

*'Oh, of course, one accepts the Gospels, naturally':  
Subversive Use of the Bible in Graham Greene's  
Monsignor Quixote*

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**Abstract.** When Graham Greene wrote *Monsignor Quixote* (published in 1982), one of his aims was to reflect critically on the role of the Catholic Church in the Spain of the late 1970s, as well as on the support this institution offered to the former dictatorship of Franco within the so called 'National Catholicism.' In this novel, the reader witnesses the evolution of the protagonist, Father Quixote, from a religious living a complacent life in a small village in La Mancha to a priest in rebellion against the conservative hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Spain. Drawing upon Gerard Genette's theory of transtextuality, I will examine Greene's use of different religious texts to fight a model of conservative Catholic Church that he rejects. I will focus my analysis especially on the intertextual and metatextual references to the Gospels that the Bishop of La Mancha/Father Herrera and Father Quixote make in their dialogic interactions, references that portray their different vision of the role that the Church should have in society.

**Keywords:** Graham Greene; *Monsignor Quixote*; Spanish Catholic Church; Bible intertextuality; Spain's transition to democracy

## 1. Introduction

Coming near the end of Graham Greene's extensive literary career, *Monsignor Quixote* (1982) has been considered a culminating work in the journey of the writer's religious imagination (Desmond 1990: 76; Bosco 2005: 215), or, in words of Kathryn McClymond, his "final religious novel" (2006: 11). In this line of thought, the novel has been mainly studied "in terms of his religious content, themes, and images" (McClymond 2006: 11), focusing on the spiritual progressive movement of convergence between the two protagonists, father Quixote and Sancho. For the purposes of this paper, however, I am less interested in determining the extent of Greene's personal religious commitment to the Catholic faith than in analyzing the representation in the novel of the immense influence held by the conservative hierarchy of the

Catholic Church in Spain during and immediately after Franco's dictatorship, a topic that has been overlooked to date.<sup>1</sup>

By contrast, an aspect that has received extensive scholarly attention is the novel's connections with Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quijote de la Mancha* and its re-writing by the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno in his work *Vida de don Quijote y Sancho*. When we think of Graham Greene's *Monsignor Quixote* and textual transcendence, the first text that comes to mind is, not surprisingly, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. However, Cervantes's book is not the only relevant text to bear in mind when reading Greene's novel. In the latter, we find references to literary works, specifically Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, and non-literary works, such as Marx's *The Communist Manifesto*. In addition, the presence of diverse religious works is noticeable, including St Augustine's *City of God* and *Confessions*, St Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life* and *The Love of God*, Father Heribert Jone's *Moral Theology*, Father Caussade's *Spiritual Letters* and some books in the Bible, concretely *Genesis*, *Psalms* in the Old Testament, and *Timothy*, *Titus* and the *Gospels* in the New Testament. In this paper, I will argue that in *Monsignor Quixote*, Greene built up a complex network of textual references that are worth analyzing in order to gain a deeper understanding of this novel, a narrative whose very simplicity underscores its profundity (Henry 1985: 78).

In order to analyze this network of textual references and its significance in *Monsignor Quixote*, I will draw upon Gerard Genette's theory of transtextuality, focusing mainly on the categories of intertextuality and metatextuality. Undoubtedly, there are other significant theoreticians apart from Genette – such as Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Michael Riffaterre, and Harold Bloom – whose work has proven enlightening in reference to the relationships between texts. Genette's theory of transtextuality works especially in this case, however, because it illustrates in a more comprehensive way Greene's exercise in introducing different religious texts in the novel in order to create new meaning.

