

THE SPIRIT OF DON QUIXOTE
IN THE ZAPATISTA REVOLUTION

by

JULIE ANNE KROGH

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In 1605, Miguel Saavedra de Cervantes published the literary masterpiece *Don Quixote* that has impacted the literary, political, and social world. Cervantes created the crazy knight-errant Don Quixote and his humble peasant sidekick Sancho Panza in order to criticize the popular tales of chivalry of the time. Additionally, Cervantes effectively commented on the social, economic, and political condition of 17th century Spain. While many of his observations are negative criticisms, the character Don Quixote encourages the reader as a living example of hope in the ability of an individual to shape his own reality.

On January 1, 1994, the Ejército Zapatista Nacional de Liberación (EZLN) seized San Cristóbal de Las Casas of the Mexican region Chiapas and declared war on the Mexican Army demanding rights such as liberty, land, democracy, health, and education for indigenous people. While the EZLN has roots in indigenous traditions and Marxist ideologies, the hope of Don Quixote that people truly do possess the ability to change their condition permeates the Zapatista movement. The writings of the most prominent EZLN leader, Subcomandante Marcos, help to reveal the influence that *Don Quixote* has had on the Zapatistas and their mission.

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Introduction

Although the arts are often thought of as more ethereal than or superior to the earthy and messy world of day to day human interactions, it is undeniable that the two affect and shape one another, sometimes so strongly that the line between the untouchable spirituality of art and the physical reality of the human experience becomes blurred. Literature is one, though certainly not the only, art form that can influence and move people not merely aesthetically but also ideologically and politically. Once a work of literature has leapt from the page and instilled itself in the values and ideas of its reader, it has the potential to be manifested physically through his or her actions, whether it be in the form of new art, activism, or political movements. *Don Quixote de La Mancha* by Miguel de Cervantes is one such work that has profoundly influenced literature, culture, and politics both in Spain and throughout Western culture.

In the 21st century, the Zapatista movement in southwestern Mexico is a concrete example that Don Quixote's message still lives on. The writings and actions of their spokesperson, Subcomandante Marcos, give life to Don Quixote almost 400 years after publication and on the other side of the world. Neither *Don Quixote* nor the Zapatista movement can be accurately bound by any existing theory, ideology, or philosophy, but there is a common bond that unites the two. That bond is a real hope in the power of individuals to actively create their own reality and shape the world they live in. The spirit of Don Quixote, the hope in the ability of an individual to create his or her own reality, lives on 400 years later in the Zapatista revolution in Chiapas, Mexico.

To uncover the theme of creation as a constructive means of change, this thesis will first critically analyze the aspects both the literary work of *Don Quixote* and the

political movement in southeastern Mexico that are relevant to this theme as individual and separate topics. Then, a study will follow regarding the connections between the two: specifically, how *Don Quixote* echoes in the Zapatista movement and what values or lessons can be applied to the future of the Zapatistas in the 21st century.

Don Quixote

In order to expose the shared commonalities between *Don Quixote* and the modern day Zapatista movement, it is first necessary to understand the premise and themes present in *Don Quixote*. While the influence that *Don Quixote* has had directly or indirectly on the Zapatista ideology is highly contestable, the Zapatista leader Subcomandante Marcos cites *Don Quixote* as the most important and influential political book. The extent to which *Don Quixote* spans centuries and continents to reach Chiapas will be discussed later on, but first we must establish which themes in *Don Quixote* are relevant to the Zapatista movement.

Cervantes wrote the novel known today as *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote* (*El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quixote*) in two parts which were published in 1605 and 1615. The novel enjoyed tremendous success in seventeenth century Spain and in contemporary times remains a classic piece of literature read and appreciated around the globe. In the prologue to the novel, Cervantes claims to write *Don Quixote* in order to criticize and ultimately abolish books of chivalry set in the Arthurian age of medieval knights. He does indeed proceed by blatantly denouncing chivalric novels through the episode of book burning in Chapter VI, Part I. Cervantes also expresses the destructive nature of such idle reading through the main event without which the essence of the novel would be lost. Essentially, Alonso Quixano read so many novels of chivalry that he lost all

sense of reality and “*vino a dar en el más extraño pensamiento que jamás dio loco en el mund;*, *y fue que le pareció conveniente y necesario...hacerse caballero andante, y irse por todo el mundo con sus armas y caballo a buscar las aventuras*” (came to conceive the strangest idea that ever occurred to any madman in this world. It now appeared to him fitting and necessary...to become a knight-errant and roam the world on horseback...in quest of adventures.)¹ Although Cervantes stays true to his professed aim of destroying chivalric novels, he simultaneously creates a story of universal and timeless appeal by engaging his readers in discussions of literature and life, liberty, dignity, arms and letters, virtue and lineage, and class struggles. Supporting the myriad of themes and topics that Cervantes discusses in his novel is the underlying assumption that humans are constructionists; that an individual is capable of creating his or her own version of reality or destiny. Cervantes develops these universal themes by creating Don Quixote; an ordinary character who one day decides to be extraordinary.

As a knight-errant, Alonso Quixano adopts the name Don Quixote de La Mancha and sets out to right the wrongs of the world. Throughout the course of the novel, Don Quixote sallies forth from La Mancha on three separate occasions and engages in many different adventures as he travels through the Spanish countryside. The knight creates a large number of these exploits for himself out of his own imagination and based on the understanding he has developed from reading tales of chivalry. By the end of Part II, as the fame of Don Quixote has grown, adventures seem to pursue them. Throughout the

¹ When citing *Don Quixote* I have chosen to refer to the following Spanish edition and English translation. In all following citations I will list the page number of the Spanish edition before the page number of the English edition.

Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 2000) 87.

Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de, *Don Quixote of La Mancha*, trans. Walter Starkie (New York: NAL Penguin Inc., 1957) 59.

vast majority of his travels, Don Quixote is accompanied by his squire, Sancho Panza, who is a local peasant from La Mancha and largely serves as the antithesis to Don Quixote and his romantic imagination through simple speech and a grounded sense of reality. Perhaps the most famous tale of Don Quixote that is largely recognizable by people who have never read the novel is that of the windmills in Chapter VIII of Part I. With Sancho by his side Don Quixote perceives the windmills to be giants that he must slay in the name of his love, Dulcinea del Toboso. At this point in time, Cervantes has developed neither Sancho nor Don Quixote's characters beyond that of their archetypal representations of reality and insanity respectively. As Don Quixote prepares to slay giants, Sancho begs his master to refrain from attacking the windmills. Don Quixote replies, "bien parece...que no estás cursado en esto de las aventuras: ellos son gigantes; y si tienes miedo, quítate de ahí, y ponte en oración en el espacio que yo voy a entrar con ellos en fiera y desigual batalla," (it is clear that you are not experienced in adventures. Those are giants, and if you are afraid, turn aside and pray whilst I enter into fierce and unequal battle with them,) and charges the windmills with gusto². The adventure ends comically as an arm of the windmill tosses Don Quixote through the air confirming the reader's and Sancho's visions of reality and Don Quixote's madness.

This episode demonstrates the commonly accepted conceptions of limits, possibility, and sanity. At this early point in the novel, the characters of Sancho and Don Quixote are in complete opposition and neither contains much depth. In this episode, Sancho plays the unquestioning observer and defender of societal norms and beliefs while Don Quixote, a seeming mad man, challenges those norms and beliefs. Readers support Sancho's sound advice to avoid the windmills and wonder at the apparent

² Cervantes 145, 142

insanity of Don Quixote. However, it is important to note that Don Quixote is not truly defeated by the windmill giants. Instead of being convinced of his futility and powerlessness, he continues on in search of greater conquests and victory. This challenge against widely accepted standards of what is sane or even possible is the only way to actually affect change. The Zapatistas have also been ridiculed and discredited for their ambitious plans against apparently unconquerable enemies yet it is in the continual rising from small losses that true success is obtained.

Don Quixote sallies forth from La Mancha three distinct times during the novel; once alone and twice with Sancho by his side. Cervantes writes Part II in response to a false sequel written by Avellaneda and published throughout Spain after the vast success of Part I. This time, at the end of Part II, Cervantes cures Don Quixote of his madness and the old Alonso Quixano dies in bed after denouncing his follies as knight-errant. In an unexpected twist, Don Quixote announces, “Yo tengo juicio ya, libre y claro, sin las sombras caliginosa de la ignorancia, que sobre él me pusieron mi amarga y continua leyenda de los detestable libros de las caballerías...ya yo no soy don Quijote de la Mancha, sino Alonso Quijano,” (My judgment is now clear and unfettered, and that dark cloud of ignorance has disappeared, which the continual reading of those detestable books of knight-errantry had cast over my understanding...I am no longer Don Quixote of La Mancha but Alonso Quixano.)³ By ending Don Quixote’s life Cervantes made certain that no more pretenders would follow.

Don Quixote de La Mancha is often cited as the first modern novel. Though this claim can be debated, the importance of *Don Quixote* still remains as a significant factor in the development of the novel as we know it today. Mark Twain, Herman Melville, and

³ Cervantes 1312-13, 1045

Jorge Luis Borges are some of the often cited reflections of Cervantes' echoes into the more contemporary literary world. One of the unique characteristics of the novel at its time was the combination of idealism and realism. Through the characters of Sancho Panza as concrete actuality and Don Quixote as highly idealistic values, Cervantes blends two outlooks on life into one holistic world view.

