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FILOLOGÍA HISPÁNICA**

*El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*  
and *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight*:  
a Comparative Analysis of the Concepts of “Knight”

*El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*  
y *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight*:  
un análisis comparativo sobre los conceptos de “caballero”

**Alumno: Daniel Rodríguez Gómez**

**DNI: 49113603R**

**Dirección: Manuel Cabello Pino**

**y Auxiliadora Pérez Vides**

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## **0. Summary**

The objective of this essay is to prove that Cervantes got some inspiration for the character of *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* from the book *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight*. In the analysis, I make a comparison between the character of *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* and The Green Knight, including Don Quijote as a third part in the comparison. I argue that the former is a real knight in a real world that shows no idealization of the world, whereas the second one can be considered a more fantastic one showing an extremely idealized world. Also, Don Quijote would be an attempt of a knight that has taken his ideals from the old chivalry legends as he is a real man in a real world that wants to be a legend.

Keywords: El Caballero del Verde Gabán, the Green Knight, chivalry, knight, castle, lady.

### **Resumen:**

El objetivo de este trabajo es demostrar que Cervantes se inspiró en *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight* para concebir a su personaje el Caballero del Verde Gabán. Para ello, llevamos a cabo una comparación entre ambos caballeros (el Caballero del Verde Gabán y *the Green Knight*), incluyendo a Don Quijote como una tercera parte en la comparación. Mi tesis es que el primero aparece como un caballero real que no muestra rasgos de un mundo idealizado, mientras que el segundo es más un caballero fantástico, el cual muestra un mundo propio de una leyenda. Don Quijote por su parte es un intento de caballero medieval ya que es un personaje real que quiere convertirse en aquello que más ansía y toma sus ideales de las antiguas novelas de caballerías.

Palabras claves. El Caballero del Verde Gabán, the Green Knight, caballería, caballero, castillo, dama.

## 1. Introduction

Cervantes is well-known for being an intricate author, who wrote one of the most relevant novels in the history of literature: *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* (1605). The whole novel is full of symbols and references to other books that were relevant in that time. Don Quijote mentions many knights through his adventures, but there is one specific knight that appears in the book that confronts the ideals of knighthood at that time against those of the past. This character is *el Caballero del Verde Gabán*, who comes with a different concept of knight to those of the medieval literature.

This new character of *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* could be interpreted as a modern image of The Green Knight in the anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (14<sup>th</sup> century). As many times before, Cervantes included references to other books, and for that reason we know that there are no coincidences in Cervantes, that is, he had a clear intention when including this knight in the book. The purpose of this essay is to prove that and to explore Cervantes's intention with the introduction of this character in his novel.

*El Caballero del Verde Gabán* fits the prototype of the Renaissance knight, while Cervantes only included one knight in his book: Don Quijote. For this reason, there is a strong sense of shock when both characters meet in the story, as they cannot believe each other exists. Don Quijote has in mind a clear image of what a medieval knight has to be, but in this case, he faces a different concept of knight and he locates himself in the middle of the comparison. On the one hand, we have a knight from a legend, The Green Knight, who would be the perfect example of an unreal knight, the one that Don Quijote wants to become. On the other hand, we have the image of a knight from a realistic point of view. Don Quijote could try to be just like him but he refuses this ideal and seeks his own fortune.

The thesis we defend is that with this character Cervantes wanted to prove to Don Quijote that knights were not as he had read in the books and legends. If we follow this pattern, we need to think that *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* is a realistic version of that Green Knight from the Arthurian legends. If that was the intention of the author with the appearance of the character, it should lead to a collision between the imaginary world in the mind of Don Quijote and the real world he does not want to contemplate.

Thus, Don Quijote stays in the middle of two different ideals of knight: the real one and the fantastic one. A contrast is established between the characters, from one extreme to the other, from reality to fantasy. Our thesis will imply a comparison among *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* as a real knight with the image of The Green Knight as a legendary knight, and Don Quijote as an attempt of becoming a knight. To achieve this purpose, we will use a comparative methodology, analysing different excerpts from *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, while also showing the similarities and differences between the characters in order to show the roots that influenced the character of *el Caballero del Verde Gabán*. But first we need to start with a review of the theoretical framework.