In *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, Genette introduces his theory of 'transtextuality' defined as "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether

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<sup>1</sup> Although different scholars, such as Michael Brennan (2016: 156), point to the theme of Franco's legacy in the novel, the only works that partly examine the representation of the Spain of the late seventies in *Monsignor Quixote* are Berta Cano's "La España anacrónica del *Monsignor Quixote* de Graham Greene" and José Ruiz's "El 'caso Almería' y la imagen literaria de la Guardia Civil en *Monsignor Quixote*, de Graham Greene." While Ruiz focuses on the image of the Guardia Civil in the novel, Cano claims that Greene reproduces the cultural stereotypes that the British had of Spain.

obvious or concealed, with other texts” (1997: 1). Dividing transtextuality into five distinct categories, Genette provides a comprehensive account of the different possible kinds of relationships connecting hypertexts – texts derived from another one/other ones – to their hypotexts – the text(s) from which other texts derive. Genette’s concept of transtextuality equals the notion of intertextuality as defined by authors such as Julia Kristeva or Michael Riffaterre. Genette’s conception of intertextuality is more restrictive in this sense, defined as the “relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts: that is to say, eidetically and typically as the actual presence of one text within another” (1997: 1–2). Another category in Genette’s theory that proves significant in the analysis of *Monsignor Quixote* is metatextuality, the relationship through which one text bears critically on another (1997: 4).

Drawing upon Genette’s theory, I will examine intertextual and metatextual references in *Monsignor Quixote* in connection to religious texts, and especially the Gospels, and I will argue that Greene introduced such references in the novel to critically reflect on the role of the Catholic Church in Spain during its transition to democracy after forty years of Franco’s dictatorship. In my analysis, I will focus first on studying the structure of power represented in the novel and the role of the Spanish Catholic Church in it. Second, I will concentrate on examining Father Quixote’s evolution, paying special attention to the use of intertextual and metatextual references from different religious texts that influence the priest’s spiritual journey.

## 2. The Structure of Power in the Spain of the 1970s in *Monsignor Quixote*

In 1962, Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council, the purpose of which was to define the role of the Catholic Church in the modern world. Its spirit, open to dialogue, and its constitutions, supporting the defence of human rights as well as religious and political freedom, shook the pillars of the so-called Spanish ‘National Catholicism.’ Not only did the Council alienate the reactionary Spanish Church hierarchy from the international body; it also allowed the more progressive sector among Spanish priests to air criticisms, drawing their arguments from Council documents and papal declarations. By the 1970s, following the decidedly liberalizing posture of Cardinal Tarancón, the Spanish church had started to publicly recognize its failure to be a force of peace during the Civil War as well as to support profound changes in the country’s institutions that would guarantee fundamental rights for citizens (Miley 2015: 428). Catholicism in Spain had started the process of leaving

behind what had been going on since the Civil War started: the ‘ideological cement’ of the Nationalist regime (Sánchez 1987: 116). However, not all Catholics agreed on such moves, including many representatives of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and clerics in the country, who experienced Franco’s death and the transition to democracy as a trauma (Miley 2015: 429).

Graham Greene, feeling close to the spirit of reform that the Council had breathed into the Church in connection with such topics as social justice and freedom,<sup>2</sup> decided to set *Monsignor Quixote* in Spain, describing the situation of the country in the late 70s and reflecting on the role that the Catholic Church had played during Franco’s regime within the so-called ‘National Catholicism.’<sup>3</sup> He knew the country, since he had been travelling around Spain and Portugal with his friend Father Leopoldo Durán for some weeks every summer from 1976 to 1981, together with another winter trip in January, 1982 (Villar Flor 2015: 219–222).

The protagonist of the novel is a rural priest, Father Quixote, who is unwillingly promoted to the rank of monsignor and decides to take some time off and set forth on a trip with an uncommon companion, Enrique Zancas – whom Father Quixote calls Sancho –, the Communist ex-mayor of El Toboso. The priest has lived all his life in El Toboso, isolated from the political situation of the country during the dictatorship. Even though Franco died in 1975, the ruling class during his regime still dominates the country in the late 1970s, with significant figures from the dictatorship still in government together with the *Guardia Civil* in the roads of Spain. On the other hand, the Church contributes to the legitimation of the hegemonic ideology, reinforcing the rule of the dominant sector of the society.<sup>4</sup> In the novel there is a triangle of power: the Catholic Church and Opus Dei; members of the governing class, and the *Guardia Civil*. The connection between them is reflected in different moments in the text, such as in the conversation between Father Quixote and doctor Galván, once the priest has been taken back to El Toboso against his will:

<sup>2</sup> In *A World of My Own*, his diary of dreams, Greene reveals his admiration for Pope John XXIII in contrast with his feelings for Pope John Paul II, for whom he had no liking (1992: 54–55).