The first theme of *Don Quixote* that is relevant to the Zapatista movement is the direct, intimate, and dynamic relationship between literature and life. Each one affects the other profoundly and neither can be fully appreciated or understood on its own. Cervantes employs a technique of layered levels of authorship to blur the line between reality and fiction for his readers. He does this first by claiming that his role in the telling of Don Quixote's adventures is that of an editor, one who has compiled historical accounts from the Arab historian Cide Hamete Benegelli. Cervantes calls the reliability of the account ever further into question by explaining that Moorish historians often lie or bend the truth. Cervantes reminds the readers that he is a compiler of historical accounts rather than a writer of fiction as

“abruptly, in the middle of an adventure, in part I, chapter 9, we have to pause, the action is frozen and the two rivals of that adventure are paralyzed, their swords still in the air, because we have run out of text. This device, of pausing the narrative while searching for the lost manuscript, is an example of how Cervantes distances himself in order to provide perspective to full advantage and with dramatic impact.”⁴

By separating himself from Don Quixote through a historian and a translator, Cervantes creates the illusion that *Don Quixote* is a history rather than a fictional novel. E.C. Riley comments that “what truth is to history, verisimilitude is to fiction.”⁵ By extension of

⁴ Durán, Manuel and Fay R. Rogg, *Fighting Windmills: Encounters with Don Quixote* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) 58

⁵ Riley, E.C., *Don Quixote* (Boston : Allen & Unwin, 1986). 127

this logic, if a fiction is believable enough to pass for history, it can become historical truth. Cervantes tries to pass Don Quixote off to the reader as a historically verifiable person by creating a fictional novel that retains just enough verisimilitude to cause the reader to question his or her conception of the line between reality and fiction.

Another technique that Cervantes utilizes is that of interpolated stories. These stories are told by characters in the novel and add yet another layer of authorship that serves the purpose of distancing Cervantes from the action of the novel and thereby creates the illusion that Don Quixote occupies the same space of reality as the reader. In Part I, Chapter XXXIII, Cervantes inserts an interpolated story about two friends Anselmo and Loratio. This story is called "*El curioso impertinente*" (The Impertinent Curiosity) and relates the tragic tale of two best friends torn apart by an elaborate plan to test the fidelity of Anselmo's wife. The story is read by the priests to the guests in the inn who seem to be hearing it for the first time just as the reader of *Don Quixote* is reading it for the first time. As the reader of *Don Quixote* becomes involved in the story, he or she identifies with the audience in the inn through the shared experience of the entertaining story and thus seemingly coexists with them in the same plane of reality.

The confusion that Cervantes creates between reality and fiction relates directly to one of the main themes of the novel: the interaction between literature and life. It is important to note that Don Quixote does not simply mimic the fictional knights that he so idealizes, but rather immerses himself fully in the sincere belief that his actual identity has changed. If Don Quixote had merely admired knights-errant or nostalgically pined away for the Golden Age, it would have been logical for him "to have written romances

himself, for instance.”⁶ Instead, Don Quixote’s madness causes him to substitute his very life for the pen. He is aware that a historian is writing his biography and occasionally verbally composes verses or improvises prose as he is confident in the knowledge that they will be recorded in his personal history. Through his actions and words, Don Quixote challenges the traditional role of the author as creator and replaces it with the individual as the artist of his own life.⁷

The indigenous people of Chiapas also blur the distinction between literature and life through their legends. These legends mix reality with fiction and influence the actions of the indigenous people today. Some of these legends will be discussed in greater detail later on. The *mestizo* leadership of the Zapatistas blurs the line between literature and life as Subcomandante Marcos looks to authors such as Shakespeare and Gabriel García Márquez to form his political and philosophical ideas. The connection between life and literature is so strong that it is quite impossible to separate the two completely. This is not to say that life would cease to exist without literature. However, just as the experience of and reflection on life construct literature, the experience of and reflection on literature also influence the construction of new life as a reader is introduced to new ideas and concepts that help him or her understand and respond to the world in which he or she lives. Marcos seems to understand that it is necessary to find a balance of reading, living, and writing in order to maximize the potential of each of those activities individually.

The tension between words and action described above manifests itself in the traditional Spanish debate between arms and letters. Don Quixote himself addresses the

⁶ Riley 125

⁷ Riley 126

issue of arms or letters near the beginning of Part I and concludes that arms are nobler as long as they are used to secure peace, “que es el mayor bien que los hombres pueden desear en esta vida” (the greatest blessing that man can enjoy in his life).⁸ As a man of action, his conclusion makes sense but he never fails to proclaim the value of letters. While with his words Don Quixote maintains the superiority of arms, his life reflects a deeper commitment to letters. In fact, prior to his self-dubbed knighthood he was an extremely avid reader. Such active and addictive reading was what caused him to pursue arms in the first place. Accordingly, it is reasonable to conclude that neither arms nor letters are superior. As with life and literature, the two must be applied in synthesis. Don Quixote compares arms to justice and letters to peace, which are the two codependent aspects of Don Quixote’s idealized return to the Golden Age of Spain. Arms bring about justice through force and letters in the form of the law ensure peace. It seems that in Don Quixote’s world one cannot exist without the other. The Zapatistas share the view that arms and letters must accompany one another in order to achieve success, although they profess to value the power of the word over the power of weapons. Either way, the belief that people must combine academic ideas, or letters, with real physical action, or arms, is one that both *Don Quixote* and the Zapatistas share in order create change in their worlds.

While Cervantes presents some opposites as two sides of the same coin, each with its own necessary value, he supports very clear biases between other contrasts.

Regarding the prominent theme of the superiority of virtue or lineage, Cervantes forcefully argues in favor of virtue rather than lineage as the measure of a person’s worth. During this time in Spain’s history, a noble ruling class still existed on the basis of lineage. As evidenced by the story of Cardenio in Part I, Chapters XXIV and XXVII, it

⁸ Cervantes 504, 387

was important to be from a family with a good name. Neither Cardenio's sincere love nor virtue could elevate him above the selfish and traitorous duke Ferdinand to win the blessing of Lucinda's father. However, as we see in the Duchess and Duke in Part II, noble blood does not predetermine noble character. Don Quixote explains to Sancho,

“—Mira, Sancho: si tomas por medio la virtud, y te precias de hacer hechos virtuosos, no har para qué tener envidia a los que los tienen príncipes y señores; porque la sangre se hereda, y la virtud se aquista, y la virtud vale por sí sola lo que la sangre no vale” (Remember, Sancho, that if you make virtue your rule in life and if you pride yourself on acting always in accordance with such a precept, you will have no cause to envy princes and lords, for blood is inherited, but virtue is acquired, and virtue in itself is worth more than noble birth).⁹

The Zapatistas also address, although less directly, the issue of lineage versus virtue. The indigenous people of Chiapas have experienced the injustice of racial discrimination and exploitation for 500 years which has all been justified through an assumption that European lineage is superior to indigenous blood. By using words and weapons to incite change in Mexico, the Zapatistas challenge the status quo that accepts lineage as opposed to virtue as the value of a person. This attitude reflects the recurring idea that people create their own world to live in. As Don Quixote says, *“cada uno es hijo de sus obras”* (Every man is the son of his works).¹⁰

In order for people to exercise their virtues, Cervantes believes that the liberty and dignity of man must be valued and protected. In his typical role of teacher, Don Quixote explains,

“La libertad, Sancho, es uno de los más preciosos dones que a los hombres dieron los cielos; con ella no pueden igualarse los tesoros que encierra la tierra ni la mar encubre; por la libertad, así como por la honra, se puede y debe aventurar la vida, y, por el contrario, el cautiverio es el mayor mal que puede venir a los hombres”

⁹ Cervantes 1050, 825

¹⁰ Cervantes 110, 76

(Liberty, Sancho, my friend, is one of the most precious gifts that Heaven has bestowed on mankind; all the treasures the Earth contains within its bosom or the ocean within its depths cannot be compared with it. For liberty, as well as for honor, man ought to risk even his life, and he should reckon captivity the greatest evil life can bring) (2^a, LVIII).¹¹

In a way, Don Quixote's prior life as a *hidalgo* was captivity. He was trapped inside his house with the single mental escape of reading books of chivalry. Becoming a knight and actually embodying the very fantasy he read about was able to seize this most precious treasure of human existence. Even if all those around him considered him crazy, from the moment Don Quixote believed himself to be a knight, he became free.

Don Quixote's sense of liberty extends beyond his own freedom and into a moral gray area that challenges the reader to question the ultimate or unqualified goodness of liberty. In one of his adventures, Don Quixote crosses paths with a group of criminals who are being taken to the galleys as slaves to serve their punishment for their crimes. Don Quixote asks each convict to give him an account of his crime and finally concludes, "*me parece duro caso hacer esclavos a los que Dios y naturaleza hizo libres*" (it seems to me a harsh thing to make slaves of those whom God and nature made free) (1^a, XXII).¹² All Don Quixote sees is that these men are going to be punished against their will and it does not matter that they have committed crimes. In his mind, that is not liberty and their freedom must be restored. Through this episode the reader realizes the extent to which Don Quixote believes in his virtues and how he will not allow his convictions to be swayed by any extraneous information. One of the main demands of the Zapatistas is liberty. In the Mexican context, liberty means the freedom to earn a living wage, own land, and have a meaningful voice in the governance of the country. Liberty of the

¹¹ Cervantes 1182, 935

¹² Cervantes 292, 216

individual is at the very heart of Don Quixote's credo and the Zapatistas have extended that mission to an entire population. While the morality of Don Quixote's decision to free the galley slaves is questionable since the prisoners were each admittedly guilty of some crime, the Zapatista effort to obtain liberty for the indigenous people of Chiapas is less controversial ethically. The liberty and freedom that the Zapatistas seek is not from legitimate criminal punishment but rather from historic social, cultural, and economic oppression.

