Quixotic Storytelling, *Lost in La Mancha*, and the Unmaking of *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*

Sidney Donnell

What could be more quixotically modern than a movie about the making of a film version of *Don Quijote de La Mancha*, Miguel de Cervantes’s novel about stories and storytelling? One answer to this question is Keith Fulton and Louis Pepe’s *Lost in La Mancha* (2002), purportedly the first documentary in the history of cinema about the unmaking of a movie, Terry Gilliam’s *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*. My article presents a comparative discourse analysis of *Lost in La Mancha* and *Don Quijote de La Mancha* to investigate, in part, whether Fulton and Pepe’s documentary is generically the first of its kind. More important, I will argue that the distortion of reality and fiction in the lives of the subjects of *Lost* has a direct impact on its generic categorization and the unmaking of film itself.

Codirectors Fulton and Pepe’s postmodern activity—the self-conscious, metatheatrical act of documentary filmmaking—is very much in keeping with the blurring of discourse and genre in *Don Quijote*, which itself is a self-reflexive, metaliterary text.¹ There are primarily three discursive areas in which *Don Quijote* and *Lost in La Mancha* (*Lost*) overlap: intimacy with both literary and popular forms of discourse (that is, high and low cultural practices); reliance on perspectivist narrative techniques; and the objectification of their respective heroes’ forms of madness. Both *Lost* and its filmic object, the irreverently eccentric filmmaker Gilliam, are progeny of Cervantes’s novelistic legacy and part of the quixotic tradition of storytelling. The “unmaking” of a story can be used as a reading strategy for furthering the analysis of literary discourse and genre. The negation of a film genre—movies about the making of movies—is a way of interrogating quixotic storytelling’s relation to the many interruptions of its own narrative.²
Overview

The Man Who Killed Don Quixote (Killed) was conceived as a feature-length adaptation of Don Quijote. The project had been a long-time dream of Gilliam, a former Monty Python member who turned movie director in the mid-1970s. Many of his films deal with a male protagonist who suffers a major failure in life, experiences isolation and alienation (which are usually evident prior to failure), and undergoes an unconventional redemption.3 It should come, then, as little surprise that Fulton and Pepe capture Gilliam comparing himself with Don Quixote, thus implicitly casting him in the role of madman throughout their documentary. Like Cervantes’s titular hero, the protagonist of Lost gleefully and obliviously pursues what everyone else considers to be a doomed project, which at times appears to be less about the making of a movie than a reinvention of himself (a modern auteurist cinema director) in an uncomprehending, uncharitable world (a postmodern, transnational European Union). And like the author of Don Quijote, who often cruelly taunts the titular hero with the power of his pen, Fulton and Pepe probe the human subject of Lost with a handheld camera, suggestively revealing Gilliam to be an anachronism, an aging eccentric in a dystopia of his own making, not unlike some of the mad protagonists of his other feature films.4

In so doing, the directorial pair makes a highly perspectivist film about documentary and filmmaking in general. They also express—implicitly within Lost and explicitly in interviews about the movie—a self-critical, theoretical understanding of the inherent indeterminacy of meaning that occurs during the telling of a tale. Even if they were to wish otherwise, cinematic storytelling produces a distortion of real events and the truths associated with them.5

In like fashion, generic categorization of Don Quijote has long been open to critical debate, and Cervantes’s self-reflexivity and iconoclasm demonstrate his own interest in this very topic, especially as it relates to the reception of his novel.6 The hybridity of his literary creation—with its heterodiegetically interlaced genres—blurs conventional narrative boundaries, providing an almost idyllic discursive environment in which his mad hero can repetitively re-create himself.7 In a famous essay on the origins of the novel, Mikhail Bakhtin describes traditional genres as “permeated with laughter, irony, humor, elements of self-parody and finally—this is the most important thing—the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openness, a living contact with unfinished, still evolving contemporary reality” (7). Such observations have led to much intertextual (as well as intratextual) analysis and the reading of Cervantes’s experimental novel as a highly perspectivist tale in which narrative voices seek agency while their respective discourses compete for authority over each other.8 Film is well suited to this sort of dynamic, Lost in particular.9

The phrase unmaking of (which was used loosely to market Lost) derives from the generic name given to short documentaries—sometimes promotional in character—that appear on television near the debut of a highly publicized movie. A “making of” is finished once production of a feature film is complete and tends

to consist of interviews with the cast as well as previews of the movie. In some instances, longer documentaries have been constructed many years after the fact and turned into feature films in their own right.\textsuperscript{10}

Still, \textit{Lost}'s marketers deploy the phrase \textit{unmaking of} in a manner that fails to characterize the film convincingly for a critical audience. Perhaps Fulton and Pepe recognize an inconsistency in its use because they describe their documentary as “tragicomic,” thus placing it within the tradition of stage drama. Indeed, a spate of disturbingly funny documentaries has appeared in recent years, each fitting the generic categorization of “tragicomedy.”\textsuperscript{11} In addition, since most documentary filmmakers have small budgets, they—like Terry Zwigoff (dir. \textit{Crumb}, 1994)—tend to track the tragicomic lives of only a few individuals, resulting in narrowly focused, microcosmic representations of disillusionment and alienation.

On a technical level, Daniel Argent ascribes Fulton and Pepe to the Dogme 95 school of direct cinema, whose members use a handheld camera and techniques found in movies such as \textit{Start-up.com} (16).\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Lost} never confronts viewers with some of the antiestablishment radicalism associated with the Dogme 95 manifesto, but this is probably because its sympathetic subject is already so unconventional and nonconformist. Although “dogme” is French for “dogma,” it also can be understood in English as “dog me,” for, not unlike “man’s best friend,” the genre’s human subjects often forget they are being shadowed by a friendly cinematographer. The overall intent of the Danish filmmakers who authored the Dogme 95 manifesto was to lessen the distance between actor and spectator by never staging scenes; thus, a lightweight, handheld camera becomes indispensable for filming anywhere. Nevertheless, the subjects—no matter how consensual at first—sometimes remember they are being “dogged” or “hounded” by the camera. In Gilliam’s case, viewers may therefore wonder whether his haggard look is solely attributable to his doomed production.