<sup>3</sup> The regime, in both its pronouncements and its legislation, often referred to its Catholic inspiration (Linz 1973: 238).

<sup>4</sup> As Paula Martín points out, the institutional Church in *Monsignor Quixote* is “in close contact with a governing social or political community: the Bishop and Father Herrera representing the curia intent on repressing the deviant Father Quixote” (2015: 12).

The bishop himself appealed to Father Herrera to find you and bring you home before things went too far. [...] as I have a cousin in the Ministry of the Interior the *Guardia* were very understanding and helpful. (Greene 1982: 175)<sup>5</sup>

Father Herrera ratifies this link, “[h]is Excellency and I had a lot of trouble persuading the *Guardia* to take no action. The bishop even had to telephone His Excellency at Avila to intercede. Dr Galvan’s cousin was of great help also” (177). Finally, the Bishop of La Mancha also refers to the help from the *Guardia Civil* and the Ministry in his last conversation with Father Quixote, adding some relevant information: “We had to approach a high authority in the Ministry of the Interior - luckily a member of Opus Dei... [...] He saw at once that it would do the Church untold harm if a monsignor appeared in the dock charged with helping a murderer to escape...” (188). Opus Dei is mentioned as well in the episode of the ecclesiastical shop; Father Quixote thinks that the assistant “was almost certainly a member of Opus Dei – that club of intellectual Catholic activists whom he could not fault yet whom he could not trust” (69). After leaving the shop, Father Quixote relates Opus Dei with Franco saying “[o]f course I’m sure they do a lot of good in their own way. Like the Generalissimo did” (71).

Concerning the relationship between the *Guardia Civil* and the Church, the former tends to respect the ecclesiastical figures,<sup>6</sup> as Sancho tells Father Quixote in the episode of the purple socks: “... all along the roads of Spain the ghost of Franco still patrols. Your socks will be our safeguard. A *Guardia Civil* respects purple socks” (68). In this sense, the most relevant episode is the priest’s final adventure at the Monastery of Osera. There, even though the *Guardias* have orders to arrest Father Quixote and Sancho for causing a riot, they finally yield to Father Leopoldo’s will after he tells them: [...] these two will stay here in the monastery until the doctor allows them to leave. I shall speak to the bishop in Orense and I am sure he will have something to say to your commanding officer” (241).

On the other hand, the bond joining the Catholic Church with the regime is clearly reflected in the character of the Bishop of La Mancha, who longs for the times of the dictatorship (13; 26–27; 187). Tellingly, in the bishop’s view, the fact that El Toboso has a Communist mayor is a worrying situation. Therefore, when Sancho is not re-elected, the bishop feels that the “tide is turning at last in the proper direction [...]” (38)

<sup>5</sup> Hereafter cited in the text by page number.

<sup>6</sup> Ruiz observes that the *Guardias* are ideological allies of the Catholic Church in Spain both during and after Franco’s dictatorship (2001: 785).

### 3. Father Quixote's Double Journey

This is the Spain in which Father Quixote sets off on his journey, blissfully ignorant of the political and social situation of the country. In their picaresque trips, Sancho leads Father Quixote through the roads of Spain in a double journey of discovery: self-discovery and awakening to what remains of the dictatorship in the Spain of the transition to democracy. In this double journey, intertextual and metatextual references connected with different religious texts, especially the gospels, are fundamental to gaining a deeper understanding of the novel.

