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Space in Cervantes' *La fuerza de la sangre*

In my reading of *La fuerza de la sangre*, I want to show how Cervantes enacts the process of narration in relation to the space it occupies. The tale foregrounds traditional components of narrativity such as perspective, space, and time. I focus in particular on the uses of space in description and in the orientation of agency. Ways of thinking about space, ways of interacting with space are intimately connected with social constructions and gender relations. Although my analysis of space in the novella will deal with both socio-cultural and esthetic values, in the latter case I will attend to the story's spatiality less as it bears on narrative arrangement (parallelisms, repetitions, circularity) than as represented and symbolic space. In *La fuerza de la sangre* the uses of space by its characters cross-cut, intersect, are aligned with one another in relations of support or antagonism as if a multiplicity of virtual spaces was put into play within the represented space of the action.

In a general sense the plot moves from a space of turbulence (the initial conflictive encounter between Rodolfo and his victim, Leocadia) to a space of harmony (their final encounter in the dining room at the home of Rodolfo's parents). A relationship born in violence (Rodolfo's rape of Leocadia) is gradually brought to conciliation in three steps: 1. the generation of a harmonizing principle, Luisico, born of the rape; 2. the beginning integration of the principals by means of this son; 3. the final integration and the mending of the initial break within a harmonized space. In my assessment of this textual development there are some issues which I do not engage. These issues have been aptly summarized by William Clamurro in an excellent study of the novella where he deals with issues of identity. He says at the outset: "The main *difficulty* stems from the improbability of the motivations and

psychological reactions, on the one hand, and the troubling moral implications of the resolution, on the other"(Beneath the Fiction, 149).

The novella takes place within the virtual total space of 17th century Spain. I say virtual because it is implied and not described. This is the space that the text presupposes, but does not show. The space, however, is not truly absent. The narrative functions synecdochically within it: its very thrust identifies and selects socio-cultural components of that total space that contribute to its own formation. This wide, enclosing space does not make itself felt as a space of deambulation but rather as a socio-cultural reality, in the sense that it is characterized and is generated by certain practices which it encloses, such as the patriarchal construction of courtship and marriage. In fact we may say that the novella, through its plot, selects out this representation of Golden Age Spain. The consciousness and behavior of the characters express this reality (rejecting or embracing it) and the plot converges toward its ultimate satisfaction, though, as is frequent in Cervantes, in a somewhat oblique manner. Another implicit socio-cultural component of the wider Peninsular space that enters into play is that of *justicia*. Such *justicia* is necessary so that the transactions required by the patriarchy may be carried out in a legitimate and predictable manner. The novella illustrates an occasion when these expectations first break down and then are reaffirmed: space is first made chaotic, and then reordered. In effect the essential component of the tale is the transfer of Leocadia from her father's home to that of her future husband. The plot thus enacts a fundamental pattern of the space of Golden Age Spain, (subject of many plays and narratives of the period). In this space youth is a dangerous time when it comes to matrimonial arrangements, for its impulses endanger the prescribed order'. There are furthermore aspects of space related to orientation that involve the notion of "cognitive mapping " and that seem especially relevant and where spatial and agential issues are intimately intertwined. In the present instance, the fact that such cognitive mapping is also inextricably linked to gender issues gives the novella special relevance. Cognitive mapping relates to the internalization of