Filmmaker George Stoney is another likely influence on Fulton and Pepe because of his impact on the documentary film profession. He always was frustrated with the moral rigidity with which cinema verité (or direct cinema) adhered to the notion of unmediated truth, as if its representation were transparent (Winston 81).\textsuperscript{13} His contribution to the field was actually a broadening of what had been considered acceptable practice in documentary filmmaking since the 1960s: “[I] f mediation truthfully illuminates the issue at hand, then the interventions necessary to get the image are justified by this enlightenment. The ‘contract with the audience’ is to provide understanding not to promise to avoid manipulation” (Winston 81). In the tradition of Stoney’s dynamic “contract,” Fulton and Pepe are stalwart in their commitment to the truthfulness of their documentary project and equally committed to creating the \textit{illusion} of an unmitigated line of communication between filmic object and audience. In practice, they—like Stoney—are unwilling to sacrifice the poetic devices of good storytelling to an overdetermined preoccupation with the veracity of minute details. In this sense, the directorial pair belongs to a less moralistic, more openly artistic school of cinema verité filmmakers.
Within this context of filmmakers who challenge the rigidity of generic categories, I consider the concept of “unmaking” and its possibilities as an interpretative strategy for understanding genre and narrative discourse. As applied to Fulton and Pepe’s representation of Gilliam’s film project, it would seem that *Killed* unravels on its own. However, in even its broadest theoretical sense, “unmaking” comes to mean “deconstruction.” Indeed, the codirectors of *Lost* tug at the loose narrative threads of *Killed*’s demise until they unravel; then, the codirectors reknit them to tell another story. In this light, “unmaking” can also refer to the discursive practices often relegated to “low” or popular culture and their discovery within the discourse of what is conventionally understood as “high” or elitist culture, thus radically dismantling or reconfiguring the same.

Film and novel overlap in many ways, and applying a narratological approach to each can help identify their discursive similarities and differences. “Unmaking” might be applied in a narratological context to describe at least two of Cervantes’s discursive strategies in his quixotic storytelling: the metanarrative and use of numerous voices. *Lost* also is told as a metanarrative that results in the postponement, interruption, and eventual suspension of what initially appears to be the film’s main diegesis (the making of *Killed*); however, the diegetic logic of this story is undone, that is to say, revealed as merely an imagined or imminent tale of the successful completion of Gilliam’s feature film. In addition, like the numerous voices present in *Don Quijote*, the voices of speakers and actors in *Lost* are either garrulous or silent. For instance, Gilliam seeks to reestablish his authority or legitimacy as director of a halted film project, but his agency is waylaid by the constantly shifting perspectives in *Lost*’s telling of his story. Multiple narrators, interviewees, and extra- or metadiegetic speakers compete to have their voices heard so as to establish the preeminence of their respective discourses. Gilliam is rendered speechless, a cinematic gesture that quietly calls attention to the silence often observed by documentary filmmakers throughout their movies. Does silence have a role in storytelling?

In the prologue to part 2 of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes announces that the titular hero will die by the end, but both Quixote’s voice and quixotic storytelling have survived through numerous literary and popular iterations over the past four hundred years. So, if Cervantes could not succeed in unmaking Quixote, isn’t it audacious of Gilliam to propose the same in *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*? Quixote’s assassin—according to Gilliam—could only come from the present, a modern-day being who unmakes or destroys all voices of the near and distant past that disrupt progress. Toward this end, *Lost’s* and *Don Quijote’s* respective discursive strategies have much in common. Both consist of a multitude of voices and the continuous, unmitigated unmaking—and miraculous remaking—of those voices. At its most extreme, “unmaking” is the very interruption of reason, a condition fearfully associated with madness. Quixote’s resuscitation of knighthood in the early modern era is considered insane because the anachronism interrupts his contemporaries’ discourse. However, it is sheer and utter folly to pretend to muzzle that which has the agency—through unre-
strained madness—to reconstitute and reconfigure itself. Cervantes and Gilliam (and Fulton and Pepe) coincide on this point: the voice of reason cannot exist without its mad, show-stopping other.

**Negotiating High and Low Culture: The Quixotic Business of Documentary Filmmaking**

Many traditional scholars and enthusiasts of Cervantes—including Hispanists—might take issue with (or simply dismiss) any attempt to compare and contrast a twenty-first-century English-language film with *Don Quijote*. Cervantes’s novel has been elevated to the realm of “high culture,” which is manifest in the laudatory designation of “masterpiece” to describe his work. But it should be remembered that the learned titular hero has his Sancho who, both on and off his donkey, is inferior in class standing as well as physically shorter in stature than Quixote; that is, *Don Quijote* also had its origins in “low culture.” The novel simultaneously takes stock of literature and orality, book learning and popular know-how. From beginning to end, Cervantes satirizes cultural practices that overly privilege certain forms of discourse and undervalue others. The many dialogues between the characters of *Don Quijote* teach by discursive example: high cannot exist without low, and sometimes distinguishing between the two is difficult.

Had Cervantes’s experimental novel not been a commercial success, there might not be much academic discussion about it today. The novelist, moreover, amusingly and unashamedly promotes himself in the pages of his work through conversations between fictional characters. Readers learn about the anticipated sequel to *La Galatea*, which was penned by the priest’s “great friend” Miguel de Cervantes (1: 6), or about the runaway success of *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* within weeks of Quixote and Sancho’s return home in the first novel (2: 2-3). Although classroom peddlers of high culture commonly claim that Cervantes’s work is the first modern novel, teachers and scholars often forget the reflexivity of Cervantine self-interrogation.

In *Lost*, Fulton and Pepe want to tell a good story, but they also factor marketability in its telling. They wanted to make a feature-length film, yet the format they began with was a short, hour-long promotional documentary about the making of Gilliam’s movie. Their original intent was sufficiently transparent before Gilliam began shooting: they wanted to make a sixty-minute show to air on television near the debut of *Killed*. At the very least, the work would appear as bonus material once Gilliam’s film was released on DVD. Although their project depended entirely on completion and commercial distribution of Gilliam’s film, their anticipated scenario was realistic. Fulton and Pepe launched a similar film project (*The Hamster Factor and Other Tales of the Twelve Monkeys*) documenting the production of *12 Monkeys* (1995), which Gilliam shot in Philadelphia in 1994. So, the two already had a history of telling stories about successful films, but were they now in the business of documenting and telling the tale of a film production’s collapse?
The codirectors explain on *Lost in La Mancha: Bonus Disc* (part of a DVD set) that they and producer Lucy Darwin had to come to a decision about what to do with their project even as Gilliam’s screeched to a halt. Apart from ethical issues in documenting what had become the implosion of *Killed*, there is no market for a sixty-minute film about a movie that has been neither completed nor commercially distributed. They also would need to seek permission again from interviewees because the theme had turned abruptly from success to failure. Yet, the partners, with Gilliam’s encouragement, decided to continue. Thus began a very different project, one belonging to a relatively unexplored subgenre. The codirectors and their producer reasoned that the subject of a documentary about the unmaking of another movie would have to stand alone as a feature-length film to attract viewers.