**3.1. Father Quixote's journey of self-discovery.** The trips with Sancho function as a journey of self-discovery for Father Quixote. When we meet him for the first time, we see a priest who lives placidly in his small village and who, in contrast with his ancestor Don Quixote, does not want to go forth looking for adventures on the roads of the world. Consequently, when he is promoted to the rank of monsignor, all he feels is despair (28). In his ignorance of the outside world, Father Quixote eats horse steaks without realizing it (16), does not know what tonic water is (129), and has never seen a contraceptive (116). On his bookshelf we find: "his missal, his breviary, the New Testament, a few tattered volumes of a theological kind, the relics of his studies, and some works by his favourite saints" (15). Father Quixote's attachment to his 'books of chivalry,' as Sancho calls them, results from the fact that they speak about love (Henry 1985: 68), not about topics such as the Trinity, natural law or mortal sin.<sup>7</sup> Among his favorite saints, therefore, St Francis de Sales occupies a place of honor, since his work is flooded with the love of God (Stramara 2015: 4). Actually, love is the spiritual power that drives his relationship with the rest of humankind, and even with non-human beings, such as his beloved car, Rocinante,<sup>8</sup> to whom he often talks following St Francis de Sales' advice in *The Love of God*: "Among the reflections and resolutions it is good to make use of colloquies, and speak sometimes to our Lord, sometimes to the Angels, to

<sup>7</sup> Desmond argues that *Monsignor Quixote* represents "a kind of culminating statement of Greene's imagination of the material world and the evolutionary dynamic of love operating within it" (1990: 61–62).

<sup>8</sup> Marín analyzes the representation of Rocinante in *Monsignor Quixote* in comparison with her Cervantine 'ancestor,' arguing that the car suffers a process of animalization in Greene's novel. In numerous occasions, Father Quixote confers qualities to his Seat that are proper for horses: Rocinante groans or she is skittish after her stay in the garage (2011: 348).

the Saints and to oneself, to one's own heart to sinners, and even to inanimate creatures..." (106)

Throughout the novel, Father Quixote goes through a significant evolution, in which Sancho plays an important role (Ziolkowski 1991: 219). However, intertextual and metatextual references in connection with different religious texts are also relevant for the priest's progression. During his first trip with the ex-mayor, the priest starts to question various Catholic dogmas. In a metatextual exercise, they discuss different texts from the Bible and Sancho's remarks cause the priest's first concerns. First, Sancho brings in the parable of the Prodigal Son, a story that in Sancho's view, "has been probably a little corrected and slanted here and there by the ecclesiastical censors" (59). Sancho carries out a thematic transposition of the story, turning the prodigal son into a young man disgusted by the bourgeois world in which he has grown up. After living as a poor shepherd for some time, however, he goes back to the farm, where an old bearded peasant welcomes him with open arms as the father does in the 'official' version in the Bible (59–62). This thematic transposition has an axiological bearing on the narrative; Sancho's questioning of the intellectual make-up of the biblical character and his motivation behind his actions involves a significant deviation in the text's value system.

A second example of a metatextual exercise is the episode in which Sancho wonders why Jesus chose among all animals the sheep to represent his people: "Sheep are stupid beasts [...] I have never understood why the founder of your faith should have compared them with ourselves. "Feed my sheep" (55, quoting from John, 21: 17). This idea is reinforced with another intertextual reference from Palm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd" (56). Father Quixote cannot help but consider Sancho's words:

But he thought: All the same, why sheep? Why did He in His infinite wisdom choose the symbol of sheep? It was not a question that had been answered by any of the old theologians whom he kept on the shelves in El Toboso: not even by St Francis de Sales [...] (57)

Significant as well in the priest's evolution are the different adventures he lives, hypertextual episodes of the ones his ancestor had.<sup>9</sup> Father Quixote undergoes several new experiences that make him become disillusioned with