external space and its application to our daily engagements with the environment. Such external space is not manipulable, cannot be encompassed from a single viewpoint, and requires movement in order to be experienced—such is the space of rooms, for instance, or even neighborhoods or cities. From the point of view of the *mimesis* of *space*, cognitive mapping refers to the characters' behaviors as they "are based on representations of space, and other types of knowledge or beliefs that might be represented spatially but which do not necessarily depend on spatial representations" (Kitchin & Blades, *The Cognition of Geographic Space*, 2). For instance individuals may relate to certain spaces positively or negatively according to a cognitive map that was formed by past experiences. Also, individuals may respond positively or negatively to certain spaces on the basis of possible or imagined experiences in those spaces. In the present case these reactions would include the socio-cultural realities of Golden Age Spain that bear upon its patriarchal gender constructions and imbue certain spaces with significance and symbolic properties. After her rape Leocadia persuades Rodolfo to leave her in the "plaza que llaman del Ayuntamiento ... Quedó sola Leocadia, quitó la venda, reconoció el lugar donde la dejaron. Miró a todas partes; no vio a persona; pero sospechosa que desde lejos la siguiesen, a cada paso se detenía, dándolos hacia su casa, que no muy lejos de allí estaba." (83). Her condition as an inhabitant of Toledo allows her to recognize familiar space—"reconoció," etc-- , but her new cognitive map, traumatically imprinted by her recent experience, is the result of a breakdown in the patriarchal compact. This breakdown concentrates now for Leocadia the fear of being seen alone at night, which in and of itself would be a taint upon her "honra," as well as the fear of being attacked again, because the space has been totally destabilized and made to seem dangerous by her recent experience. Leocadia's successful navigation of the city's night-time is the synecdochal representation—in a relation of whole to part-- of that earlier space of violence, Rodolfo's room, which she captured and internalized through a spatial inventorying. Furthermore her "way-finding" in the city is the metaphorical anticipation of her later "way finding" and negotiation of events when she reenters the space of Rodolfo's family.

In wider, general terms, individuals negotiate the space of their deambulations according to their personal "cognitive mapping": "Cognitive maps provide insights into the relationship between people's environmental representation and their behavior in the environment. People can only operate on the basis of their own knowledge, and their plans and decisions are based on their cognitive maps" (*The Cognition of Geographic Space*, 7). The encounter with which La fuerza ... opens may be described as the confrontation of two cognitive maps, those of Rodolfo and his friends, and those of Leocadia and her family. The latter act according to a cognitive map that guides them, at the strict level of physical space, up the slope from the river, and within an implicit social space that leads them to believe that they can do so in safety because "justice" is expected to be in force. The former have equally internalized the physical space they are traversing they are going down the path-as well as an interpretation of the socio-cultural space of Toledo (and Spain, implicitly) whereby their class and youth exempt them from the order that should otherwise prevail.²

From an esthetic point of view, there is an implicit hierarchy in the way narrative treats the items of its attention. In this hierarchy modes of existence (animate-principally human- vs. inanimate) are articulated by means of dimensions of existence (time vs. space) through forms of storytelling (narration- or action- vs. description)? Thus the human subject is narrated in time, while objects are described in space. On this scale superiority in one domain leads to privileged treatment in another. For instance, agents are dynamic, they move, think, interact; they elicit, indeed one might say they justify, the attention of narrative at the expense, or in front, of their surrounding space and the objects that populate it. In this context a further hierarchy is suggested: male agents through their introduction in the narrative are time oriented, or rather, express their agency specifically through key events in the novella: Rodolfo rapes Leocadia in the dark under conditions that underplay the event's spatial disposition; Rodolfo's father retrieves his grandson in a context that though in full daylight is marked by a concatenation of events - race, injury, instinctive recognition, retrieval-. The principal female characters reinsert the consequences

of these events into their configurations of space: Leocadia recognizes the space of her injury and takes from it a marker of such recognition, the crucifix; Doña Estefanía is the principal agent of her son's reentering the convivial space (prepared dining room) where his own "retrieval" into familial space is accomplished. Thus customary hierarchies (men as agents, women as "patients") are reversed as space is given the ultimate responsibility for achieving recognition and affording the necessary reconciliation. It supersedes time as ultimate force in the narrative, promoting the role of women as *génies du lieu*. Such a reversal of narrative "values" turns the women into the prime movers. Male intervention or action in time infringes on "space," or "place," rendering it chaotic, while female agency, once recovered (in the case of Leocadia), or assumed (in the case of Doña Estefanía), undertakes the task of recovery. The principal male character, Rodolfo, may be seen as the mere instrument whereby the principal female character, Leocadia, learns to access the space of her agency. Rodolfo's and Leocadia's fathers are equally adjacent to the thrust of events. As patriarchs their role is conciliatory but not decisive. Both seek to mend the breaches caused by younger, heedless males (Rodolfo, the racing "caballeros") and in this are closer to the women. Rodolfo's father gathers up wounded Luisico from the street while Leocadia's father convinces her to bide her time.