Status based on economic privilege and cultural class division severely impacts the level of freedom a person is able to exercise in his or her world. As a *hidalgo* it is known that Don Quixote had a house, food, an education, and the privilege of leisure time which he chose to fill by reading books whose sole purpose was to entertain and not to instruct. Yet, a *hidalgo* was the lowest level of nobility. By his very station in society it is known that he was considered too noble to work but, as evidenced by the condition of his house, land and food, he was too poor to live like a noble. *Hidalgos* did not have to pay taxes like the working classes, but they also did not receive benefits like the real nobility did.¹³ This social state of limbo resulted in the likely fate of idling life away just like Alonso Quijano. His status separated him from the majority of Spaniards who performed manual labor to earn the money necessary to support themselves and their families although his actual monetary wealth did not support such a distinction. Cervantes recognizes the stigma attached to being poor when he describes Sancho for the first time as a "*hombre de bien—si es que este título se puede dar al que es pobre*"

¹³ Defourneaux, Marcelin, *Daily Life in Spain in the Golden Age* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1979) 41.

(honest fellow, if such a term can be applied to one who is poor.) (1^a, VII).¹⁴ Cervantes also describes the power that money wields in the episode of the Duke and the Duchess who had so much money and leisure time that life seemed meaningless and empty and their only form of amusement was the destructive taunting of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

The entire Zapatista movement is a response to economic oppression. Without money in either Spain or Mexico, a poor person would always be at the mercy of the rich people. In any capitalist economy, certain individuals may realize the dream of working up from the meager existence of wage labor to the comfortable wealth of the capitalists, but there will necessarily always be a large population whose labor is exploited in order for capitalism to function. The growth and globalization of neoliberalism only intensifies the gap between those who physically produce the capital and those who reap the benefits of its growth.

While the themes discussed above do not represent all of the issues that Cervantes tackles in his novel, they display the most powerful technique that Cervantes employs to engage his readers: humor. At its most basic level, Don Quixote can be read as an amusing tale about a man who has completely lost all sense of reality. However, humor can go deeper than simple amusement. Durán explains that “a person with a good sense of humor can observe the world around him or her with a certain amount of detachment, yet humor leads to critical analysis and ultimately becomes a tool to better understand both the society we are part of and also a few individuals in this society.”¹⁵ A true

¹⁴ Cervantes 137, 95

¹⁵ Durán 20

appreciation of humor requires a certain level of intelligence and an ability to analyze a situation and see it for what it really is.

In order to read Don Quixote into the modern day Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico, it is necessary to establish the outlook the Don Quixote had on life and his ability to be a vehicle of change to realize the “impossible dream.” Luis Rosales summarizes Don Quixote’s logic as one of hope rather than of reason, which intrinsically implies that Don Quixote is vision oriented, always looking toward the future imagining what might be rather than dwelling on and accepting what currently exists.¹⁶ If Don Quixote’s logic is understood to be one of hope, then his actions regarding the freeing of the galley slaves no longer appears crazy, or illogical, but instead coincides with the hopeful logic that if these men were freed they would enjoy that freedom positively rather than destructively. After reading adventure after adventure in which Don Quixote places himself, it becomes apparent that he

“mira la vida interpretándola...y no percibe la realidad, sino el sentido de lo real, pues para el ingenioso hidalgo todas las cosas son símbolos y...la coherencia de su pensamiento...no obedece a las leyes de la lógica, sino a las leyes de la ética”

(looks at life interpreting it and does not perceive reality, but rather the feeling of what is real. So for the ingenious *hidalgo* everything is a symbol and the coherence of his thinking does not obey the laws of logic, but rather the laws of ethics).¹⁷

Don Quixote does not allow public opinion or social rules limit or qualify his sense of right and wrong. He knows what he values and is discouraged by nothing in his quest to shape the world according to the way he thinks it should be. This is the greatest lesson of Don Quixote to be applied to the Zapatista’s cause.

¹⁶ Rosales, Luis, *Cervantes y la libertad* (Madrid: Instituto de cooperación iberoamericana, 1985). 453

¹⁷ Rosales 455

Historic Background of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN)

Nearly 400 years later and across the Atlantic Ocean, the same spirit of proactively shaping circumstances, rather than passively being shaped by them, resurfaced in the Southeastern corner of Mexico. The emergence of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) must be understood in the greater historical context of Mexican class struggles and land reform. Colonial oppression of the indigenous Amerindians has dominated Central and South America since 1492 creating a new ethnic divide between upper and lower economic classes. Very established societies such as the Aztecs, Incas, and Mayas inhabited the continent for years before the arrival of the Europeans and there should be no illusion that those societies embodied utopian ideals of equality. Yet while other societies in different parts of the world have been able to develop, evolve, and address issues of inequality and freedom within their own cultural constructs, the indigenous people of Central and South America have found themselves systematically, politically, and economically oppressed by outside European forces. Specifically in Mexico, ownership and access to land and markets has been a key point of contention between the characteristically whiter upper class and the more indigenous population that makes up the lower classes. Mexico's post-colonial history is filled with clashes and conflicts between ethnic and economic groups, but the most recent and most directly influential event to the formation of the EZLN was the Mexican Revolution.

The Mexican Revolution

At the turn of the twentieth century the Mexican population was divided between the few powerful rich and the many powerless peasants. While the peasants outnumbered the wealthy,

The state supported the owners of great estates in their continuing land conflicts with the peasantry; supported factory and mine owners in their disputes with industrial workers; and supported the metropolitan elites, foreigners, and provincial strongmen allied closely with the regime against the growing demands for broader political and economic participation from the increasingly estranged local and regional elites.¹⁸

The majority of peasants were landless and although President Porfirio Díaz continued to invest in Mexico's economic growth through industry, the living situation of the peasants was not improving and they were "frustrated with the government's indifference to their cries for agrarian reform."¹⁹ The attempt at peaceful reform was made when Francisco Madero challenged Díaz for the presidency in the elections of 1910. However, the legitimacy of the election was questionable and Díaz was declared the winner while Madero was thrown in prison.

During his incarceration, Madero wrote and published the *Plan de San Luis Potosí*. This plan denounced Díaz as president and served as a catalyst to the Mexican Revolution, which began as an uprising against Díaz. As soon as Díaz fled from Mexico, Madero acted as president until he was democratically elected in the elections of 1912.²⁰ Initially supported by agrarian reform and social justice advocates as well as the United States, Madero failed to follow through with many of his promises. His presidency did

¹⁸ Hart, John Mason, "Mexican Revolution: Causes," Encyclopedia of Mexico, Michael S. Werner Ed. (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997). 847

¹⁹ "Mexico," Encyclopedia of Latin American Politics, Diana Kapiszewski Ed. Alexander Kazen Asst. Ed. (Westport, Ct: Oryx Press, 2002: 200-219). 211

²⁰ "Mexico", 211

not last long as he “was overthrown and assassinated in a 1913 coup staged by General Victoriano Huerta [supported by the United States], whom Madero had placed in charge of defeating the rebel forces.”²¹

The third president in 3 years, Huerta ruled as president until 1914 when he fled the country just as Díaz had 3 years earlier. Although internationally recognized as the legitimate president, many Mexican citizens and Woodrow Wilson’s administration did not support Huerta’s presidency. During Huerta’s presidency, revolutionary leaders such as Emiliano Zapata, Pancho Villa, Venustiano Carranza, and Álvaro Obregón failed to unite and fought against one another in addition to their common enemy, Huerta’s government. For example, Zapata and his Conventionist forces from the south, battled against the Constitutionalist forces of Carranza and Obregón in the north. Zapata and Villa shared the same vision of agrarian reform and social justice, more revolutionary demands than those of Carranza or Obregón who denounced Huerta’s rise to presidency as unconstitutional.

Carranza became president in 1914 after driving Huerta out but was challenged by Villa and Zapata in a hostile takeover of Mexico City in 1915. Carranza improved his relations with the masses by including agrarian and social reforms as well as “an acknowledgement and celebration of Mexico’s indigenous heritage”²² in the Constitution of 1917, the year in which he was officially elected as the president of Mexico. Despite the advances of the Conventionist values, the infighting continued as Carranza was assassinated and replaced by Obregón in 1920. Since then, the succession of the presidency has been relatively peaceful, if not unanimously legitimate, and the reforms

²¹ Gentleman, Judith, “The Revolution,” *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture*, Barbara A. Tenenbaum Ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1996). 15

²² “Mexico”, 211

made in the Constitution of 1917 remained until 1992 when President Carlos Salinas amended the critical Article 27.