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<sup>9</sup> Hypertextuality is defined by Genette as "any relationship uniting a text B ... to an earlier text A ..., upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary." (Genette 1997: 5). To know more about hypertextuality in *Monsignor Quixote* in relation to *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, see Henry (1986), Henríquez (1988; 2007), Canavaggio

the complacent life he used to have back in El Toboso. As his knowledge of the world widens, he realizes that he has never understood his parishioners' worries, fears, and desires because he has not experienced human frailties. Tellingly, in the scene of the movie in which the protagonists are having sex, the only emotion he can feel is amusement, and that worries him profoundly. To alleviate his anxiety, he turns to reading St Francis de Sales' *The Love of God*, trying to find a spiritual guide to interpret what he has just experienced:<sup>10</sup>

Iron has such a sympathy with Adamant that as soon as it is touched with the virtue thereof it turns towards it, it begins to stir and quiver with a little hopping, testifying in that the complacence it takes, and thereupon it doth advance and bear itself towards the Adamant, striving by all means possible to be united to it. [...] And do you not see all the parts of a lively love represented in this lifeless stone? (140–141)

This analogy between love and magnetism makes Father Quixote reflect on whether he is capable of feeling human love. With this preoccupation in mind, Father Quixote prays to God: "O God, make me human, let me feel temptation. Save me from my indifference" (141). This new feeling contributes to Father Quixote's questioning of his former complacent life, reaching a point of no return in his spiritual evolution that will lead him to follow the steps of his valiant ancestor, facing the conservative hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Spain.

**3.2. Father Quixote's awakening to 1970s Spain.** Father Quixote's trips with Sancho make the priest aware of the Spain of the transition to democracy and of the power the Catholic Church still has in it. Throughout their adventures, Father Quixote and Sancho encounter the *Guardia Civil* several times. The first time stands out as a relevant episode in the progression of Father Quixote's awakening: the priest quotes from St Francis de Sales's *Introduction to the Devout Life* to support his idea of how innocent they must seem to the *Guardias*: "Nothing appeases an enraged elephant so much as a sight of a little lamb,

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(1987), Ziolkowski (1991), Jelinsky (2004), Kundu (2006), Estébanez (2007), Leigh (2013), and Valverde (2018).

<sup>10</sup> According to Duarte, Father Quixote opens twice one of his beloved books randomly to find a passage that helps him interpret his experiences in his spiritual journey. This technique, Duarte argues, is similar to bibliomancy or to *sortes virgilianae*, which consisted in looking for advice opening randomly some work by Virgilio and interpreting the passage found (2016: 250).

nothing breaks the force of cannon balls so well as wool" (91–92). However, this thought proves wrong when the *Guardias* show up some minutes later and ask for Sancho's and Father Quixote's papers. Sancho's insistence on Father Quixote wearing his purple socks<sup>11</sup> is certainly useful in this episode, since the *Guardias* do show respect towards the figure of Monsignor Quixote, in spite of several misunderstandings and Sancho's taunting comments about the necessity of Franco's soul for prayers (95). The attitude of the *Guardias* is all powerful, and at some point, even threatening: "If you try to start the car you will get hurt" (96). Father Quixote, in his innocence, cannot make sense out of the sentence and Sancho needs to explain it to him: "I think he is threatening to shoot us if we move" (96). Father Quixote's ignorance of the Spain of that moment is stated through his bewilderment: "this is an inexplicable situation. Not in all my years in El Toboso..." (96)

The episode of the Valley of the Fallen is also relevant to Father Quixote's realization of post-Franco's Spain. During their visit, Father Quixote expresses the 'official version' behind the construction of the monument: "this was meant to be a chapel of reconciliation where all the fallen on both sides were to be remembered" (87). However, immediately after the narrator questions this version with the description of the altar, in which only two tombs can be found: Franco's and the tomb of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the founder of the fascist organization *Falange*. Furthermore, this counterargument is supported by Sancho's statement: "You won't find even a tablet for the dead Republicans" (87).<sup>12</sup> Even though the priest would never recognize how impressed he is, he thinks "What a rock it would need [...] to close this enormous tomb" (86–87), and when they leave, he prays for Franco, for Sancho and himself and "for my Church" (88).