In the tradition of storytelling, especially in the realistic novel, description acquires some importance not only as setting, but also through its confirming or anticipating markers, or as a means of revealing aspects of *the* characters' psychology. The end product of such dramatization of description is the Nouveau Roman, where the action may reside almost entirely in the gradual movements of description, such as in the novels of Claude Simon, Robert Pinget, Alain Robbe-Grillet, and others.⁷ What has happened in these cases is that description has become the repository of the plot. I do not propose axeing of *La fuerza de la sangre* in these terms, nor do I in the ever widening interpretive orbit of *Don Quijote*, seeking to find in it Quixotic echoes or practices. As to the function of space in this novella, it has been approached until now in terms of various overarching interests, such as Christian

eschatology (Casalduero), the miracle tale (Forcione), the workings of Romance (El Saffar), the rhetoric of power (Friedman), and others. As I've mentioned, my own approach examines the transformation of disordered space into the incipient order achieved by cognitive mapping preparatory to effective agency, and relates this issue to contrastive uses of darkness and light, blindness and sight.⁵

The somewhat providential plot of the novel, hinging as it does on propitious coincidence, linked to apparently cursory characterization, and the sententious tone of the narrative voice have generated contrary opinions among critics: some consider it the best of Cervantes's "novelas," some the worst.' The tale is rather straightforward and deals with a young woman's (Leocadia) recovery of her honor by marrying the man who raped her (Rodolfo). When her son, offspring of the rape, is run over by a horse on the street and lies bleeding, the rapist's father, moved by the child's likeness to his son, gathers up the child and has him attended to in his home. When visiting her son, Leocadia recognizes the home and the room where he is recovering: it is the same room in which she was raped. She tells Rodolfo's mother about the attack; the latter in turn tells her husband, and they contrive to bring their son back from Italy where he has been since soon after the rape. The moment he sees her, Rodolfo is enchanted by Leocadia's beauty and they marry. As mentioned earlier, cognitive maps are internal orientations that incorporate spatial, and social realities. They guide us in our negotiations with our surroundings, and they enable agency. The cognitive map according to which Leocadia and her family were proceeding from the banks of the river up to Toledo, which included an assumption of safety, disintegrated under the assault of Rodolfo and his friends. Insofar as one of the principal themes of the novella is the merging of two families of unequal rank, it should be noted that this inequality is established from the outset in terms of space. Rodolfo and his friends, mounted, are descending the hill, in a position of spatial superiority that represents Rodolfo's higher status (as well as actual physical power) with respect to Leocadia and her family who are making their way up from below.

Within the space of the country as a whole is that of Toledo. This ambit is transitional and connective between the total space and the inner spaces of the narrative. It is represented (whereas the total space is merely present implicitly) as the area of authority and order that is infringed: Leocadia and her family were walking home "[c]on la seguridad que promete la mucha justicia y bien inclinada gente de aquella ciudad"(77). In a sense one could say that the plot of the novel involves the mending of the infraction to such "justicia." The broken order, in a series of embeddings, will reach down from the total social space, through the space of the city, disturbed, disordered, through the space of Rodolfo's room, space of ravishment, to the egregious instance of Leocadia's violated body and her infringed inner self. All these breaks require a final mending.

The narrative voice originates in what we have termed the total, socio-cultural space of Spain and conveys precisely the framework of authority that the events first break away from and then rejoin. It is a putative space of justice and order whose responsibility it is to allow for the transfer of young, nubile women from one household to another, to contain within the bounds of propriety the excesses of youth, always, as mentioned, a danger to the patriarchal covenant. This voice presents the opening area of action as Toledo, and within it the hill up from the river. Within this space of action, we can identify a field of vision. In general terms a field of vision may be defined as what is *here* as opposed to *there*. During the initial events the field of vision is gradually tightened from 1. a very general circle (the city): "la mucha justicia ... etc." (quoted above) 2. to a specific topography (the hill): " venían de recrearse del río en Toledo ... " 3. to the interactions that take place thereon: "Rodolfo ... con otros cuatro amigos ... bajaba la misma cuesta que el hidalgo subía' ; "Rodolfo y sus camaradas, cubiertos los rostros, miraron los de la madre, y de la hija, ...la mucha hermosura del rostro de Leocadia ... comenzó ... a imprimírsele en la memoria" (77); 4. a moment later Rodolfo and his friends come back and he steals Leocadia who "desmayada y sin sentido no vio quién la llevaba, ni adónde is llevaban"(78).