Suddenly, Fulton and Pepe had to tell a very different kind of story. They opted for a misleading yet truthful format whose diegetic logic initially convinces viewers that Gilliam’s film already is made. For instance, the extradiegetic use of original music by Miriam Cutler (formerly of the women’s pop group Oingo Boingo) sets the tone of the main story in many scenes. The music—part of the dramatic language of feature films—is so compelling that even if spectators know *Killed* was never completed, they want to believe there will be a satisfactory outcome during the screening. In another example, *Lost*’s, codirectors make much of the moment when *Killed*’s troubled director and crew are heartened to see a reified version of what they imagine Quixote to be. While admiring Jean Rochefort, who plays Quixote, in his appropriately mismatched pieces of armor, Gilliam proclaims, “I think Don Quixote slowly becomes real.”

After trial and error and showing *Lost* to focus groups, then completely reediting it, the codirectors developed a convincing story and paired it with a narrative structure that manipulates the expectations of viewers already familiar with the conventions of the “making of” documentary format. According to Pepe, “We talked about this in editing. This film doesn’t have a happy ending, so let’s look at the model of a Shakespearean tragedy. Everybody who goes to see *Romeo and Juliet* knows the lovers are going to die at the end. You have to somehow get your audience to suspend what they know and think, ‘Maybe this time they’ll be able to get together’” (qtd. in Argent 16). Similarly, Cervantes states in his prologue that Quixote will die by the end of the second novel (he wanted, in part, to avoid unauthorized sequels based on the success of the first novel). Nevertheless, his readers wish Quixote’s fate is otherwise and even forget about his inevitable demise while following him from adventure to adventure. During a *Bonus Disc* interview, Fulton spoke of the discursive practices of *Lost*: “[The documentary] takes [Gilliam’s] failure and makes you sympathize with what he went through, which is what’s dramatically satisfying about the film.”

Certainly, marketing has a direct influence on shaping the content and discursive practices of *Lost*. Like professors of Spanish literature who argue that *Don Quijote* is the first modern novel, frequent publicity for *Lost* claims that the film is probably the only “unmaking of” documentary in cinema history—a state-
ment the codirectors, for their part, never disavow. More important, the codirectors assume—tho
ough somewhat tentatively at first—directorship of a salvage project of the beginnings of a
vibrant film under the command of another. With Gilliam’s full consent, Fulton and Pepe
document the film that might have been. Like Quixote, who toward the end of his story has to
sacrifice his knighthood yet wants to find a way to continue to sing Dulcinea’s praises, Gilliam is
willing to make sacrifices and admit failure. For his filmic version of Don Quijote to survive in
some small way, Lost must become a commercial success in its own right.

Of Goats and Gallows Humor: Perspectivism and Narrative Discourse
The indeterminacy of Cervantes’s perspectivist approach lends itself to appropriation. In addition
to a thousand-and-one direct literary adaptations, there are undoubtedly thousands more that
echo Don Quijote’s structure without making direct reference to it. Literary critics sometimes
find it difficult to pinpoint the exact source of what is often a disturbingly quixotic resonance.
Fulton and Pepe’s story of a failed film production is a truthful documentary, but it is somewhat
deceptively so in terms of its discursive practices. Lost is a film about the unmaking of Gilliam’s
movie, and it is inextricably linked to both the story he wanted to tell and the way he wanted to
tell it. My argument is that even though Fulton and Pepe never mention “quixotic storytelling,”
their documentary surprisingly exemplifies Cervantes’s narrative techniques of indeterminacy
and polyvocality.

The very title of Cervantes’s novel, El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de La Mancha, is
perplexing and requires interpretation about its author and subject. In early modern usage,
readers probably would wonder why “don” (a designation of knighthood or higher rank) appears
adjacent to “hidalgo” (a member of the lowest rung of the nobility). They might also ask who is
responsible for this irreverence. Has the author made a mistake? Is this Quixote fellow
overstepping his place in society? Similarly, the film title Lost in La Mancha suggests a
fragmented story about subjectivity and the quest to discover who, exactly, is lost. Is it Don
Quixote? Another protagonist? The codirectors? Their viewers? Fulton and Pepe remain mute on
this point; indeed, they are usually silent and always visually absent throughout the documentary.
They permit their voice as documentary filmmakers to be drowned out by a confluence of other
narrative voices, making it appear as if it is “lost in La Mancha.”

Although Fulton and Pepe faithfully document Gilliam’s real-life struggle to film an adaptation
of Cervantes’s fictional story, they rarely interrogate certain claims or opinions expressed by the
speakers in their movie. As a case in point, the directorial pair turns a purported similarity
between Gilliam and Quixote to their advantage because the comparison serves as a discursively
unifying motif throughout Lost. Certainly, Lost provides numerous instances of either Gilliam
likening himself or others likening him to Quixote, Cervantes’s mad hero. Rather than
attempting to prove or disprove the validity of their claim that Gilliam is a modern-day Don
Quixote, I view it as a discursive strategy in telling their story. There may be many
inconsistencies in comparing the two as characters, but there

Donnell, Sidney. 2006 Spring. “Quixotic Storytelling, Lost in La Mancha, and the Unmaking of The Man Who
Killed Don Quixote.” Romance Quarterly 53(2): 92-112. DOI: 10.3200/RQTR.53.2.92-112
are numerous commonalities in how each hero’s respective tale is told. Comparative analysis can show us the mechanics of narrative discourse as story (content) struggles with the structure of its telling (form).

Fulton and Pepe’s documentary parallels Don Quijote precisely because the thread of the tale they tell is entangled in those of so many others. Creating a story about Gilliam’s collapsed production requires them to grab at the threads of numerous tales and weave them into something new. Lost’s opening scenes offer a complete sample of the kinds of stories the directors tell and the types of narrative strategies they deploy throughout Lost. Using four rapid sequences spread over three-and-a-half minutes, Fulton and Pepe establish that several narrators will tell much of Gilliam’s story from several narrating positions, and that they as codirectors have taken artistic license to blur conventional narrative boundaries by constantly recasting Gilliam in multiple roles: as spectator, character, actor, first-person narrator, and storyboard artist. Curiously, the one role Gilliam is not shown playing here is film director.