Apart from his beloved saints, Father Quixote's favorite reading is the Gospels. The priest quotes from the Gospels and comments on them; such intertextual and metatextual references are relevant when analyzing his evolution in terms of his stance regarding the hierarchy of the Church in the

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<sup>11</sup> The purple socks, together with the *pechera* that Father Quixote refuses to wear, represent the badges of ritual authority that will provide for the priest and the ex-mayor a measure of protection from the *Guardia* (McClymond 2006: 17). Their symbolic value in this sense is used by Greene to show the perception of power relations in the country at that time.

<sup>12</sup> The narrator and Sancho's interpretation of The Valley of the Fallen is close to the way in which, according to Encarnación, the monument is seen in Spain: "[the monument] is widely recognized as a one-sided monument to Franco's Nationalist crusade, a point powerfully underscored by the fact that it houses the dictator's grave" (2008: 441).

Spain of the late 1970s. Father Quixote's books of chivalry, centered on God's love, contrast from the first moment with the point of view of Father Herrera, the priest who comes to substitute him in el Toboso during his time off. Father Herrera, who holds a doctorate in Moral Theology (38), recommends the monsignor to balance his old books with some more modern theological works, encouraging him to take with him Father Jone's *Moral Theology* (43). However, as Father Quixote explains later to Sancho,

[...] Father Jone is not among my old books of chivalry. His book is only like a book of military regulations. St Francis de Sales wrote a book of eight hundred pages called *The Love of God*. The word love doesn't come into Father Jone's rules and I think, perhaps I am wrong, that you won't find the phrase 'mortal sin' in St Francis's book (91).

Differently from Father Herrera, Father Quixote only opens his old theological textbooks occasionally, "to make sure that the short homily which he would be making in the church on Sunday was properly in accordance with the teaching of the Church" (25). As Bosco argues, "Quixote's understanding of moral theology honors motivation and intention over rules and regulations. [...] he ultimately grounds his moral vision on the primacy of conscience – a position that echoes back through Cardinal Newman's writings and gained status at Vatican II by many Council fathers." (2005: 216)

In addition, in his complacent life in el Toboso, Father Quixote never shows interest in any controversy within the bosom of the Church about orthodoxy after Vatican II:

He also received once a month from Madrid a theological magazine. There were criticisms in it referring sometimes to dangerous ideas – spoken even by a cardinal, in Holland or Belgium, he forgot which – or written by a priest who had a Teutonic name [...] but he paid little attention to such criticisms, for it was very unlikely that he would have to defend the orthodoxy of the Church against the butcher, the baker, the garagist or even the restaurant keeper [...] (25)<sup>13</sup>

Father Quixote identifies Father Herrera with the bishop (183). In his view, in due time Father Herrera "[...] will surely end up in Opus Dei" (200). As Sedlack observes, both characters embody the pre-conciliar conservative

<sup>13</sup> Concretely, this is a reference to Edward Schillebeeckx and Hans Küng's exchanges on sex and birth control in the tensions that that resulted after the promulgation of *Human Vitae* by Pope Paul VI in 1968 (Bosco 2005: 216; Brennan 2010: 163).

option within the Church (2002: 589). In Father Quixote's first conversation with the young priest, we find a significant example of a metatextual exercise. In it, Father Quixote quotes for the first time from the Gospels: "Let us go to Jerusalem and die with Him" (40, quoting from John 6: 11). "Oh, of course, one accepts the Gospels, naturally," Father Herrera replies "with the tone of one who surrenders a small and unimportant point to his adversary" (35). In their critical discussion, Father Quixote highlights the importance of God's love when confessing; Father Herrera, however, gives preference to God's justice (41). In the same vein, Father Quixote reflects critically in their conversation on the differences among the four Gospels:

Do you know that St Matthew mentions Hell fifteen times in fifty-two pages of my bible and St John not once? St Mark twice in thirty-one pages and St Luke three times in fifty-two. Well, of course, St Matthew was a tax collector, poor man, and he probably believed in the efficacy of punishment, but it made me wonder... (58)

In contrast with the monsignor's opinion, Father Herrera prefers St Matthew's gospel to St John's. In Father Quixote's view, "the Gospel of St Matthew could be distinguished from the others as the Gospel of fear" (74). For him, governing with fear is what Stalin or Hitler did; on the contrary, God does not need to do so. That is the reason why Father Quixote prefers St John's gospel: it is the gospel of love, it has no reference to hell. Father Herrera suspects he is questioning the existence of Hell, to what Father Quixote confesses "I believe from obedience, but not with the heart" (74–75).