The layering of fields functions according to blindness and vision on physical and moral levels: the young men's faces are veiled, and Rodolfo is morally blinded by the visible desirability of Leocadia. She, in turn, faints and is blind to the events (not only has she fainted, but Rodolfo covers her eyes with a kerchief). She will remain unconscious until after the rape. Rodolfo, as well as Leocadia and her family, are likewise blind to their fate. The relationship between blindness and vision, darkness and light, will find its confirmation at the end of the story with Leocadia's appearance before Rodolfo. The space of disorder is confusing or not easily seen, the space of order is clear, bright with light .

The controlling trope of the novella is synecdoche. The dark, locked room in which Leocadia finds herself after the rape stands in synecdochal relationship to the darkness of the enclosing space in actuality-it is night in Toledo-and symbolically, since the "mucha justicia" that characterizes the city has been wanting. The room's darkness is the physical manifestation of broken order. In this darkness Leocadia begins to create her own ordered space, she begins to generate a new "cognitive map" that integrates the new physical space and the new social reality, first by resisting Rodolfo's second attack, then by persuading him to let her go and not to mention the event to anyone. Once alone-Rodolfo has left to consult with his friends on what to do next-Leocadia orients herself within the room physically first, through movement and touch: "levantándose del lecho anduvo todo el aposento, tentando las paredes con las manos, por ver si hallaba puerta por do irse o ventana por do arrojarse. Halló la puerta, pero bien cerrada"(81); then with tentative sight: "topó una ventana, que pudo abrir, por donde entró el resplandor de la luna, tan claro, que pudo distinguir Leocadia las colores de unos damascos que el aposento adornaban. Vio que era dorada la cama, y tan ricamente compuesta, que más parecía lecho de príncipe que de algún particular caballero. Contó la sillas y los escritorios; notó la parte donde la puerta estaba, y aunque vio pendientes de las paredes algunas tablas, no pudo alcanzar a ver las pinturas que contenían"(81-82). She finds a crucifix that she takes, "no por devoción ni por hurto, si no llevad~ de un discreto designio suyo"(82). Furthermore, Leocadia's observation of the room may further be described as

a "gendering" of its space, a feminine coding characteristic of patriarchal settings. In such settings, as we mentioned, time, history, action, are generally coded as masculine. This is precisely the way in which Rodolfo's transgression functions. Now Leocadia does not seek to rescue space from this position. Rather, she puts it into play and tries to use it to her advantage given prevalent social relations. Thus, her inventorying of the room will come into play as she seeks to recover the wholeness of her sundered self.

Leocadia's reorientation in this darkened space is the first moment of her journey to recovery as Rodolfo's wife. In general terms our interaction with space, our self-positioning within it, is the underlying condition of agency.⁸ That is why what is usually described as "disorientation" is a metaphor for confusion and the inability to act in a directed or fruitful manner. It is, in fact, a loss of agency. In this case Leocadia goes through a very careful, detailed reacquisition of the alien space of Rodolfo's room by means of her senses and of her thinking, in the first stage of regaining her lost self. Actually, her reorientation begins as soon as she wakes up and engages in self-narration: "¿Adónde estoy, desdichada? ¿Qué oscuridad es ésta, qué tinieblas me rodean?" (79). Such self-narration always requires orientation in space (a cognitive map)--in fact it begins here with a spatial reference. In a general sense, self-narration accompanies us in our deambulations, when we evaluate our situation, as we contemplate our choices. Leocadia's exploration of the room is a pursuance of such orienting self-narration, and the crucifix, the final object of her itemization, initiates her self-recovery as a project, "un secreto designio suyo."⁹ The passage shows precisely how Leocadia turns the room into a cognitive space: She first realizes the space as a mere physical reality and then gives it direction or significance for further action. It becomes the locus of planned (future) agency centering on the crucifix as its instrument. After this Leocadia reenters the night of Toledo, Rodolfo leaves her at her request, in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento, whose darkness is metonymic for its absent justice and carefully makes her way back home.