While all of the revolutionary leaders of the Mexican Revolution challenged the existing system that oppressed the poor and indigenous populations, Emiliano Zapata is the leader who has most profoundly impacted the creation and development of the EZLN. Born into a middle class family in the town of Morelos in southern Mexico, he mobilized the oppressed agricultural populations in central and southern Mexico to form the *Ejercito Libertador del Sur* (Liberation Army of the South). Celebrated today as a national hero, Zapata summarized his agenda in his rallying cry, “¡Tierra y Libertad!” (Land and Liberty!). He expanded upon his demands in his Plan de Ayala, put forward in 1911, which called for the “nationalization of land controlled by *haciendas* and other big landowners, and its subsequent redistribution to the *campesinos*.”²³ Some of the key elements that the EZLN inherited from Zapata are his demands for food, education, finance and security for *campesinos*, the complete opposition to pillaging or other acts of disrespect during the process of requisitioning land from large landowners, and a celebration of decentralized self-government.²⁴ While his call for the seizure and redistribution of land seems like a socialist agenda, Zapata differs from the EZLN as he did not call for the overthrow of capitalism and did not align himself with socialist doctrines. Zapata’s fiery campaign for land and liberty ended in 1919 when Carranza had him assassinated,²⁵ but his legacy has lived on in Mexico and recently been embodied in the EZLN.

²³ Rochlin, James F, Vanguard Revolutionaries in Latin America: Peru, Columbia, Mexico (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003). 174

²⁴ Rochlin 175

²⁵ Gentleman, 16

For the indigenous landless populations of Mexico, the greatest success of the Mexican Revolution was Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution. The great success of the revolution, Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, read:

Necessary measures shall be taken to divide up large landed estates; to develop small landed holdings in operation; to create new agricultural centers, with necessary lands and waters; to encourage agriculture in general and to prevent the destruction of natural resources, and to protect property from damage to the detriment of society. Centers of population which at present either have no lands or water or which do not possess them in sufficient quantities for the needs of their inhabitants, shall be entitled to grants thereof, which shall be taken from adjacent properties, the rights of small landed holdings in operation being respected at all times.²⁶

This article legalized communal farms, *ejidos*, and helped many Mexican peasants become owners of their own means of production. The article primarily asserts that lands and waters are the property of the state and as such can be acquired and redistributed among the citizens. The Catholic Church lost its right to land and foreigners were allowed more restricted access to owning Mexican land. Amid the celebration of the individual's right to land, Article 27 legalized the communal ownership of land, "a provision that subsequently led to the development of the *ejido* system of cooperative farms."²⁷ While the new constitution put these rights into writing, the landless population did not reap the benefits tangibly until the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas from 1934 to 1940 in which he enacted sweeping land reforms.²⁸ Prior to Cárdenas, "less than a tenth of the rural population directly benefited from the reform."²⁹ The Mexican Revolution was an important development in the history of Mexico but, as demonstrated

²⁶ "1917 Constitution" March 11, 2007. March 23, 2006.

<http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Mexico/mexico1917.html>

²⁷ Ramos-Escandón, Carmen, "Constitution of 1917," Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture, Barbara A. Tenenbaum Ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1996). 26

²⁸ Rochlin 175

²⁹ Gentleman, 16

by the Presidency of Cárdenas, the rights and lands of the indigenous and poor populations were still largely in the hands of the ruling party.

Post-Revolutionary Mexico

For the majority of the twentieth century, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party) (PRI) dominated Mexican politics. During the PRI's reign that lasted until 2000, the country experienced a "significant if uneven program of wealth and land redistribution,"³⁰ as well as success from economic protectionism.³¹ The 1960s through the 1980s particularly reflected a sense of economic progress in Mexico. Not everyone supported the PRI. The state sponsored massacres in response to student protests in 1968 and a "dirty war" against suspected subversives and guerillas.³² Such action led to the formation of the rebel group, *Ejército Revolucionario Popular* (Popular Revolutionary Army) (ERP).³³ Class divisions, oppression, and unequal access to land still characterized the Mexican landscape but progress seemed steady and relatively promising.

The 1980s marked a turning point for the Mexican economy and the leadership of the PRI. The economy began to plummet and in 1982 Mexico announced that it could not repay international debts. As the economy suffered, so did the support of the PRI. Both the elites and the masses began to question the legitimacy of the country's leadership. Mexico's inability to repay its foreign lenders resulted in a restructuring of the Mexican economy by the International Monetary Fund through the implementation of

³⁰ Rochlin 177

³¹ Rochlin 178

³² Rochlin 179

³³ Rochlin 180

neoliberalism.³⁴ Two of the key characteristics of the attempt to modernize the Mexican economy were the dismantling of protectionist policies and an increased emphasis on exportation. The result of these policy shifts was a more liberalized economy that did not provide sufficient social support. It is unclear whether the economic crisis of the 1980s was a cause or an indicator of subversive movements, but the two accompanied one another.³⁵ The chasm between rich and poor widened as the government cut spending in the hopes of gaining international status as a stable player in an increasingly global economy. During this time when social welfare was not adequately provided by the state, narco-trafficking to the United States increased dramatically and subsequently provided the jobs and social services that the masses lacked access to.³⁶ Another example of the ineffectiveness of the state was the aftermath of the devastating earthquake of 1985. It was “primarily society, and not the state, that successfully dealt with the severe consequences.”³⁷ It is safe to say that Mexico was in a declining state of instability and insecurity in which the greatest victims were those who had been systematically denied a voice in the decisions and direction of the country. Finally, the end of the decade saw the highly contested election of Carlos Salinas as president in 1988 and whatever legitimacy the government still engendered in the masses was lost.

The Formation of the EZLN

While the Mexican Revolution was a national effort that represented the landless peasantry from both the northern and southern parts of Mexico, the region of Chiapas has historically experienced greater levels of poverty, oppression, and limited access to land.

³⁴ Gentleman 22

³⁵ Rochlin 181

³⁶ Rochlin 182

³⁷ Rochlin 180

Chiapas benefited from fewer social services, lower quality land, and a higher level of poverty. To address these iniquities, in November of 1983, the EZLN was born of an alliance between three *mestizos* and three indigenous members.³⁸ Prior to the creation and activity of the EZLN, political groups such as the PRI and the LP had already moved in to the Chiapas region with the purpose of inciting a Maoist style revolution. Conflicts over the use of armed force and hierarchical structure lead to internal factions and ultimately the birth of the EZLN.³⁹ The EZLN drew on a number of socialist and revolutionary inspirations, such as the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, but ultimately formed their own ideology and organization through the indigenous inspired process of listening to the demands of the masses. From its inception, the EZLN began to slowly and quietly build a weapons supply.⁴⁰ It is evident that from the beginning, the EZLN planned for the use of force as a mechanism to gain the recognition and rights that they demanded.

By the election, fraudulent or otherwise, of President Salinas in 1988, the EZLN had already been learning, developing, and growing for 5 years. In 1992, Salinas amended Article 27 of the Constitution of 1917, eliminating the explicit right to land and the ability to own land communally.⁴¹ The effect of the changes made is that “peasant land can now be bought and sold and the constitutionally guaranteed right to a land grant has been eliminated,” so that Mexico can bring corporations into that land to produce crops for a world market and not for subsistence farming⁴² Ironically, 1992 marked the 500 year anniversary of Columbus’ arrival in the Americas and the start of indigenous

³⁸ Rochlin 186

³⁹ The book The Zapatista Social Netwar in Mexico prepared for the United States Army discusses in greater detail the political groups and conflicts of leadership that characterize the development of the EZLN as it exists today.

⁴⁰ Rochlin 186

⁴¹ Rochlin 176

⁴² Cavise, Leonard “NAFTA Rebellion” Human Rights: Journal of the Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities 21:4 (Fall, 1994): 36-39. (37)

oppression at the hands of Europeans. The irony was not lost on the indigenous populations who demonstrated in riots throughout the country.⁴³ As Salinas restricted the already insufficient rights of the poor Mexican population, the EZLN was spurred into action as they prepared for their public international debut.

On January 1, 1994 Mexico entered into the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States and Canada and the government celebrated the symbolic transition to a more liberal economic policy that would supposedly elevate Mexico to the status of a developed nation. While many celebrated, the EZLN had another agenda. Also on January 1, 1994 the EZLN, also known as the Zapatistas, seized San Cristóbal de las Casas and township centers in eastern Chiapas in an armed uprising declaring war against the Mexican Army. The government responded quickly with 12,000 troops but refrained from annihilating the Zapatistas “in what would surely strike Mexican and international civil society as a genocidal repression.”⁴⁴ This statement implies that the Mexican Army had the ability to wipe out the Zapatistas with ease but chose not to. While their numbers, training, and financial backing support this assertion, it is interesting to note that it still took 12 days of fighting before President Salinas declared a unilateral cease fire on January 12. Peace talks began on February 21 in San Cristóbal de las Casas and were mediated by Bishop Samuel Ruiz García, a Catholic priest and follower of liberation theology who had worked with the indigenous people of Chiapas for years. The EZLN was represented by the general command called the Comité Clandestino de Revolución Indígena (CCRI) which was composed of 18 men and women while Manuel Camacho Solís served as Salinas’s negotiator. By March 2 the

⁴³ Rochlin 187

⁴⁴ Collier, George A, “Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas,” Encyclopedia of Mexico: History, Society, and Culture, Michael S. Werner Ed. (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997). 1635

two parties had reached tentative accords on thirty two of the thirty four points of contention but the EZLN was unwilling to settle for anything less than everything.⁴⁵

Purpose of the EZLN

The EZLN is primarily a supporter of indigenous rights as it was born out of a sense of indignation and exasperation with the 500 years of oppression that the indigenous people have experienced at the hands of European invaders and their descendents. While the cry of Zapata for land and liberty is still central to the purpose of the EZLN, they have added more demands that show that they will not be acquiesced with small gestures of increasing access to land. The EZLN has looked beyond the primary issues of land and liberty and has demanded a dramatic shift in Mexican society and policy in order to provide a right to dignified life for all citizens, in all regions, and of all races.