On the other hand, Father Quixote's relationship with the hierarchy of the Spanish Catholic Church, in the person of the Bishop of La Mancha, has never been open to dialogue, as the bishop's authoritative attitude is ever-present. As Sedlack puts it,

the unnamed diocesan Bishop of La Mancha is a proud and spiteful man who regards the priest 'as little better than a peasant' or too ignorant to be a priest in his diocese. [...] But more important are his meanness of spirit and verbal abuse, which parallel his narrow, negatively oriented doctrinal sense. (2002: 588–589)

The first impression we get about Father Quixote's relationship with his bishop is indirect: the priest himself gives an account of the 'misunderstandings' between them; in his opinion, the bishop does not consider him of much value. Actually, the Bishop of La Mancha is shocked when he hears for the first time

about Father Quixote's promotion to monsignor and does not understand how, given his infallibility, the Pope has reached that decision (27).

The only direct encounter between them happens at the beginning of the second part of the novel. In bed, and just before the bishop's visit, Father Quixote turns again to one of his chivalry books, this time Father Caussade's *Spiritual Letters*. Opening it randomly, he finds an enlightening quotation when he is thinking of facing the bishop:

God wishes to conceal all that from me, so that I may blindly abandon myself to his mercies. I do not wish to know what He does not wish to show me and I wish to proceed in the midst of whatever darkness He may plunge me into. It is His business to know the state of my progress, mine to occupy myself with Him alone. He will take care of all the rest; I leave it to Him. (182)

This paragraph reaffirms him in his conviction that only God knows why he has gone through this spiritual journey on his trips with Sancho: Father Quixote is now ready to confront whatever the bishop's judgment may be.

The encounter between Father Quixote and his bishop establishes their opposite positions concerning what the role of the Catholic Church should be in the society in the Spain of the time. Now we find a very different priest from the one we met at the beginning of the novel, showing a rebellious attitude against the religious authority. He does not fear the bishop any more but himself (182), because he does not recognize himself as the peaceful priest he used to be (Ziolkowski 1991: 250). In their dialectic fight, the use of intertextual references is of the utmost importance. The bishop asks Father Quixote for an explanation for having hidden a criminal from the *Guardia*. Ironically, the priest quotes from Father Jone's *Moral Theology* – Father Herrera's favorite reading – to justify his action:

Father Heribert Jone points out that an accused criminal [...] may plead "not guilty" [...]

'Who on earth is Father Heribert Jone?'

'A distinguished German moral theologian.'

'I thank God that he's not a Spaniard'. (189)

Their different conceptions of the Catholic Church are based on the fact that Father Quixote and his bishop take the figure of Jesus and of St Paul respectively as the basis of their vision of the church. When the bishop accuses Father Quixote of choosing unsuitable friends, the priest reminds him about the fact that Jesus used to seek the company of sinners, offering as an example

the case of St Matthew. The bishop, who cannot deny it, answers: "To Him all things were permissible, but for a poor priest like you and me isn't it more prudent to walk on the footsteps of St Paul?" (185) Father Quixote, on the contrary, considers St Paul a 'reliable guide' but someone who is "liable to error" (123). Ironically, Father Quixote uses intertextually St Paul's Letter to Timothy to counteract the bishop's accusation about drinking too much wine in the company of Sancho: "Do not confine thyself to water any longer: take a little wine to relieve thy stomach" (186, quoting from Timothy 5:23). At the end of their interaction, the bishop quotes from the letter of St Paul to Titus so as to make clear the importance in his view of controlling dissident voices within the Catholic Church: "There are many rebellious spirits abroad, who talk of their own fantasies and lead men's minds astray: they must be silenced" (185).

