which includes other typologies and genres while challenging them at the same time: not only the chivalric romances, but also the picaresque novel (by replacing the unique viewpoint of the narrator with a multiplicity of narrators that refuse to overlap), the sentimental novel, the pastoral novel, the Moorish novel and even the Byzantine fiction, all used, parodied and surpassed in *Don Quixote*. Thus, the second part of 1615, in which the characters have read and know the first part of 1605, makes the whole

² It is not by chance that Orson Welles also chose a procession of a Spanish *Semana Santa* for one of the most brilliant sequences of his unfinished film, when Don Quixote attacks the penitents.

novel become a dialogic exchange, not only with all the narrative typologies of the Hispanic tradition, but also with the typologies' politics of reading and of interpretation existing in the imaginary of the time.

Albert Serra's film, while explaining the director's desire to make primarily a movie of his own, not a mere visual illustration of a famous and complex literary text (hence the great importance of the film's *mise en scène* and of the excellent photography with digital camera by Christophe Farnarier and Eduard Grau), does not establish a formal dialogue with Cervantes; like Cervantes did with his contemporaries, he looks at the few filmmakers who, before him, opened a path very seldom traveled and aims at being as radical as they were: Dreyer, Pasolini, Godard, Bresson, Rossellini, Ozu, Tarkovsky, Kaurismäki.

Like Pasolini's Christ in *Il vangelo secondo Matteo*, or Rossellini's San Francisco (in *Francesco, giullare di Dio*), Albert Serra's Don Quixote moves between the earthly and the mystical, within that thin line that separates madness and extreme lucidity. If one were to quote a reference (which is actually explicit in *Honor de cavalleria*), this would be Robert Bresson's *Lancelot du Lac*. This extraordinary French film shows how to adapt a literary legend to the screen without bending to the Hollywood spectacle and fanfare, by having the film continue the story of the legendary knights of the round table where the legend had ended.

A relationship with the cinema of Michelangelo Antonioni is also quite evident. The Italian director was one of the first filmmakers to use empty times for dramatic purposes and one of the first to give prominence to landscape over human beings; yet in his movies landscapes are always what T. S. Eliot used to define as *objective correlative* of the character's psychology, while in Albert Serra's *Honor de cavalleria* the landscape is nothing but a silent presence. A mere place offered to our eyes in its radical non-symbolic opacity.

Finally, it would be interesting to think about what it really means that the characters of a novel so linked to both a specific language and culture and a concrete national history as the Spanish are placed in a context of

a different tradition, that of a culture without a State, expressing themselves through another language, that of a minority in conflict with the Castilian predominance in the present century. In my opinion, the use of Catalan by Don Quixote is not gratuitous. The possibility of an understanding of such option as a cultural nationalist claim has no interest at all for me here and now (and I doubt that such possibility was a reason for the choice made by the director). The displacement reinforces the director's will to adapt the *logic* and not the *plot*, as I have proposed in my reading of the film. If Wilhelm Pabst's Don Quixote speaks German, Kotzintzev's speaks Russian, or Yates' American English, to name but three examples, it was not to establish a cultural distance from Cervantes' novel, but as a way to naturalize and appropriate a universal myth. In Serra's film, however, other reasons can be brought up. Since the movie is supposed to address narratees who are cultivated and perfectly bilingual, the alleged strangeness of the use of Catalan to introduce a character that symbolizes and, to some extent, grounds the hallmarks of Spanish-Castilian culture, must be associated with other factors that in the film serve the same de-naturalizing function: the amateurism of the actors, their monotonous and too *theatrical* diction, the extreme slowness of the rhythm, and so on.

It is something similar to what happens within Pasolini's *Trilogy of Life*. The Italian filmmaker refers to three fundamental global benchmarks, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and the *Thousand and One Nights*, as texts that found, or at least co-found, three different cultures, the Italian, the Anglo-Saxon and the Persian. Nevertheless, in the trilogy's films the characters always speak Italian and not English or Farsi. Such choice emphasizes the non-submission, in each of the three films, to the literary national referent of the original. What interested Pasolini was in fact the re-appropriation by an European author of a legacy understood as part of a shared cultural tradition. The very sense of such re-appropriation denied the possibility of a nationalistic point of view.

I shall finally go back to the text by Milan Kundera quoted before, *The Curtain*. According to the author, «we

can judge a novel without the knowledge of the original language» since «Gide did not know Russian, Bernard Shaw did not know Norwegian, and Sartre did not read Dos Passos in his original language»; yet such circumstance did not prevent any of them from discovering the aesthetic contributions of the authors claimed as a source and model of their own work. If one applies Kundera's considerations to *Honor de cavalleria*, one can convene that Albert Serra's decision to move from La Mancha to the Pyrenees and from Castilian to Catalan implies to decouple Cervantes' benchmark novel from all sentimental connotation attached to a "national" culture.

If *Don Quixote* belongs, in fact, to what Goethe called *Weltliteratur*, which is not a way to circumvent national specific cultural particularities, but a way to read them from a transnational perspective, the film by Albert Serra seeks not to be linked to Spanish or Catalan cinema, but to a wider and transnational tradition of film history. The minimalism of the *mise en scène*, the willingness to avoid any hint to the story's plot, replacing the role of action with the development of a *climate* and a *tone*, allow us to define *Honor de cavalleria* as one of the most original tributes cinema could offer to Cervantes' great novel.