In 1993 The EZLN issued *La Primera Declaración de la Selva Lacandona* (The First Declaration from the Lacandona Jungle) as a declaration of war on the Mexican Army. In this first, and arguably clearest, expression of the EZLN's purpose and aims, the General Command asks the Mexican people for their "*participación decidida apoyando este plan del pueblo mexicano que lucha por trabajo, tierra, techo, alimentación, salud, educación, independencia, libertad, democracia, justicia y paz*" (decided participation supporting this plan of the Mexican people who fight for land, housing, nutrition, health, education, independence, liberty, democracy, justice and peace).⁴⁶ Through this declaration, the EZLN established its purpose as one that reaches

⁴⁵ Collier 1635

⁴⁶ Comandancia General del EZLN, "La Primera Declaración de la Selva Lacandona." (Mexico, 1993) <http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1994/1993.htm>

beyond the indigenous struggle and extends to all of those Mexicans who lack any or all of the demands listed in the declaration. These goals have remained the same over the last 13 years and have been repeated and emphasized throughout following EZLN communication. In 1996 the EZLN issued *La Primera Declaración de La Realidad: Contra el Neoliberalismo y por la Humanidad* (First Declaration of La Realidad: Against Neoliberalism and For Humanity) to propose an international gathering in Chiapas for everyone who fights for democracy, liberty and justice, who fight to resist neoliberalism, and who are without the basics needs demanded in *La Primera Declaración de la Selva Lacandona* such as housing, education, and health. These goals are not exclusive to indigenous people but rather command a sense of global unity as the EZLN seeks to unite the international population in a universal quest for a solution to the destruction and inequity caused by capitalism broadly and neoliberalism specifically.

Just another Marxist-Leninist Vanguard Revolution?

While the event of January 1, 1994 initially appears as an emotional and disorganized peasant response to Mexico entering into NAFTA, it is really the culmination of planning, training, waiting, thinking, listening, sharing, hoping and dreaming in response to a long history of oppression. Many scholars and observers have tried to label the EZLN as the first postmodern Marxist revolution or lump it together with Latin American vanguard revolutionaries such as Ché or the violent Sendero Luminoso of Perú but it never quite fits. Perhaps the EZLN does not fit into a category of the preexisting political left because it has successfully freed itself from the constraints of German, Russian, Cuban, and Chinese doctrine and followed the dreams, traditions, and knowledge of the indigenous people. By creating a culture of “leading by following”

and treating Karl Marx's writings as a resource rather than a rulebook, the EZLN has prepared for the successful realization of democracy, liberty, dignity, and equality for all people in a country that does not fulfill Marx's prerequisites of industrial development.

While Marx focuses the majority of his writings on criticism of capitalism, he also recognizes its value for creating what he considers to be the necessary conditions for socialism to arise. In Marx's opinion, socialism requires two main prerequisites: the technology to eliminate scarcity and a bourgeois democracy. Capitalism spurred industrialism so effectively that in the late 1800s the new economic problem was not one of scarcity, but rather overproduction. From that point on, all poverty has been artificially produced since as a society we can produce enough to meet the needs of every person in the world. The reason that people still live in such devastating poverty is that there is a gap between the means of production and distribution of goods created by capital. While capitalism has not solved the problem of poverty, Marx points out that it has created a system of production and industry that makes it possible to eliminate need. The second prerequisite is a bourgeois democracy. In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Part II, Marx claims that "the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy."⁴⁷ In order for the proletariat to win the battle of democracy, there must already be a democracy in place in which the proletariat can gain power peacefully, with numbers, and representing the working class. Perhaps one of the reasons that Marxism has become characterized by violence is that the first real attempt to put it into practice was in Russia which did not meet Marx's requirements and therefore could not facilitate peaceful

⁴⁷ Marx, Karl, "Manifesto of the Communist Party" *Marx-Engels Reader* Robert C. Tucker Ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1972: 469-500). 490

socialism. Mexico, while growing rapidly towards international status as a fully developed nation, still hovers slightly below these standards with a history of election corruption and economic struggle to compete internationally.

If Mexico does not meet Marx's prerequisites for the development of socialism, Chiapas falls miserably short. Chiapas is the state in the far south east corner of Mexico that was incorporated last and provides the lowest quality of life to its 1,000,000 indigenous inhabitants. In "A Storm and a Prophecy, Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds," Subcomandante Marcos compares Chiapas' wealth in resources such as oil, gas, cattle, and coffee to its life blood and imperialism to the teeth that sink in to drain that blood. Although a small state, Chiapas provides 55% of national hydroelectric electric energy and 20% of Mexico's total electricity but "only one third of the homes in Chiapas have electricity."⁴⁸ Marcos goes on to describe the environmentally disastrous impacts of capitalism on Chiapas, the poor infrastructure, the worst education Mexico has to offer, and the abhorrent state of health and nutrition that accompanies poverty. While companies obtain exclusive rights to pillage raw resources from the land to sell for a profit and distribute globally, the local *campesino*⁴⁹ is restricted by threat of fine or jail sentence from harvesting food for sustenance or wood for shelter to meet his basic animal needs. Although this experience is not one of overproduction in a post-scarcity society, the net effect of artificially induced poverty is the same. The indigenous people can see the resources they need for dignified survival but are artificially, by law, prevented from obtaining them. Without the legal right to farm for themselves, peasants were forced into

⁴⁸ Marcos, Subcomandante, "A Storm and a Prophecy. Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds" Our Word Is Our Weapon Ed. Juana Ponce de León (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001:22-37). 24

⁴⁹ Rural peasant

farming on *haciendas*⁵⁰ owned by a small landowning elite until 1917 when Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution gave small farmers the right to own land in *ejidos*⁵¹. Despite this constitutionally granted right, few indigenous peasant farmers were economically able to escape the *haciendas*. In this way, indigenous *campesinos* of Chiapas experience the same exploitation as factory wage laborers.

In addition to the exploitation of labor, indigenous people of all different tribes share a greater than 500 year experience of oppression since the arrival of Europeans in the Americas.⁵² This shared experience created a bond previously nonexistent between indigenous tribes and has helped to form unified resistance movements. One top of 500 years of racially and ethnically based oppression, Chiapas as a state of Mexico has not enjoyed the fruits of the few successes gained by the underprivileged and dispossessed people of Mexico. Whether because of their late incorporation into Mexico of their stronger cultural ties to Guatemala, Chiapatecos have been forgotten in the turmoil of progress. Chiapas officially became part of Mexico in 1824 and thus its people began their Mexican lives as outsiders. Even in the Mexican Revolution which demanded agrarian reform and advocated on the side of peasants against large *hacendados*⁵³, Chiapas was left slightly behind. Emiliano Zapata made it very clear that he was fighting for “¡Tierra y Libertad!” (Land and Liberty!); these were two things that Chiapatecos and many other impoverished Mexicans lacked. Zapata became a national, almost legendary, hero for his success but life in Chiapas for indigenous peasants still did not improve to a

⁵⁰ Large plot of land, or ranch

⁵¹ Communally owned farming land

⁵² Leslie Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* also displays the communal tradition imbedded in Amerindian culture

⁵³ Large land owners of the *haciendas*

level of dignity. The EZLN hopes to revive the spirit of Zapata and finish his mission completely.

Subcomandante Marcos: Leader, Author, and Man

The strongest bridge between Don Quixote and the Zapatista movement for indigenous equality is Subcomandante Marcos. Marcos has publicly withheld his identity and always dons a ski mask, or *pasamontaña*, to maintain an air of mystery. He claims that he will only remove his mask when Mexico removes its own masks. His commonly accepted identity is that of the former university professor Rafael Guillén. Whether Guillén is the true identity of Marcos or not, it is certain that Marcos is a Mexican *mestizo* from a middle class background who has an extensive college education. In various interviews he has cited his parents as well as revolutionary writers such as Ché, Bolívar, Marx, and Lenin as strong influences. If his true identity is that of Guillén, he was educated at the National University in Mexico City and received a national medal of excellence from President José López Portillo in the department of philosophy and letters. His educational background is significant to and perhaps defines his role in the EZLN as he attempts to communicate the thoughts and feelings of the uneducated indigenous people of Chiapas to other Mexicans, the Mexican government, and the world. His writing is poignant though at times dramatic and is arguably responsible for the reputation that the EZLN has gained from the worldwide community as the first post Cold War revolution. In addition to all of these influences, fictional literature such as Cervantes' *Don Quixote* plays a special role in Marcos' life of leadership. Specifically, Marcos has projected Don Quixote as a symbol through blatant references, imitations of Cervantes, and ever more subtle reflections of the knight-errant's life in his own actions.

Blatantly, Marcos explained the value of *Don Quixote* to Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Márquez in an interview. When asked what he was currently reading Marcos responded that *Don Quixote* is always at hand and that it is

“el mejor libro de teoría política, seguido de Hamlet y Macbeth. No hay mejor forma para entender el sistema político mexicano, en su parte trágica y en su parte cómica: Hamlet, Macbeth y El Quijote. Mejor que cualquier columna de análisis político”

(the best book of political theory, followed by *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. There is no better way to understand the Mexican political system, in its tragic and comic aspects: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Don Quixote*. Better than any political columnist).⁵⁴

Marcos is very public about the influence that the novel has had on his political thought. He has also been known to dress up as Don Quixote on horseback. However, these public displays of admiration for a popular book in Spanish speaking cultures are meaningless on their own. What is significant is how the spirit of Don Quixote has manifested itself in Marcos' actions and writings. More than just an admirer of Cervantes, Marcos can be seen as his imitator.

