

The Cuban Quijote

By Alicia L. Rodríguez, Ph.D.

Four hundred years since the publication of *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, we have wanted to broaden the possible reading of the first modern novel, starting from the worthy countenance of that famous knight errand to its possible irradiations on the current national Cuban tragedy. Do you think this far-fetched? If we spurred our imagination, we could trace interesting correlations between the Cuban people inside and outside the Island confronting daily so much infamy, and Don Quijote facing the trickery, deceit and incarnate injustices, personified by, among others, those giant wind mills.

At both sides of the Malecón Seawall, evil has masqueraded through time as redeeming leaders (the one within the city walls, has become the most bestial dictator, a histrionic, long-living chameleon, with Long Arms of Bad Blood), as appearances and disappearances of empires, as almost biblical wars, as "allies," as academics (blind and deaf), and as false mythologies.

Besides, why not say it, our people ride with the shadow of our own character, Caribbean-Hispanic, individualistic, improvised and party loving, or the Cuban version of Sancho Panza.

While in Exile, we have taken to the road to rescue our freedoms and return the Island to the Kingdom of Good. We have kept our ideals of Honesty, Integrity, Truth, and Beauty. We have combated the blindness of great newspapers, the ignorance and hostilities of all the "Establishments" and minorities that share our American-International "pie". Even the White House itself, the biggest of the mills, has shud-

dered at our fury! They attribute us the power to tilt the electoral scale toward the candidate who favors our cause.

On the Island, our Quijotes undertake a much more arduous battle. Those who dare confront the monster with Long Arms of Bad Milk are labeled crazy traitors and criminal disaffected, provoking the jeer, anger, and violence of the official head. Most of them end up with their bones in dark, medieval and humid dungeons, forgotten by the rest of the world. The most fortunate, unfortunate galley slaves, are able to leave the Island-Prison with their courage intact to undertake their noble fight once more.

But our epic has not ended, and the rosary of adventures, or misadventures that characterizes it is replete with victories as well as failures. What is certain is that we ride on to a victorious end. Contrary to the famous novel by Cervantes, the hardness and duration of the battle will not conquer the will of the noble Cuban Quijotes in their fight for the Good, because to be sure, reason and History are on our side.



Windmill in La Mancha
photograph by Madeline Bertot