## 2. Theoretical framework

*El Caballero del Verde Gabán* has awakened the interest of many critics, as it is an enigmatic character that appears through three chapters in *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*. This knight has been present in many studies about the parallelism between Don Quijote and him, as both of them had a similar social status but many differences in the way they lived. According to Redondo (1985), many critics have tried to interpret the character of Don Diego de Miranda from different points of view, they show both, a positive and a negative approach. This scholar shows that this character has always been a problem to analyse. In his work, Redondo shows a contradiction between both characters, Don Diego and Don Quijote, comparing the ordinary life of a nobleman and the life Don Quijote is looking forward to having. He says that there are two images face to face, two knights. The first is Don Quijote de la Mancha, who sees everything from a classic perspective, that is, from the golden age of knighthood. On the contrary, the second knight, Don Diego de Miranda, presents another point of view, like an updated version of the medieval knight: he is looking at the present and at the future. Redondo defends that both characters tend to represent the same ideal but in different ways. For him, Don Quijote shows an old mentality while Don Diego reflects the contrary as he is looking at the future with a new concept of the knight.

Francisco Vivar (2004) gives another argument to this idea when he remarks that the knight needs to adapt to a new military and religious world. This is why the old knight becomes a Christian courtier, in order to find his social position. This idea shows the need that knights had to adapt to a new society, a concept that Don Quijote does not want to carry out even when he is shown the image of a modern knight: *el Caballero del Verde Gabán*. To reinforce this argument, we need to mention other ideas from Vivar (2004), who defends that Don Diego is a clear representation of the Renaissance as this new knight is between the soldier and the saint. That new epoch did not need the extremist behaviour that was typical in the Middle Ages. According to this, Don Diego totally demonstrates the new concept of knight. Thus, we can say that there is a play of mirrors contrasting the two images of knights: Don Quijote, that belongs to the Middle Ages, and Don Diego, that belongs to the Renaissance.

Mariana Barone (2012) defends the idea that two people from the same social status should share the same view of the world. She defends that Humanism was a movement that encouraged people from the same social class to study together as they shared a common view of the world. Despite the fact that both characters belong to a similar status, they have very different points of view of the world, and they are contradictory examples of nobility. Between both characters there is a sensation of distance as they do not have a common point of view. Barone sustains that Don Diego is not able to go in the world of Don Quijote as he belongs to a knight's world. For this reason, Don Diego cannot understand the connection between the craziness of his actions and the good sense of his ideas. Cervantes only allows some characters to understand Don Quijote, and Don Diego de Miranda is not one of them. Don Diego represents humanist ideals that belong to the Renaissance. Thus, he is described as charitable, but he does not boast of that, and he even goes to church every day, being the perfect image of Humanism.

As Martínez Mata (2015) maintains, the character of *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* turns out to be one of the best described characters by Cervantes. Márquez Villanueva (1975) shares this point of view as he also defends that this innovative character is deeply explored in the novel. Both authors agree about the character, as *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* is a knight that appears well described by Cervantes. In fact, we can analyse several aspects of the knight as there is plenty of information about him. The comparison between both knights is a comparison between two different lifestyles, because both characters summarize their lives to compare them during three episodes.

In conclusion, there have been several writers that have tried to explain the connection between Don Quijote and *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* in the novel from different points of view. However, nobody has done until now an in-depth analysis between the contrast presented by *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* with the literary character of the epic poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Evidently, Cervantes took that name as a way to create a parody. With our work, we are going to fill that critical gap.

### 3. What is a medieval hero?

This is an interesting question as Don Quijote has pictured a clear image of the medieval hero and he knows the way he should behave and all the actions he should perform. So, for Don Quijote there is a good definition about what he should become: a man who is famous for a long list of features. The knight must be known for his courage, loyalty, nobility, bravery or ability, and should as well be admired for his deeds and noble qualities, that is, any person who is thought as a model to imitate.

The concept of the knight is closely related to the concept of the hero, which has evolved through the different cultures and ages. Basically, the medieval knight displays the same values as the classic heroes, so both concepts are intimately linked. The hero faces a heroic quest and shows that a person can make a mistake and still be able to keep his heroism. A mistake does not mean that he is not a hero anymore; it just shows how human he is, that is, despite being a hero he is still a human being. He can have some lacks and fears, and he constantly tries to defeat them because it was what medieval heroes were supposed to do. All that was a pattern to follow by all the knights of that time, and for that reason, chivalry implies a type of polite, kind and unselfish behaviour.

As it is well known, Don Quijote was obsessed with following that pattern. He insists on being a medieval knight and he thought that all he needed was a mentality centred on chivalry, the union of many ideals of knighthood. These ideals were things such as justice, humility, valour, courage, honour, loyalty, courtesy and generosity. All of that is what his character will try to display along the story. He tries to fight against terrible monsters and even against his own integrity, and he constantly tries to find new adventures to prove his values as a knight. Every single medieval hero travels to defend his dignity and Don Quijote would not be less: our knight gets ready and goes seeking for his own destiny.

With the beginning of the Renaissance there was a breach from the concept of the medieval knight. Don Quijote has to face this fact but he still believes in the knights from the legends and their quests. *El Caballero del Verde Gabán* appears as the new concept of Renaissance knight: he represents all the features that Don Quijote should show. However, our *Caballero de la Triste Figura* resists to this new ideal and he firmly sticks to the old medieval legends.