Don Durito as a Parody of Don Quixote

While many political leaders, past and present, cite *Don Quixote* as an inspirational figure in the political arena, Marcos is a particularly interesting case because he also identifies with authors such as Unamuno and Borges in his admiration for the literary aspects of the novel. One of the significant ways that *Don Quixote* has impacted the Zapatista movement has been through the literature that Marcos has written. In fact, in 1999 Marcos published a book entitled *Don Durito de la Lacandona* that describes the adventures and conversations that he has with Don Durito, a small black beetle who lives in the Lacandón jungle, home of the Zapatista movement.

⁵⁴ “Habla Marcos: Entrevista con Gabriel Garcia Márquez y Roberto Pombo.”
<http://www.ezln.org/entrevistas/20010325.es.htm>

As *Don Durito* is a parody of *Don Quixote*, it is necessary to first understand the use and significance of parody in literature. A parody exaggerates the style of an original text with the purpose of creating humor, satire, or to “extend a work’s range of thematic and stylistic references.”⁵⁵ While similar, parody is not simply imitation, pastiche, or plagiarism, nor is it necessarily burlesque as parody can admire or even elevate the original text rather than mock it. The key characteristic of parody is the disagreement or the differences between the original text and the parody. Critic David Bennett explains that parody works within literature by accenting “the artifice or fictitiousness of its model’s representation of reality, reversing the formal self-effacement on which the parodied discourse depends for its claims to...truth.”⁵⁶ In terms of *Don Durito* as a parody of *Don Quixote*, the similarities pay homage to the original text while lending legitimacy and power to the distinct messages of the new text.

The connections between *Don Quijote* and *Don Durito* range from direct quotation to stylistic replication. For example, the beginning of the seventh chapter of *Don Durito* is a quote from Chapter 25 in *Don Quijote*. Marcos credits Don Durito with speaking the words from *Don Quijote* and the character Marcos mentions to the beetle, “Creo que se te están confundiendo los tiempos y las novelas...el inicio de tu discurso se parece demasiado a una parte del *Quijote de la Mancha*” (I think that you are confusing times and novels...the beginning of your speech is too similar to a part from *Don Quijote de la Mancha*).⁵⁷ There are many other similar examples of direct quotations from *Don*

⁵⁵ Lyle, A.W., “Parody,” *Encyclopedia of Literary Critics and Criticism*, Chris Murray Ed. (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999:827-828). 827

⁵⁶ Bennet, David, “Parody, postmodernism, and the politics of reading,” *Critical Quarterly*, Vol. 27, no. 4, 1985:27-41. 29

⁵⁷ Marcos, Subcomandante, *Don Durito de La Lacandona* (San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, México: Centro de Información y Análisis de Chiapas, A.C., 1999). 33

Quixote in *Don Durito* and the author Marcos not only footnotes each reference but the character Marcos verbally recognizes the usage of the quote.

The most frequent connection between *Don Quixote* and *Don Durito* is parallelism. It is immediately apparent that Don Quixote and Don Durito are similar names for the protagonists of the books, and furthermore they both named themselves, abandoning their given names of Alonso Quixano and Nabucodonosor respectively.

Nabucodonosor is the Spanish name for the Biblical character Nebuchadnezzar. As recorded in the book of Daniel chapters 3 and 4,⁵⁸ motivated by his pride and vanity for all of the success he had experienced, King Nebuchadnezzar built a giant idol of gold and ordered all of his subjects to worship it. When three Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, refused to worship the golden idol Nebuchadnezzar had them thrown into a fiery furnace. According to the Bible, God spared their lives and in doing so convinced Nebuchadnezzar of God's supremacy. Later on, the king experienced the fulfillment of a dream which was interpreted by Daniel. He lost all sanity and became like an animal eating grass and behaving bizarrely. This story of madness reminds the reader of Don Quixote's sudden loss of sense, although Don Quixote only seems to be insane in regard to knighthood and chivalry, and immediately gives the reader an idea of the character of the small black beetle. The name that the beetle chooses once he ceases to be Nebuchadnezzar and has presumably gone insane is Don Durito which means little hard head, or stubborn one. Just as Don Quixote is absolutely convinced of his identity and purpose, Don Durito can be expected to be just as convicted. Marcos' introduction to Don Durito,

⁵⁸ Daniel 3-4

autodenominado caballero andante y con el nuevo apelativo de 'Don Durito de la Lacandona,' este pequeño escarabajo decide recorrer los caminos del mundo para deshacer entuertos, socorrer doncellas, aliviar al enfermo, apoyar al débil, enseñar al ignorante, humillar al poderoso, levantar al humilde,

(the self-named knight errant with the new appellative of “Don Durito of the Lacandón,” this little beetle decides to roam the world to right wrongs, rescue damsels in distress, heal the sick, help the weak, teach the ignorant, humble the powerful, and elevate the humble,)⁵⁹

resounds with phrases and style very reminiscent of *Don Quixote*. This excerpt also demonstrates how Marcos parodies *Don Quixote*, similar to how Cervantes parodied the tales of chivalry. While Cervantes parodied chivalric novels in order to criticize them for entertaining without teaching, Marcos parodies *Don Quixote* as a way to catch the reader’s attention and add depth to the character of Don Durito. By parodying *Don Quixote* and the Bible story of Nebuchadnezzar, Marcos informs the reader that Don Durito has gone mad and that he is on a mission to which he will remain absolutely devoted without needed to state so directly. Other parallels between *Don Durito* and *Don Quixote* range from wording to organizational structure and can be found on almost every page of *Don Durito*.

The most discrete connection between the two books is the shared goal of blurring the line between reality and fiction. Sometimes Marcos imitates Cervantes’ techniques but at other times he achieves the same goal in new ways. They both insert true historical figures into their fictional stories to encourage the reader to question the line between history and fiction. As discussed earlier, one way Cervantes causes the reader to question reality is by separating himself from the reader by inserting historians and a translator between himself and Don Quixote. Essentially Cervantes claims no responsibility for the content of the book because he is merely compiling historic reports. Marcos, on the other

⁵⁹ Marcos, *Don Durito* 9

hand, hardly allows any space between himself and the reader and additionally inserts himself as a character in the book. This technique, although elementally opposite of Cervantes', also causes the reader to challenge his or her understanding of where reality ends and fiction begins. The reader knows that the author Marcos lives, studies, trains, and writes from the Lacandon Jungle just like the character Marcos, so he or she begins to wonder how much of Marcos' fictional story is real.

In a style all his own, Marcos uses the voice of Don Durito to belittle his own intelligence and importance to the Zapatistas. Don Durito repeatedly mocks the "Sup" and trivializes his role as a leader of a revolution. By showing such disrespect toward his creator, Don Durito becomes somewhat believable as an independent entity just as Don Quixote seems to act independently of Cervantes. In Chapter IV, Marcos invites the reader to look over Don Durito's shoulder and read the letter he has written to "*Señor tal y tal*" (Mister so and so) regarding neoliberalism and the party-state. Throughout his letter, Don Durito blatantly criticizes Marcos for his irreverent writing style and his muddle ideas that are too hard to understand. Don Durito perceives that it is his responsibility to clarify what Marcos has left so unclear. In response to a short paragraph written by Marcos calling for democracy, liberty, and justice, Don Durito expands upon such intangible concepts and explains what those ideas mean for Mexico. Ultimately, Don Durito explains how democracy, liberty, and justice make up the pieces of the revolution that will create a political space in which it is possible to make a revolution that will produce a new system or structure. While Don Durito does not represent the indigenous people, his role supports the idea that true knowledge and understanding of the Mexican situation comes from those who are native to the land. He never denounces

Marcos but clearly sees him as the *mestizo* outsider that he is and takes every opportunity to remind the reader of Marcos' shortcomings. Of course, Marcos is actually the author behind Don Durito and through his self-mockery he seems to be admitting his limitations and highlighting the wisdom and ideas that come from the indigenous people.

Readers also experience a similar sense of self-mockery when reading Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. In the episode of the book burning in Part I, Chapter 6, the priest and the barber sort through Don Quixote's library evaluating and passing judgment on each book in a manner reminiscent of the Spanish inquisition. Cervantes uses this episode to criticize other works by sentencing them to be burned, but he also judges his own novel, *La Galatea*. While the priest and barber refrain from sentencing the novel to a fiery death, they decide to lock it up until Cervantes can produce a second part to make it worthy of mercy. From these examples of self-criticism, the reader perceives a sense of humility or self-awareness from both Cervantes and Marcos.

Marcos and Don Quixote

Besides being an intentional imitator of Don Quixote, Marcos can also be viewed as a living reflection of the knight-errant. Although there certainly are many differences between the knight and the revolutionary, there are some significant similarities that the two men share as they live to change the worlds around them. Both Don Quixote and Marcos grew up in families of social status and enjoyed access to education. Cervantes immediately describes Don Quixote as a *hidalgo*, a class description for the lowest level of nobility that comes from the phrase *hijo de algo*, "son of something." Marcos grew up in a middle class Mexican family and obtained a university education. Both men left their lives of status and traveled with people who, by society's standards, were inferior to

them. In both cases, reading books served as the catalyst for abandoning safety and security for a wild world of adventure. Don Quixote read tales of chivalry and then set out into the Spanish countryside on a decrepit old horse and with shoddy armor in search of adventures while Marcos read Marx, Lenin, and Ché (in addition to fictional novels such as *Don Quixote* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*⁶⁰) before he trekked into the jungle to incite an armed rebellion. Perhaps most significantly, Don Quixote and Marcos developed and grew as individuals through unexpectedly educational relationships with Sancho Panza and the indigenous people of Chiapas respectively. Neither expected to learn from people who society deemed inferiors, yet as time progressed, both Don Quixote and Marcos found themselves letting go of the role of a teacher and embracing the position of a student.