At the beginning of Lost, the rapid succession of cuts is too fast-paced for a viewer to comprehend completely (except on a deeply symbolic level). The first seventy seconds of film consist of more than two-dozen cuts of Gilliam watching a company of dancing demons. Then, over the next two-and-a-half minutes of highly stylized footage, the codirectors encode a complete grammar for understanding the heterodiegetic elements of the remainder of their documentary. The tale of Gilliam’s failed production is the main story, yet fragments of the story he wanted to tell (Killed) also are included. Additionally, both the main story (the unmaking of) and the story-within-a-story (scenes from Killed) are embedded within Fulton and Pepe’s self-reflexive tale about narrative projects and filmmaking in general. The opening sequences alone vividly recall Cervantes’s creative deployment of two dynamic forms of storytelling: (1) a frame tale, which explains how a “second author” found the necessary written sources to relate the “true story” of Don Quijote; and (2) numerous interpolated texts, which in the Don Quijote of 1605, for example, recount several amorous tales of adventure or unrequited love.

Thus, metafictional storytelling appears frequently in Lost. In addition to animated sequences of storyboards from Killed (which are introduced almost immediately and maintained throughout much of the documentary), viewers are confronted with a rich variety of other kinds of interpolated filmic texts. Shortly after the introductory credits a simple story about Don Quixote is narrated by Gilliam’s scriptwriter Toni Grisoni and animated by Stefan Avalos from familiar etchings of quixotic scenes by Gustave Doré. Moments later, principal narrator Jeff Bridges tells us about another famous director’s failed attempt to bring Don Quijote to screen. He introduces the “curse of Don Quixote” while narrating scenes from Don Quijote de Orson Welles (1992), a montage of black-and-white archival footage from Welles’s doomed production. In contrast with the blurring of the boundaries between diegetic levels that takes place with the animated storyboards, the scenes are placed discursively between the filmic equivalent of quo-
tation marks. Fulton and Pepe set even firmer boundaries between the main diegesis and metanarrative when they present a short movie within their movie, complete with title credits to mark the shift. Chiam Bianco animates many Gilliamesque images for this “Terry Gilliam’s Picture Show,” a brief history of the director’s career, with voice-over narration by Bridges. Despite having established clear narrative markers in the above interpolated instances, Fulton and Pepe return to a fast-paced blurring of boundaries, recalling the film’s opening sequences. They frequently cross-fade their documentary footage of Gilliam’s company shooting a scene (for example, of actor Johnny Depp playing “Toby,” a modern-day man forced into the role of Sancho) to edited footage in the corresponding scene from *Killed*.

There are other discursively quixotic similarities that result in perspectivism. As a case in point, in *Don Quijote* Cervantes takes some very curious steps toward distancing himself from the story, calling himself its “padrastro” (“stepfather”) in the prologue to the first novel. He then carefully constructs a framing tale in which a “segundo autor” (“second author”) refers to the anonymous chronicles of La Mancha as the principal source for his story about the legendary knight. This unnamed second author relies on Cide Hamete Benengeli’s *Historia de don Quijote de la Mancha* to finish his own “historia verdadera” (“true story”).

Even though Cervantes inscribes multiple authors into his novel, the gesture creates little doubt in the minds of readers about whether or not they are reading fiction. They are too close to the narrators and characters to be fooled completely by this conceit. It leads them to conclude that for Cervantes a story is always a story: unless a reader is well informed, it is often difficult to distinguish between fact, fiction, or hoax. Ultimately, the readers have to ask themselves if what they are reading is sufficiently convincing—verisimilar—to continue reading.

Questions of authority and verisimilitude are integral parts of a perspectivist strategy. In *Lost*, the interviewer (Fulton) is never visible during numerous interviews with Gilliam and members of his company; with a few exceptions in which the interviewer’s question is heard to contextualize the respondent’s answer—the editors render the grand inquisitor mute. In contrast, an abundance of extradiegetic narrators offers authoritative voice-over commentary and explanation about Gilliam and his production. Also, again, Gilliam is never shown as director. For example, he and screenwriter Grisoni appear as actors while a man off-camera directs them to read lines from *Killed*, and Grisoni stumbles over the words of the story they wrote together. *Killed*’s director wields little control over his actions or those of others.

This crisis (or lack) of agency also appears to extend to the invisible, voiceless codirectors of *Lost*. Their absence suggests their discomfort with potentially occupying a dominant subject position over Gilliam when the making of *Killed* shifts from success to failure. Gilliam’s “victory” (the film’s completion) means that they can be mostly passive observers—like Sancho early in *Don Quijote*, who generally tags along and allows his master to tell his own success story. Gilliam’s defeat, however, implies that Fulton and Pepe have greater authority because they have

---

to interpret footage and tell why it occurs. If the unraveling of Killed was solely because of the loss of financial backing, then there would not be much story to tell. Producers and investors would bear the sole blame. To the contrary, Fulton and Pepe’s polyvocal tale allows them to contemplate the challenges of filmmaking in general, document another’s failed film project in particular, and subtly reflect on their responsibilities as codirectors of their film.

Fulton narrated the pair’s earlier “making of” documentary, The Hamster Factor. The potential for greater commercial distribution was the most likely main reason for his ceding the role of principal narrator to Bridges in Lost. Although his interventions are sparingly placed (mostly used to segue into a new sequence), Bridges’s unnamed (though recognizably famous) voice invokes a reassuring, omniscient narrative presence. He is the audience’s muse, guiding them toward an enlightened present that only he occupies. Because Fulton and Pepe refuse to divulge the unhappy ending at the start of their tale, viewers are allowed to believe that the hero has prevailed over adversity, come to a reckoning with his failings, and attained his lifelong dream of making a film version of Don Quijote. But where are Fulton and Pepe? Why is neither visible interviewing the actors of their film? The answer, it would seem, is that directors are often farther behind the scenes than most spectators realize. They have the power to end their tales in mid sentence, but they do not have complete control over the successful completion of that utterance. Similar to Don Quijote’s scene of Maese Pedro and his puppets (2: 25-27), it is difficult to know who is running the show: the puppeteer, the puppets (who experience technical difficulties beyond the view of the puppeteer), the narrator (who often digresses from the story), or the spectators (who, like Don Quixote, can intervene). As suggested during Lost’s opening, Gilliam is like Quixote, serving as spectator, actor, narrator, author, and sometimes director. His interventions can be creative or destructive, like Quixote’s when he attacks the puppets because he wants their story to take a different direction. Gilliam has the authority to start or stop the show since he knows more about the story than the narrator (Bridges) and perhaps as much as its silent puppeteers (Fulton and “Maese” Pepe).