The objective of this conversation is not really to understand Father Quixote's reasons for his actions, but to avoid what is in the bishop's view a great scandal in the Church (177). Once the priest realizes that the bishop is not listening to his explanations, he finally gives up and stops worrying about what he, and the hierarchy of the Church in general, may think of him: "Bugger the bishop," he says in Spanish when Father Herrera mentions him (176). Here, as Bosco puts it, "Greene's complaint [...] is with an oppressive hierarchy" (2005: 217). This last act of rebellion means Father Quixote's *Suspensión a Divinis*, through which a priest's right to administer communion and to hear confession is institutionally suspended.

The honor of the Church does not seem at risk in the hierarchy's view, however, in the episode of the Mexicans in Galicia. The priests in the village, eager for money, and with the support of their bishop, put Our Lady up for auction and whoever puts in the highest bid, carries her in the procession. In Father Quixote's eyes, this blasphemy is the real scandal, and he leaves Sr Diego's house having decided to challenge whoever in order to defend the honor of the Virgin's image, as his ancestor would have done without hesitation. Moreover, just before confronting the multitude, he declares "I am Monsignor Quixote of El Toboso" (229) with the same firmness as his ancestor in his adventure with Andrés says: "I am the valorous Don Quixote of La Mancha, the undoer of wrongs and injustices." (Cervantes 1950: 49) As McClymond argues, "[b]y disrupting the corrupt festival, Quixote opposed the priests who organized it and, by extension, the Church hierarchy behind them. In so doing he situates himself outside of and in opposition to the institutional church" (McClymond 2006: 13). Father Quixote's spiritual journey is complete.

#### 4. Conclusion

*Monsignor Quixote* has been considered a novel in which conflicting political positions and religious controversies, ever-present in Greene's entire corpus, become reconciled, a novel in which questions are raised, offering no dogmatic solution (Holderness 1993: 265). Doubtless Greene's religious and political concerns are at the center of *Monsignor Quixote*. However, the analysis of Greene's use of a complex network of intertextual and metatextual references in connection with different religious texts leads to the conclusion that the novel also constitutes a critical reflection on the role of the conservative Catholic Church in the Spain of the transition to democracy, a model of the church with which Greene felt completely at odds. Vatican II brought an environment of open discussion and free circulation of thought, distancing itself from any doctrinal and ecclesiastical authoritarianism. Following its ecumenical spirit,<sup>14</sup> Father Quixote and Sancho manage to build a friendship based on their tolerance and comprehension of the other's opposing belief in a historical and political context in which it is not favorable to do so: the post-Francoist Spain, a world in which liberal tolerance does not govern (Holderness 1993: 267).

Relying on his books of chivalry, based on the love of God, and given his awakening to the Spain in which he lives, Father Quixote undergoes a profound spiritual journey, changing from a blissfully ignorant priest living a complacent existence into a priest in rebellion towards the conservative and oppressive hierarchy of the Catholic Church in the 1970s Spain. Through love, "Greene enacts the Christological movement [...] in the growing bond of companionship between the priest and the ex-mayor" (Desmond 1990: 67). They become *compañeros*, and their profound new relationship reaches its climax in the delirious Eucharistic liturgy that Father Quixote, defying his *Suspensión a Divinis*, performs before his death. It is that feeling of love what helps the priest and his Communist companion to communicate and understand each other (Desmond 1990: 18; Henry 1985: 76–77). Conversely, imposition, intolerance, and authoritarianism – all characteristics present in the conservative stance held by the hierarchy of the Spanish Church, represented in the Bishop of La Mancha – constitute the gulf that finally separates Father Quixote from the members of his own community, the Catholic Church.

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<sup>14</sup> In this sense, Mark Bosco concludes that the novel is "not post-Catholic or post-Christian, but Catholic and post-Vatican II, imaginatively responding to the religious upheavals of the twentieth century" (Bosco 2005: 220).

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