In light of the insight Marcos discovered from listening to and respecting the indigenous people rather as opposed to forcing western doctrine on them, it is interesting that Marcos chose Don Quixote as a symbol for the Zapatista movement. Don Quixote not only represents Spanish culture but is arguably one of the most recognizable symbols of Spanish culture abroad. Although the Spanish invasion of South and Central America began over a century before the publication of *Don Quixote*, it is still the Spanish cultural influence that Marcos is simultaneously opposing and embracing by using Don Quixote as a political figure for the Zapatistas. Since Marcos and the other leaders of the EZLN have so emphatically proclaimed that the Zapatista revolution is at the command of the indigenous people, why celebrate Don Quixote at all? Why not elevate Mayan gods such as Ik'al and Votán exclusively?

⁶⁰ By Gabriel García Márquez

One of Marcos' possible reasons for citing Don Quixote as inspiration for the revolution is simply recognition. *Don Quixote* is widely regarded as a literary classic worldwide but particularly in Spanish speaking countries. By associating himself with Don Quixote and Cervantes, Marcos may hope to receive attention and respect from people who otherwise may not have taken the time to read his stories and communiqués or take them seriously. Regardless of Don Quixote's Spanish heritage, he is one of the most familiar international literary figures and therefore lends a sense of legitimacy to Marcos' writings.

Another reason why adopting Don Quixote as a fellow Zapatista could be appropriate is that he does not represent the powerful Spanish rulers, but rather the Spanish *hidalgos* who were of noble blood but did not benefit economically like the elite few. His mission was to defend the weak, not to elevate the privileged. Although the EZLN is primarily an organization that promotes the human rights of indigenous people, it also actively pursues solidarity with all those who experience the oppression of capitalist or neoliberal economic systems. Identification with Don Quixote is not an association with Spanish royalty or elites who led the conquest of South and Central America for the sole purpose of profit and power. Identification with Don Quixote is an association with all those who struggle against injustice.

While the decision to associate the Zapatistas with Don Quixote may be justified, Marcos also realized the importance of learning about indigenous fictional heroes and he created a more complete picture of what the Zapatista movement is about by incorporating those heroes into his writings. In addition to writing a series of stories about the beetle Don Durito, Marcos wrote about Old Don Antonio, the fictional

indigenous man who teaches Marcos about the beliefs and oral traditions of the indigenous culture. Many of the stories about Old Don Antonio focus on the perception of time, the life of the gods, and the value of asking questions. By dedicating much of his writing to these stories, Marcos equates the importance of indigenous culture and history with that of Spain and the rest of the western world.

Revolution from the *pueblo*

If a revolution is understood as a group or individual actively changing the circumstances in which they find themselves, then it can be seen how Don Quixote and the EZLN both wish to incite revolution. Since the inception of Marx's idea of socialism, the relevant and important question has remained, who will bring about the revolution? Social elites are often inclined to view a future socialist revolution as a movement that will be carried out by the working man, the proletariat, but only after being educated and lead by the enlightened bourgeois intellectual. This conviction that a revolution of the people will only be realized in conjunction with the guidance, or intelligence, of the upper class, contradicts the ultimate goal that Marxist socialists claim to seek, namely a classless society. Rosa Luxemburg offers a different vision of who will bring about the revolution. She stresses that any successful liberation of oppressed people must necessarily be the work of the oppressed people themselves. In a response to Lenin's centralism Luxemburg argues that "there is no more effective guarantee against opportunist intrigue and personal ambition than the independent revolutionary action of the proletariat, as a result of which the workers acquire the sense of political responsibility and self-reliance."⁶¹ She supports this point of view by looking to the past

⁶¹ Luxemburg, Rosa, "Lenin's Centralism" Marxism: Essential Writings David McLellan Ed. (Oxford University Press, 1988).124

and concluding that “historically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee.”⁶² Cervantes foreshadows this vision of the working man elevating himself by nearly 250 years in *Don Quixote* through the relationship between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, who represent the *hidalgos*, noble yet impoverished, and working classes respectively. Approximately 150 years after Marx, Subcomandante Marcos and the other founders of the Zapatista revolution traveled to the southeastern corner of Mexico to rally the indigenous people and incite a socialist vanguard revolution only to come to the same realization that a true revolution of the people must arise from the people themselves.

Don Quixote and Sancho Panza

Before Alonso Quixano transforms himself into the knight-errant Don Quixote, he enjoys many, although not all, of the benefits of belonging to the nobility of Spanish society. While he is certainly not rich, he is educated, well read and enjoys leisure time which he fills by reading countless novels of chivalry. Don Quixote sallies forth on his first adventure from La Mancha as a lone knight errant with nobody to talk to but himself as he resolves to right wrongs, rescue damsels in distress, and help the helpless. This sort of dedication to save the marginalized members of society reflects a timeless tendency of the intellectual class to belittle the masses by presuming that they need to be rescued. However, after he dubs himself a knight, Don Quixote returns to La Mancha and as he sets out for the second time, “Cervantes creates for him [Don Quixote] a companion who is much humbler in social rank and education yet capable of listening, learning, and giving opinions that are often based upon common sense and are streetwise.”⁶³ The

⁶² Luxembourg 127

⁶³ Durán 253

knight promises Sancho an island to govern in exchange for his services as squire. This promise of governorship is the motivation that drives Sancho to remain loyal and dedicated to his master even through the most humiliating, sickening, exhausting, and painful experiences of adversity.

In Part II, Sancho becomes governor of an island through artificial means, the amusement of the Duke and Duchess, and governs well. He bases his governing decisions on a combination of wisdom that he has gained both through his service to Don Quixote as well as from his own experiences as an illiterate peasant through proverbs and common sense. At this point in the novel, Sancho has undergone a transformation such that his peasant's outlook on life has been augmented by the intellectual ideas of the *hidalgo* Don Quixote so that he emerges as a just leader who exhibits sound judgement. Contrarily, Don Quixote never rules over anything despite his hopes of becoming emperor or even settling for being an archbishop. Ultimately, it is the seemingly unlikely representative of the majority working class who rules rationally and justly. The often discussed idea of the quixotification of Sancho and the sanchification of Quixote is one that can be applied to the many changes the two main characters experience throughout the novel. One could argue that by the end of the novel that the two characters have switched roles but a more complete view is that each individual has become more complete through a fusion of their two different sets of strengths. In this case, we see that as representatives of the nobility and the peasantry respectively, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza demonstrate how good leadership arises through a synthesis of intellectual ideals and experiential common sense.

Marcos and the Indigenous People of Chiapas

It is easy to view Don Quixote as the definitive leader of the duo based on his education and socioeconomic standing. It is just as easy to credit Marcos with the ideology of the EZLN as he is an educated, well read man. However, since the indigenous people of Chiapas, and all of Latin America, have been living under oppression for 500 or more years, its no surprise that they have developed many of their own ideas about freedom, dignity, land rights, and all other aspects of a future world that they hope to realize. For example, on the anniversary of the assassination of Zapata, April 10, 1994, the General Command of the EZLN wrote the public letter “Votán Zapata or Five Hundred Years of History.” This letter addressed simply to “brothers and sisters” is about a man named Votán Zapata as the “guardian and heart of the people” who for 501 years has inhabited the bodies of historic Mexican leaders and champions of the indigenous people. The name of this man is the combination of Mayan Tzeltales culture and more recent Mexican events. Votán corresponds to “the heart of the people” and in Mayan religion was the first man sent by God to distribute land among the indigenous. Zapata refers to Emiliano Zapata as a leader of the landless in Mexican society. The General Command uses Votán Zapata to illustrate their conception of their struggle as they say

He took a name in our being nameless, he took a face in our being faceless...It is the truth, brothers and sisters. We come from there. We are going there. Being here we arrive. Dying death we live. Votán Zapata, father and mother, brother and sister, son and daughter, old and young, we are living.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ General Command of the EZLN, “Votán-Zapata or Five Hundred Years of History” Our Word Is Our Weapon. Ed. Juana Ponce de León (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001) 20-21

Clearly, the indigenous perspective represented by the EZLN views this struggle as a recurring theme in the history of their people that is bigger than the individuals currently involved. Solidarity and a cyclical notion of time distinguish the Zapatista perspective from many dominate European based outlooks on struggle and conflict.

Another example of indigenous perspectives regarding change emerges in one of the stories about Old Don Antonio written by Marcos. Marcos wrote many stories about Old Don Antonio to demonstrate what he learned from the people when he first arrived in that corner of the world. In “The Story of Questions,” Old Don Antonio tells Marcos about two of the first gods who gave birth to the world. The gods Ik’al and Votán were two gods who came from one, opposites, and the same. Ik’al and Votán initially were stationary and could not move when they decided to. Only by asking questions like “How,” “Why,” and “Where?” did they begin to move. After celebrating their success they realized that the question had been, “How do we move?” and the answer was, “Together by separately and in agreement.” The gods carried on this way, always walking with questions and never stopping, arriving, or leaving. According to Old Don Antonio, “that is how true men and women learned that questions help to walk, and not to stand still.”⁶⁵ This illustrates another aspect of preexisting indigenous thought: that in order to walk forward, or progress, people must first learn to ask questions.