Whether fictive, factual, or something in between, storytelling requires skill and ingenuity. Cervantes repeatedly draws attention to the art of narrative and its imbrications with discursive and literary traditions, as well as with the personal preferences and choices of the storytellers. For instance, when Sancho tells a story about a goatherd who takes his animals across a stream, he asks his listener Quixote to assist with narration by keeping count of each goat arriving on the opposite bank. From Sancho’s perspective, a successful narrative act depends on knowing precise details such as how many goats and river crossings have been discussed. From Don Quixote’s and the readers’ perspective, such a requirement is absurd, and Quixote protests (1: 20). The ensuing conflict between the two men, in which each defends his belief about appropriate narrative technique, reveals the underpinnings of audience expectations and storytelling skills. Quixote tries to convince his sidekick that listeners expect storytellers to cut out unnecessary
details because they understand that the entire herd crosses the stream without hearing of each goat actually doing so. Similarly, Fulton and Pepe edit down numerous hours of footage to create a ninety-minute movie that, they hope, will hold viewers’ attention. And, like Don Quijote, theirs is a narrative that draws attention to itself and the art of narration.

In interviews appearing in both the Bonus Disc and print media, the codirectors discuss the challenges of telling a story about filmmaking. Somewhat surprisingly, in general, documentary filmmakers struggle with maintaining the verisimilitude of much simpler “true” stories than the one told in Lost. As interviewer Daniel Argent explains, “Fulton and Pepe cut many moments of gallows humor that in the end, while real, were overburdened with foreshadowing” (17).

Because they tell much of the story chronologically (starting with Killed’s preproduction), they do little in the first half hour to disabuse viewers of the notion that—in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds and adversity—Gilliam makes his movie. Those who know about the failed production are willing to suspend disbelief while viewing Lost because Gilliam and friends appear so likeable that we want them to succeed. Those who are unfamiliar with Killed’s fate have doubts and might ask themselves, “Why don’t I know about this film? Did I miss it?” If spectators, however, were to answer their own queries, the response might be, “Oh, it was just an art film. That’s why I didn’t hear about it.” In other words, the verisimilitude of Fulton and Pepe’s tale is inextricably linked to many viewers’ lack of familiarity with the oeuvre of Gilliam. The directorial pair is very purposeful in their narrative project. They know their audience and leave little to chance.

What’s Eating Terry Gilliam? Discourse, Madness, and Exploitation of the Filmic Object

“He’s insane!” exclaims actor Johnny Depp. This reference to Gilliam is one of the first utterances Depp makes during a Bonus Disc interview. In a separate Bonus Disc interview, Gilliam confesses his narcissism in asking Fulton and Pepe to film him. However, when comparing himself to Cervantes’s demented hero, he says, “Unlike Quixote I have to deal with reality [. . .]. Like Quixote I’m driven by my unwillingness to accept the banal world that we live in.” Indeed, their mental states are very different. For Gilliam, any potential insanity is part of his quixotic garb, disguising creative genius, not dementia. Like Cervantes, he is more mischievous storyteller than madman. Thus, his self-comparison to Quixote is self-promotion on Gilliam’s part; his purported madness is most likely “film hype” on Depp’s. But for Fulton and Pepe, the construction of Gilliam as an insanely quixotic filmmaker becomes a discursive strategy, bridging what would otherwise result in enormous leaps between subject positions, perspectives, and diegetic levels.

Gilliam’s behavior in Lost is often quixotically absurd, but he never appears delusional, in contrast to Quixote, who is described as such from the outset of Cervantes’s novel. For Fulton and Pepe, Gilliam’s madness is part of his creative genius, which is always on the verge of brilliant success or utter failure in the

financially fragile medium of filmmaking. For Quixote’s part, delusion leads to the impossibility of failure, or rather, the inevitability of failure brings about Don Quixote’s inexorable success. To the contrary, through cameraman Pepe’s lens, Gilliam’s emotions transition from (1) narcissistic giddiness at the prospect of succeeding through an almost superhuman ability to overcome adversity, (2) paranoiac desperation as disaster strikes and colleagues begin to abandon the project, and (3) anguish and depression once he acknowledges failure. Stated simply, Gilliam experiences success as joy and failure as sorrow; he is not as mad as Quixote who turns almost everything, especially defeat, into victory.

There are, nevertheless, significant similarities between the story of Gilliam’s failed film production and the tale told in Cervantes’s novel. Not unlike Quixote who loses control of the story of Dulcinea early in the second novel, Gilliam is left to confront the failure of his own narrative project. However, during the last sequences of the documentary, Gilliam’s emotional response to defeat is figuratively much more like Sancho Panza’s fall into “a deep dark hole” after resigning his governorship (2: 55) than Quixote’s willful descent into the Cave of Montesinos (2: 22-24). There, the knight dreams of a plan to regain control of the myth of Dulcinea after learning of her enchantment by a malevolent supernatural force. So, perhaps Gilliam is somewhat miscast (or miscasts himself) in the role of Quixote because, like Sancho, he can be disabused of his madness, which also may be read as a ruse that hides the way in which acceptance of the delusion allows Sancho to control the story. Sancho’s madness also helps me to describe Fulton and Pepe’s conceit in portraying Gilliam (and allowing him to portray himself) as quixotically mad. The neurotic obsession with making a film adaptation of Don Quijote is, in some respects, Gilliam’s Dulcinea, whose story is now told by a pair of colleagues.19

Truth be told, Fulton and Pepe are reputable in their field and professional in their telling of Gilliam’s story. Like many of today’s documentary filmmakers, they recognize that objectification is an unavoidable necessity of their trade, but they also strive not to exploit their human subjects. In this way, the codirectors are sensitive to the impact that recording words and images may have on the subjects themselves.20 Yet, Fulton and Pepe are not afraid to stylize their truthful rendering of events to offer viewers an aesthetically pleasing film. Had they failed, viewers could have termed this discursive strategy “madness” since many mistake filmic transparency for truth and artistic ambiguity for fantasy.