While vision was impeded or impaired on the occasion of disorder, it begins to acquire social significance as the tale moves into its upward swing. Luisico, Rodolfo and Leocadia's son, unwitting

initiator of this change, is the visible anticipation of future, bright concord: "Cuando iba por la calle llovían sobre él millares de bendiciones; unos bendecían su hermosura, otros la madre que lo había parido, estos el padre que le engendró, aquéllos a quien tan bien criado le criaba"(85). Luisico is the center of the next key deployment of space, which occurs in broad daylight and on a concurred street: "Sucedió ... que un día que el niño fue con un recaudo de su abuela a una parienta suya, acertó a pasar por una calle donde había carrera de caballeros"(8586). In order to see better, Luisico crosses the street and is run over; he lies in the street "derramando mucha sangre de la cabeza"(86). An elderly gentleman-Rodolfo's father-gathers the child and takes him home because, as he later explains to Leocadia's parents, "cuando vio al niño caído y atropellado, le pareció que había visto el rostro de un hijo suyo, a quien él quería tiernamente"(86).

The story's positive turn hinges on this fortuitous encounter, a coincidence realized through space. Generally speaking space is a dimension of the action. Events happen in space and time." But in this instance the space in question, rather than merely containing the action spurs it, for it is this space that makes possible the co-incidence, co-presence of Luisico, his grandfather, and the racing tumult. The tumult, the spectacle, is, indeed, a disordering of Toledan space and an echo of that earlier disordering and breaking of the rules of conduct expected of civil, Toledan "paseantes" with which the novel opens. In this echoed disorder its distant, yet responsible cause, Rodolfo's permissive father, coincides with the protracted result of that infraction, Luisico. Thus the coincidence joins two moments of disordered space in which the youngest and oldest members of their respective families come together to become, later, grandfather and grandson of a newly constituted social unit. Actually the "sangre derramada," which recalls the novella's very title and is the spatialization of Luisico's injury, is also the spatialization of the rape and its symbolic/metaphorical replay.

At another level the event is marked by aspects of light and darkness, seeing and veiling: 1. seeing in the physical sense that the accident occurs in broad daylight and metaphorically in that a pattern

of recognition emerges -the "sangre derramada" that attracts the grandfather's eyes-, which is the child's resemblance to Rodolfo; 2. blindness or veiling in that Luisico crosses the street in order to *see* better and metaphorically in that the race through the streets of Toledo is an instance of disorder because the city's thoroughfares are put to a dangerous use. Yet in this instance of chaotic space an incipient order takes form

The bed where Luisico lies is the same bed, in the same room, in which Leocadia was raped, and it is here that the mending of this injury needs to begin. Now in daylight, she proceeds to an inventory of recognition: "conoció que aquella era la estancia donde se había dado fin a su honra y principio a su desventura. Y aunque no estaba adornada de los damascos que entonces tenía, conoció la disposición delta, vio la ventana de la reja que caía al jardín ... pero lo que más conoció fue que aquella era la misma cama que tenía por tumba de su sepultura; y más, que el propio escritorio sobre el cual estaba la imagen que había traído se estaba en el mismo lugar"(87). Whereas her previous exploration of the room was marked by verbs of the senses, principally "tentó," and "vio," in the present one the controlling verb is "conoció." In Thomistic terms we note a movement from *vis memorativa*, or sensitive memory, which is merely a recognition of space, to intellectual memory, which the verb "conoció" transmits. Sensitive memory *identifies* the space, intellectual memory places the self in relation to space; it generates a "cognitive map," one that relates to agency. We see a repetition of the previous pattern, but with an immediate transposition from recognition to cognition. The description concludes with a reference to the desk on which Leocadia found the crucifix and connects the present moment to that earlier "designio," fully integrating the space within Leocadia's intellectual plan. The interiorization of the space of rupture, now becoming a space of juncture represented by Luisico's healing, is a step in Leocadia's own healing as well, her transit toward wholeness. Such wholeness is anticipated and translated into renewed beauty later, when she appears in front of Rodolfo illuminated by two candelabra.