Along with indigenous beliefs, the Catholic influence of liberation theology had taken hold in Chiapas largely due to the efforts of Bishop Samuel Ruiz who has consistently played a large role in the fight for the rights of indigenous Chiapatecos. Liberation theology has been a popular way to make Catholicism relevant in the modern

⁶⁵ Marcos, Subcomandante, “The Story of the Questions” *Our Word Is Our Weapon* Ed. Juana Ponce de León (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001) 413-416,415

Latin American world of poverty and inequality or “a way to understand the grace and salvation of Jesus in the context of the present and from the situation of the poor.”⁶⁶

Bishop Samuel Ruiz converted to liberation theology in 1968 and has played a very influential role in the mediations between the EZLN and the Mexican government. He predates the EZLN and has always had the interests of the indigenous people at heart as he believes that they should “struggle vigorously for social justice in this world, rather than be passive victims.”⁶⁷ Protestantism had also gained significant holds in Chiapas and the two Christian sects have often combined efforts for the shared purpose of empowering and liberating the indigenous peasants highlighting Jesus as a champion of the poor. It is into this environment of preconceived ideas and beliefs that Subcomandante Marcos and other founders of the EZLN entered to start a revolution.

Marcos first arrived in the Lacandona Jungle of Chiapas in 1984. He went there as an idealistic and enthusiastic *mestizo*⁶⁸ ready to empower the natives with knowledge and lead them in a revolution to gain their freedom. This attitude reflects the influence of other Latin American vanguard revolutionaries such as Ché Guevarra who believed that an educated elite would lead the masses to their freedom. He founded the EZLN with two other *mestizos* and three indigenous members in November of 1983.⁶⁹ Marcos went to speak to the indigenous people but they could not understand him until he learned to

⁶⁶ Gutierrez, G., “The task and content of liberation theology” Trans. Judith Condor. The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology Christopher Rowland Ed. (Cambridge University Press. 1999) 19-38, 19

⁶⁷ Rochlin 184

⁶⁸ Refers to Mexicans of mixed European and Amerindian race, but in Chiapas it also refers to anyone from urban Mexico

⁶⁹ Rochlin, James F, Vanguard Revolutionaries in Latin America: Peru, Columbia, Mexico (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003) 186

listen.⁷⁰ Marcos said the founding members came from a “tradition of Latin American guerrillas of the 1970s, of vanguard groups, of Marxist-Leninist ideologues, who wanted to struggle for a transformation of the world that would lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat.”⁷¹ For the first ten years of Marcos’ presence in Chiapas there was a dual learning process in which the *mestizos* had to learn how to survive physically in the mountains and interpersonally with the indigenous people by learning about their beliefs and culture. The indigenous people had to learn more formal subjects including the Spanish language and sciences. Marcos did not expect to learn from and listen to the indigenous people but it was a situation of necessity. Though not aware of it, Marcos’ mutual learning with the indigenous people recalls Marx’s statement that “the materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing...forgets that it is men who change circumstances and that it is essential to educate the educator himself.”⁷² Despite Marcos’ initial reluctance to learn from the indigenous people, the result has been a historically unique synthesis of theory and experience regarding the situation of the exploited worker.

Once mutual learning has taken place in Chiapas, what does the synthesis of educated social elite Marxist ideology and indigenous values and concepts of freedom look like? In Marxist language, the goal is the dictatorship of the proletariat. In Mexico, the Zapatistas turn to “the strength of Civil Society that so perturbs government

⁷⁰ Saramago, José, “Foreward: Chiapas, a Name of Pain and Hope” *Our Word Is Our Weapon*. Ed. Juana Ponce de León (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001) xix-xxii, xxii.

⁷¹ Rochlin 186

⁷² Marx, Karl. *Theses on Feuerbach, The Marx-Engels Reader* Robert C. Tucker Ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1972) 143-145, 144.

leaders...gives us hope that it's possible to rebuild the country.”⁷³ In this letter, the General Command of the EZLN sets Civil Society opposed to Power as the two Mexicos in conflict with one another and compares them to life and death, construction and destruction respectively. The EZLN has structured itself as an example of how civil society can rule by framing traditional leadership roles as roles of service. The General Command takes orders from the *pueblo*⁷⁴. Where other revolutions have sought to impose a certain ideology on a nation, the goal of the Zapatista revolution is “reconstruction, justice, and life, with peace everywhere for everyone, with dialogue as a way that makes its own way and from which springs hope, with reason and heart as its driving force.”⁷⁵ Marcos further explains this goal in an interview saying that the difference between the guerilla movements of the fifties, sixties and seventies and the Zapatista movement is that instead of trying to destroy a system with war in order to put a new system in place, “war should only be to open up space in the political arena so that the people can really have a choice...we want to create the political space, and we want the people to have the education and the political maturity to make good choices.”⁷⁶ This is why the Zapatistas cannot be classified as Marxists, or Leninists, or Trotskyists, or Guevarists, or even as post-modern revolutionaries: because it is nothing other than Zapatista.

The quality of the Zapatista movement that inspires the most hope is that it has avoided the revolutionary impatience that has been so characteristic of failed attempts of

⁷³ General Command of the EZLN, “Civil Society That So Perturbs” Our Word Is Our Weapon. Ed. Juana Ponce de León (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001) 128-132, 129

⁷⁴ Literally, the “town” but used here to refer to the “people”

⁷⁵ General, “Civil Society” 130

⁷⁶ Benjamin, Medea, “Interview: Subcomandante Marcos” First World, Ha Ha Ha! Elaine Katzenberger Ed. (San Francisco: City Lights, 2005) 57-70, 61

revolutionaries to surpass capitalism and accelerate into a new and better future. In the years immediately following the January 1, 1994 uprising, the EZLN received a lot of press and attention on a national and international level. The Mexican Army and government agreed to and participated in peace talks that made some progress toward the Zapatista dream. The Zapatistas achieved surprising levels of fame and Subcomandante Marcos in particular became an internationally recognizable figure as everything from a second Emiliano Zapata to a sex symbol in Mexican popular culture. It would have been easy for the Zapatistas to settle for benefits offered to them by the government but instead they have waited, patiently and steadily. They are ready and prepared to use force but inclined first to use words and diplomacy. The EZLN may not enjoy the same publicity and popularity that it did in its early days, but it still continues in constant struggle to obtain the rights that it has demanded from the beginning. In one of the children's stories that Marcos writes, he is asked, "When is this war going to be over?" and Marcos responds, "Not soon."⁷⁷ This dedication, perhaps from an indigenous tradition of viewing time as cyclical, to their purpose inspires hope for the future of the EZLN, the impoverished throughout Mexico, and even all the disenfranchised peoples of the world.

⁷⁷ Ross, John. "Who Are They, What Do They Want?" *First World, Ha Ha Ha!* Elain Katzenberger Ed. (San Francisco: City Lights, 1995) 81-88, 86.

Looking Forward or Backward?

An interesting similarity between the novel *Don Quixote* and the EZLN movement is that they have both been called “firsts” by critics. *Don Quixote* is commonly viewed as the first modern novel while the EZLN often receives the title of the first postmodern revolution. Both of these labels imply that as the firsts they have fresh ideas, are doing something new and different, and are looking forward as opposed to copying what has already been done. However, as we have seen, both Don Quixote and the Zapatistas look back to the past for guidance and direction. Don Quixote wishes to return to the Golden Age where there was “no ‘mine’ or ‘yours’ ...all was peace, friendship, and concordance.” While this is undoubtedly an idealized version of a past age in which injustice certainly still existed, Don Quixote’s eyes are firmly set on the past. At the same time, the Zapatistas are very clear about their desire to create a new political space in which the people of Mexico can democratically decide and shape their future which is a very forward thinking concept. Yet this vision for the future is largely based on looking backward to Western thought such as *Don Quixote* and Liberation Theology as well as to indigenous traditions that emphasize cyclical time. To what extent does the past augment or hinder visions of the future?

Conclusion

Regardless of the past’s influence on the hopeful vision of the future, the vision is still vulnerable to criticism. The theory that people are the masters of their own destinies and that they have a certain power to construct a better life for themselves at first seems empowering. However, it can also be viewed similarly to how Marx describes religion as the opium of the people. Marx’s famous quote, “Religious suffering is... the expression

of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people,” could feasibly be rewritten by replacing the word “religion” with the “hope” and “religious” with “hopeful” and retain the same meaning.⁷⁸ The idea is to give the oppressed hope or religion and it will divert their energy and give them a sense of purpose without actually changing their situation. This idea, however, is based upon the assumption that hope pacifies and immobilizes rather than stimulating and encouraging dynamic action.

Ultimately, idealistic hope is essential to realizing real change in the world. Hope is not synonymous with passivity or acceptance. Hope can be a catalyst to change, a motivator, and a source of strength when the task seems too daunting. *Don Quixote* and the Zapatistas certainly illuminate many of the horrendous and embarrassing traits of human societies, but they also provide a call to action and a whisper of encouragement. The power of hope is often unappreciated and is in danger of being forgotten in light of all of the oppression, pain and suffering in the world. For this reason it is important to continue on in the spirit of Don Quixote and the Zapatistas by using words as weapons and promulgating the hope in the ability of individuals to construct their world.

⁷⁸ Marx, Karl, “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction,” The Marx-Engels Reader, Robert C. Tucker Ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978:53-65). 54

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