Nonetheless, Fulton and Pepe achieve interesting results through the appropriation of dreamlike, nightmarish, or seemingly hallucinatory devices found in many of Gilliam’s best-known films. For such work, Gilliam has received both critical acclaim and scholarly attention. Cássio Tolpolar discusses Gilliam’s roots, likening Monty Python’s The Meaning of Life (1983) — specifically codirector Gilliam’s treatment of nonconformity—to Luis Buñuel’s Le fantôme de la liberté (1974). Such a comparison also invites academic scrutiny of Lost because its dreamlike qualities have certain similarities with surrealist practices found in the auteurist cinema of directors like Buñuel. Lost’s numerous cartoon sequences take
full advantage of Gilliam’s career as an animator of many of his own movies and of television’s madcap comedy series *Monty Python’s Flying Circus* (1969-74). Fulton and Pepe base the “Terry Gilliam’s Picture Show” sequence on grotesque images inspired by *Flying Circus*. They also use similarly absurdist illustrations at strategic moments to transition from one realist documentary scene into another, a device inspired by Gilliam’s segues in *Flying Circus*.21 The Gilliamesque animation offers viewers comic relief from what is otherwise a realist documentary that dissects the misery of failure.

Such oneiric transitions are “smoothly” executed, but, by the documentary’s unhappy conclusion, the constant interruption of the main diegesis can leave viewers with the sense of having experienced a bad dream. In quite the reverse, one of the problems Cervantes explicitly addresses in the opening chapters of his sequel is the jarring disconnectedness of the first novel because of what many readers perceived as a lack of transition into and, at times, the irrelevance of many of the interpolated texts. Cervantes’s second novel is much more seamless in this respect; however, an ostensibly abrupt lack of segue into sanity in the final chapter—when Don Quixote falls asleep and awakens as a moribund Alonso Quijano—shocks readers as well as the protagonist’s friends and family (2: 74). The valiant knight is suddenly a mediocre man on his deathbed, ready to make his final confession. Having suspended disbelief for two long novels, readers are startled by reality as if awakened from a deep sleep.

Fulton and Pepe take an enormous risk in adopting a similarly disjointed discursive strategy because it produces an indeterminacy of meaning associated with dreams, reveries, and psychotic breaks with reason, not documentary film. In this context, *Lost* is unavoidably reminiscent of a relatively unexplored and highly controversial subgenre, surrealist documentary. The strategy appears incongruent with statements the codirectors make during their respective interviews on the *Bonus Disc*; each expresses discomfort with exactly the type of voyeuristic viewing position that surrealists embraced, a theme I have discussed elsewhere when dealing with the Cervantine tradition and the neobaroque in Buñuel’s cinema (see Donnell).22 Documentary film has advanced enormously in technique and credibility, but no matter how gently Fulton and Pepe appear to hold the camera, they are probing what eventually becomes another’s demise for our viewing “pleasure.” Their documentary is about the unmaking not only of Gilliam’s movie but also of the man himself, and it is painful to watch as he unravels emotionally near the end of the film. Though self-consciously apologetic, they cannot avoid assuming an authorial role in objectifying Gillian’s “madness” to tell the tale. This implicates—if not indictst—both filmmakers and spectators in a voyeuristic action of paying to see another human being’s misery.

At this point, I would like to return briefly to *Lost*’s opening seventy seconds of sights and sounds. Its juxtaposition of shots of a troupe of demonic dancers and Gilliam watching and occasionally filming them with a small handheld camera establishes an oneiric filmic language denoting madness. During a profile shot of Gilliam, a man’s arm suddenly sweeps across the field of vision. As the arm
gestures, someone shouts in Spanglish, “And acción!” Again, dancers and flames appear on screen, but they are becoming increasingly more frenetic. At the same time, as if by the speaker’s command, suspenseful extradiegetic music begins, faintly at first, and then building during the following shots. When Gilliam and the dancers finally appear in the same frame, the sound of live performance decreases, and an unidentified feminine voice begins to narrate, “As long as I can remember [. . .].” This voice-over narrator cedes to another, who in turn cedes her place to a third, masculine voice. All the while, the extradiegetic music intensifies as more devils appear on screen. As the third narrator finishes speaking, the fireworks, flames, and smoke find a crescendo. Then, the nightmarish scenes fade to the next sequence.

This is not a conventional cinema verité documentary, limited by a desire for transparency. During Lost’s opening, the audience immediately is confronted with nightmarish laughter and a full-body shot of a demon dancing on what appears to be a stage. Though consistent with an ethnographer’s use of cinema verité techniques to film “the natives dancing,” the scene—at first glance—appears alarmingly incongruent with current trends in documentary filmmaking. To stage an event solely for the benefit of the film camera is a violation of the tenets of ethnographic research and the attempt to document only true-to-life encounters with human subjects. When Gilliam and other spectators come into view, and finally when a few extradiegetic narrators offer voice-overs about Gilliam as a filmmaker, we come to realize that the story is about the spectator in the audience. In other words, the dancers have little to do with the main story because they are probably actors in a scene from Killed. Although the first impression is that of the worst kind of documentary filmmaking—which exploits and exoticizes its filmic objects—this devilish opening appears to be a symbolic introduction to a director in a cinematic hell of his own making.

One of the West’s best-known depictions of the suspension of reason—and the fear of madness—is Goya’s late eighteenth-century etching “El sueño de la razón produce monstruos” (“The Dream of Reason Produces Monsters”). Although appearing late in the documentary, the actual images of Gilliam’s anguish suggest a similar solitary figure overcome by hallucinatory demons. Defeat and bereavement are suggested by his expression as he watches unedited footage of a scene from his halted production. The scene would be almost meaningless if not for the richly layered stories that the filmmakers have provided. Gilliam is speechless, and the viewers cannot hear what he is thinking. But they easily can imagine his mental state to be occupied by demons and other grotesquely distorted figures courtesy of the film’s opening and Lost’s numerous animated sequences. During the opening sequence, what he is saying is drowned in the noise of live performance, voice-over narration, and extradiegetic music. Also, Fulton and Pepe set up this climax through others’ repetitive claims that Gilliam is mad.

At first Gilliam denies what almost everyone surrounding him has accepted: his dream project has not simply been temporarily postponed; it has failed. Fulton and Pepe, in turn, impose a nightmarish aesthetic on him while telling the story.
of the unmaking of his film. In terms of discursive practice, they have thoroughly prepared
viewers to project inferiority (what they assume Gilliam is thinking or feeling) on his facial
expressions through the many previous interruptions of the main diegesis, that is to say, the
unmaking or postponement of an imagined story about the completion of his film project. The
numerous impediments to telling a conventional “making of” success story are constructed from
artistic images of tales that would appear to concern and worry Gilliam such as animated
illustrations of Quixote’s demise inspired by Doré’s etchings and scenes from Welles’s
incomplete film. Other obstacles to Lost’s happy ending are a product of Gilliam’s own creations,
which have now come back to haunt him: the few finished scenes from Killed, animated
storyboards based on his illustrations, cartoon stories about the director’s career, and Lost’s
dreamlike beginning.