The veiling and unveiling, or vision and darkness dialectic that has characterized significant spaces in the novel, reaches its final stage through the maneuvers of Rodolfo's parents, Doña Estefanía, in particular, to bring about his marriage to Leocadia. As I mentioned earlier, they persuade Rodolfo to return from Italy with the promise of an ideal consort, whom they describe as "una mujer hermosa sobremanera"(89). Rodolfo returns post haste "con la golosina de gozar tan hermosa mujer"(89). Once home Doña Leocadia shows Rodolfo the portrait of a lady who, as it turns out, is rather unprepossessing and not at all to Rodolfo's taste. He makes clear that he cannot marry such a woman because he prizes beauty above all: "la hermosura busco, la belleza quiero"(91).¹² Doña Estefanía, unperturbed, tells Rodolfo that the arrangement can easily be undone, and the family sits at dinner. At this moment Leocadia makes her entrance. She is beautifully dressed and bejewelled and advances bathed in light: "Era Leocadia de gentil disposición y brio. Traía de la mano a su hijo, y delante della venían dos doncellas alumbrándola con dos velas de cera en dos candelabros de plata. Levantáronse todos a hacerle reverencia, como si fuera alguna cosa del cielo que allí milagrosamente se había aparecido. Ninguno de los que aquí estaban embebecidos mirándola parece que, de atónitos, no acertaron a decirle palabra"(92). The contrast with the portrait he has just seen makes Leocadia appear all the more beautiful to Rodolfo: "se le iba entrando por los ojos a tomar posesión de su alma la hermosa imagen de Leocadia"(92-93).¹³ All darkness and uncertainty have now been enlightened as blindness leaves Rodolfo's eyes. The ambit of reconciliation is the dining room, also the space of familial gathering and conviviality. Leocadia's beauty, by penetrating to Rodolfo's soul through his eyes, wins him over. At the beginning he was veiled, physically, and then blinded by lust, now his sight and his sense are restored by beauty."

In a tale controlled by synecdoche, the space of the narrative is a specific instance of and points to a wider context. The moral breakdown represented here points to the fragility of the overarching

social space of Toledo and of 17' Century Spain. That is why the return to normalcy at the end of the novel is so important. In this scheme, Leocadia's beauty is itself a representation of that space , whose positive order, translated into comeliness, wins Rodolfo back into its encompassing, if delicate, harmony. The novel's last words on the family" s prominence are a necessary confirmation of this spatial-moral reordering: "Fudronse a acostar todos, quedó toda la casa en silencio, en el cual no quedará la verdad deste cuento, pues no lo consentirán los muchos hijos y la ilustre descendencia que en Toledo dejaron, y agora viven, estos dos venturosos desposados, que muchos y felices años gozaron de si mismos, de sus hijos, y de sus nietos" (95).

Notes

1. For a thorough treatment of this issue see : Thomas A O'Connor, *Love in the "Corral "*: *Spirituality and the Anti-Theatrical Tradition in Early Modern Spain*. New York: Peter Lang, 2000.
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2. See Ruth El Saffar's study of the novella in *Novel to Romance*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1974. 128-138.
3. See Tamar Yacobi, "Plots of Space: World and Story in Isak Dinesen," *Poetics Today*, 12, 3 (Fall 1991). 460-461.
4. See Marcia L Welles, "Violence Disguised: Representation of Rape in Cervantes' *La fuerza de la sangre*," *Journal of Hispanic Philology*, 13. 3 (1989).
5. Although with a different emphasis, Alban Forcione addresses these binaries in *Cervantes and the Humanist Vision* (Ch. IV, The Miracle Secularized). Princeton UP: Princeton, NJ, 1982. 317—397.
6. For instance, Julián Aprdiz, Gonzalo de Amez6a, and Joaquín Casaldueiro praise it; Savj López, Giannini, and Hainsworth condemn it. Clamurro, El Saffar, Friedman, Welles, and most recent readers of the novel, find much that is praiseworthy in it, but also some problematical issues.
7. check "gendered space"et.
8. Merleau-Ponty
9. I agree with Sieber that ...
10. see Yacobi.
11. Copleston
12. on Rodolfo's character ...
13. Beauty reordering Rodolfo's soul may be seen as a platonic reminiscence. Similarly, in *La vida es sueho*, Segismundo's animal nature begins to give way when he first sees Rosaura.
14. note on neo-platonic anagnorisis?