As a climax, footage of Gilliam’s silence is perplexing. Some might say that the story has
reached a discursive void because of generic limitations since drama and cinema only can point
toward such conclusions. In contrast, Cervantes’s second novel tells of the emotional holes into
which its protagonists have fallen. But, we cannot really know what Gilliam (or Quixote) is
thinking. In this regard, what is interesting about Lost and Don Quijote is not their respective
plots, nor their “lessons,” but the polyphony and constant unmaking of voices in the telling. This
set of practices, as it were, makes Don Quijote the first modern novel only if it is also the last. I
would not go so far as to make a similar claim about a ninety-minute documentary film, but I do
find the discursive issues Lost raises quixotically satisfying.

To understand the codirectors’ utilization of narrative ruptures in Lost as a discursive device
(represented by its protagonist’s pregnant silence), we do not have to look much farther than
Gilliam’s source of inspiration. Quixote’s mere presence is a maddening interruption to every
reasoned discourse the character encounters, and in this sense, reason is precisely that faculty
that cannot tolerate interruption. We laugh at Quixote, particularly when one of Cervantes’s
intrusive narrators mocks him cruelly. But the hero fights back, attempting to make his way
through the treacherous discursive terrain of the novel. We are surprised when Quixote’s exploits
reveal the inanity in others that we might otherwise have thought reasonable. We also have
sympathy for him, especially when those who are allegedly sane attempt to exploit his insanity
for their own amusement. In Gilliam’s case, Fulton and Pepe have exploited his purported
madness and genuine emotional anguish to tell a story, but their tale is also self-reflexive about
the role of objectification in filmmaking. When viewing Gilliam’s silence at the climax, we
imagine feelings caused by alienation and extreme loss. Few viewers would question this
projection as a truthful representation of emotion and mental confusion, but it is nevertheless a
construction on our parts, shaped by the filmmakers’ thorough objectification of Gilliam.

Conclusion and Epilogue: “Coming to a Theater Near You”
As we saw in my reading of the nightmarish opening sequence of Lost, director Gilliam cannot
be heard over the deafening din of fire-breathing demons. Also, its
climax consists of close-up shots of a speechless Gilliam morosely watching what may be the last footage he will ever shoot of The Man Who Killed Don Quixote. In Lost’s closing sequence, he is silent once again, drawing a cartoon titled “The Windmills of Reality Fight Back!” As his illustration takes form, we view Quixote fleeing a windmill that flies like a helicopter gunship, but the valiant knight’s retreat is futile. A bullet has just pierced his armor, and in the background we see that Rocinante has already been shot dead. Then the scene fades to final credits.

So is this the end? Has a documentary about the unmaking of Gilliam’s feature-film adaptation of Don Quijote utterly obliterated his authorial voice? To the contrary, as Lost’s final production credits conclude, three giants storm the screen. In a single take, they attack the viewing position of the audience. As they stare down on us, a superimposed phrase suddenly appears: “Coming to a Theater Near You.” The image fades to black, and we hear Gilliam’s familiarly cartoonish laughter, which we recognize because it has been repeated throughout Lost. I interpret the three giants as an oddly familiar combination of the quixotic narrative strategies discussed in my article: the confluence of discourses associated with both high and low culture; abrupt shifts in levels of narration and the subject positions of both speakers and spectators, which result in a blurring of fact with fiction; and the objectification of madness as a means of interrupting meaningful utterances, which renders reasoned discourse futile.

Earlier in Lost, Gilliam suggested using the giant sequence as a promotional trailer for Killed. It is one of the few samples of edited footage. Thus, “high” culture’s seventeenth-century story of Don Quijote merges with “low” culture’s modern-day movie preview. The scene itself is the auteurist filmmaker’s interpretation of Quixote’s distorted view of reality because it translates a story told through novelistic discourse to a more pop culture, movie-going audience. Instead of seeing windmills, we see what Quixote sees: giants.

This, of course, is an abrupt shift in perspective as it relates to discourse and subjectivity. In contrast to the opening scenes when we focused on Gilliam as spectator—not director—of dozens of choreographed monsters, these final filmic ones have magically transformed and are now bullying the implied filmic objects, that is, members of the viewing audience. Giants have broken free from Fulton and Pepe’s control and now occupy a position “outside” the documentary, towering over us. But appearances can be deceiving. We viewed Gilliam earlier in the documentary shooting test footage with his handheld camera. By shooting from the ground, a camera angle can make short, overweight, shirtless actors look like giants. Still, it is disconcerting for the audience to be unexpectedly confronted with written evidence that Gilliam’s film exists and is “coming soon.” Didn’t we just spend ninety minutes and the price of admission to see the first documentary in cinema history about the unmaking of another movie? Gilliam, of course, never completed his feature film, but Fulton and Pepe presented us with a discursive conundrum appropriate to Don Quijote. For a brief instance we wonder if their story is fact or fiction. While we hope that Gilliam will attain his dream and make his movie, we doubt the veracity of what we have just read and seen.
Lost’s final credits signal to viewers that the movie is over and it is time to leave the cinema. For those who have not already departed, the sudden appearance of Quixote’s imaginary giants—made real by Gilliam—subverts the extradiegetic logic of placing film credits at the end. One might laughingly exclaim, “This is madness! I’m being held captive by a movie that won’t begin!” Then the scene fades to black, and we hear the signatory cackle of the quixotic film director literally having the last laugh. The windmills of reality may have silenced the story of Gilliam’s attempt to make a film adaptation of Don Quijote, but the reification of giants—not windmills—offers visual evidence that his voice has not been totally undone. In fact and deed, his signatory cackle is still audible at the very end. It is my contention, then, that Fulton, Pepe, and their filmic object Gilliam convey the following Cervantine message to their audience: the sanest response to the interruption or postponement of reason is the voicing of uncontrolled laughter. This is what we do when quixotic madmen are lost in La Mancha.

Lafayette College

Notes

In addition to the editor, I would like to express my gratitude to Jeff Maskovsky, Rudy Gaudio, Beth Seetch, Steven Seidenberg, and Lisa Vollendorf for their invaluable assistance with this article. I would also like to thank Christopher Weiner and Barbara Simerka for allowing me to read their forthcoming article, “Subversive Paratexts: Don Quijote, Lost in La Mancha (2002), and Looking for Richard (1996).”

1 For discussions on cultural authority and postmodernity, as well as their respective connections to the early modern period, see essays in Brownlee and Gumbrecht.

2 Here I build on Carl Good’s psychoanalytic approach to interruptions in Don Quijote’s narrative. For other applications of psychoanalysis to Don Quijote with relevance to the general argument of my article, see Johnson; and El Saffar and de Armas Wilson.

3 Lost’s principal narrator, Jeff Bridges, also starred as a homeless former talk-radio host in Gilliam’s The Fisher King (1991), which, according to Angela Stukator, is based on the myth of Parsifal, the knight of the Round Table who was obsessed with the Holy Grail. Since Gilliam also codirected Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975), it can be claimed that he has a long, ironic obsession with reviving the days of chivalry.

4 For readings of Brazil (1985) as dystopia, consult Rushdie; Fister.

5 In the postmodern context of the present analysis, the registered trademark motto of Lost’s distributor, DocuRama, is inadvertently amusing: “Everything Else is Pure Fiction.” If this is true, and if all narrative—including a true story—has a fictive element, then documentary must be an impure fiction, distorted by the desire to offer a truthful rendering of the facts.

6 For a theoretical discussion on the role of the reader, see Eco; for response theory, consult Iser; for the reader’s role in Don Quijote, see Friedman.

7 For theoretical works on the subject of narratology, see Genette; Prince; for a history of the novel, see McKeon.

8 For an analysis of the relationship between narrative voice and authority, see Lanser. For exemplary works on the function of narrative discourse in Don Quijote de La Mancha, consult Mancing; Parr; Quint; and Cascardi. For an analysis of perspectivism and Don Quijote, see Spitzer; Flores. On Don Quijote’s relationship to the literary canon and criticism, see Forcione (91-130). For an overview of genre and Don Quijote, see Flores.

9 For an analysis of the function of narrative in film, see Chatman; Bordwell; Neupert; and Hernández Carmona. For an overview of film narrative and Don Quijote, see Hermosilla. See, also, Donnell, “Through the Looking Glass”; Burningham.

10 One such example is Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker’s Apocalypse (1991), Fax Bahr and George Hickenlooper’s documentary about the making of Apocalypse Now (1979). Film critic Howard Feinstein says that Lost is not alone in the category of documentaries about the unmaking of a major feature film; It’s All True (1993)
and Tigrero (1994) deal with Orson Welles’s and Sam Fuller’s respective directorial failures, but well after the facts. In contrast, the immediacy of Lost appears to make it unique because Fulton and Pepe spent months carefully documenting preproduction.

11 The predominant themes of the tragicomic documentary are disillusionment and alienation, and some deal specifically with mental illness. See Jonathan Berman’s My Friend Paul (on videocassette, Fanlight Productions, 1999), or Angela Christlieb and Stephen Kuak’s Cinemania (2001; on DVD, Wellspring Media, 2003).

12 For more on Dogme 95 (“Dogma 95”), see Geuens.

13 Stoney’s How the Myth Was Made (1978) is in keeping with the tenets of cinema verité, establishing how not to make a documentary. His film dissects Robert Flaherty’s staged documentary Man of Aran (1934), exposing Flaherty as having taken too many liberties with the truth.

14 According to Fulton, “When it seemed we would not be able to make a film anymore [. . .], it was important to believe that there was a story [. . .] worth telling” (qtd. in Argent 16).

15 Adam Dawtrey reports that Gilliam was not alone in losing investors: “[Fulton and Pepe’s] little doc wobbled for a moment, too—one backer, Canal Plus, pulled out instantly” (“Duo” 16).

16 For more on Cutler, see Lehoczky.

17 Fulton states, “The first half-hour of our film became getting an audience to believe in what Terry believes in [. . .]. The moment in the film when Terry looks at Jean Rochefort in the Quixote costume for the first time is very carefully placed. You know at that point that [. . .] they’ve got problems [. . .]. But to see Rochefort in costume, and to see Terry’s expression looking at Rochefort in that costume, that’s a critical point in the film” (qtd. in Argent 16, 17).

18 Pepe asserts, “The editing process for documentaries is very similar to the writing process in a fiction film [. . .]. You would be very amused to see that something as nebulous as reality was so meticulously mapped out” (qtd. in Argent 16, 17). Fulton concurs, “With documentaries, [. . .] you have to struggle to make them seem real” (qtd. in Argent 17).

19 For an application of the concept of “quixotic desire” as it relates to the Cave of Montesinos, see Wilson; for quixotic desire and film, see Donnell, “Quixotic Desire.”

20 The Bonus Disc provides information about the division of labor between the directorial pair and their relationship to the people they film. According to Fulton, Pepe works the camera, and “I go around trying to convince people that they want [. . .] to be subjects in our documentary.” While editing, they sent their film to its principal subjects (Gilliam, Depp, and Rochefort), all of whom approved it. Fulton reports that Gilliam “felt that the way we interpreted the events was fair [. . .] as objective as it can be for documentary filmmakers who are never objective.”

21 According to Mark Lewisohn, “Gilliam provided simple cut-out animations that tended to feature grotesque characters and situations which, as often as not, were used as linking devices to move the show from one area to another [. . .] Gilliam’s inspired work made it possible to link two bizarrely different ideas without spoiling the continuous flow.”

22 According to Dominique Russell, Buñuel’s Las Hurdes (1932) “posits the impossibility of the documentary, placing the viewer in the uneasy situation of complicity with a cruel camera probing the miseries of the urdanos for our benefit [. . .]. The tension between image and sound is brilliantly exploited to undermine the very authority posited by the documentary genre. Buñuel dismantles the propagandist method of authoritarian telling as truth-making.”

23 Pepe claims, “There’s one scene in the film where, when we watched our footage, we knew we had discovered something that was emotionally powerful: the scene of Terry watching rushes [“unedited footage”] after the first assistant director [Phil Patterson] has quit [. . .]. We realized that scene needed to be the climax of the movie” (qtd. in Argent 16).

Works Cited


Wilson, Diana de Armas. “Cervantes and the Night Visitors: Dream Work in the Cave of Montesinos.”