#### **4. *Don Quijote, el Caballero del Verde Gabán* and *The Green Knight* as different knights throughout time**

Being a medieval hero was not an easy task in that time, as we said before. A knight required many values that were difficult to achieve, which needed a constant mentality for this purpose. Knights were all those things people wanted to be in the Middle Ages and they were an idyllic model to follow. So, our *Caballero de la Triste Figura* would face many different difficulties in order to accomplish his aim.

Cervantes was famous for being innovative with his literature in a transitional period. For that reason, an important feature of this author is that coincidences do not exist in his literature, that is, everything has an intention and a reason. Having that in mind, we need to take into consideration an interesting character that appears during three chapters of the second part in *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*. The name of this enigmatic character is *el Caballero del Verde Gabán*, and what is very interesting about him is that there are too many similarities with *The Green Knight* in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Apart from the likeness both characters show, we should consider the disparity between these knights as well.

There is no evidence that Don Quijote had read *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as it is not mentioned in the book, but we know for sure that he is aware of the Arthurian Cycle, as he mentions “Rey Artus” on several occasions. The image of this new knight he meets is an intricate representation of the Green Knight from English literature. When they meet, Alonso Quijano does not seem to know who he is; he only has questions about this mysterious knight in the forest. Despite the fact that we cannot state that Don Quijote had read that book we certainly know that Cervantes had read it, as there are several comments along the book about the members of King Arthur’s court. In any case, there is a linguistic game with the name that Don Quijote gives to this unknown knight, and it is related to the title of the well-known English epic poem. In this way, it proves that both the author (Cervantes) and the character (Don Quijote) knew the legend of the Green Knight.

Therefore, what we are going to do next is a systematic comparison among the three knights: *Don Quijote, el Caballero del Verde Gabán* and *The Green Knight*. The first aspect to take into account is the interest that this character arouses in Don Quijote: “Si mucho miraba el de lo verde a Don Quijote, mucho más miraba Don Quijote al de lo

verde” (752).<sup>1</sup> Actually, we could say that the same happens with the Green Knight when he goes into King Arthur’s court: “Thus from fantasy and fairyland the folk there it deemed/ Therefore to answer were afraid many elegant fighters/And all were astounded by his speech, and sat stone-still” (240-243).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, there is a similar reaction but in a different scale, as in the first case, the character’s reaction is realistic and in the second, the reaction shows a different situation. Therefore, the description has the typical features of a legend.

Parallelisms are constant along both stories but they appear in different magnitude. This is in fact normal if we take into consideration that Cervantes created a character to show what a medieval knight would look like in a real world and not what a knight looks like in an old legend. So, the only thing Don Quijote can do is to question everything about this shocking character: he has a fictional image of what a hero is in his mind and a real image in front of him about what a knight should look in that moment.

Displaying values is not an easy task and Don Quijote knows it. Knights used to show their integrity with their vestments. In this part, we need to emphasize the fact that the character of el Caballero del Verde Gabán is extremely similar in his appearance to that of the Green Knight. A first aspect to comment about these similarities is the physical description of the three knights. Don Quijote’s intention is to be a real knight, that apart from mental strength should have physical strength, and this is an important aspect that he does not fulfil as he shows a poor physique which actually sustains his nickname: *El Caballero de la Triste Figura*. Thus, we learn that “ni la amarillez de mi rostro, ni mi atenuada flaqueza os podrá admirar de aquí adelante” (753). He makes a description of himself where he is conscious of his precarious physical condition, as he refers to the yellowness of his face and his thinness. In his encounter with *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* he makes a good description of this new character, also emphasizing the latter’s physical appearance: “admiróle la longura de su caballo, la grandeza de su cuerpo, la flaqueza y amarillez de su rostro, sus armas, su ademán y compostura, figura y retrato no visto por luengos tiempos atrás en aquella tierra” (752). The previous

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<sup>1</sup> To quote excerpts from *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* we use the edition directed by Francisco Rico. Cervantes, M. 1998. *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Edición del Instituto Cervantes (1505, 1615, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> To quote from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* we use *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: a close verse translation* / translated by Larry D. Benson with a foreword and middle English text edited by Daniel Donoghue. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2012.

description corresponds to the medieval hero, as the size of the body and other characteristics are mentioned. There is an interesting part in the excerpt when it says that it was the shape of a man that had not been seen for a very long time, emphasizing the fact that knights were a thing of the past. This description is related to that of the Green Knight, although in *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight* it is much longer and with plenty more details:

There hastens in at the hall door an awesome figure,  
One of the most on earth in measure of height,  
From the neck to the waist so well-built and square,  
And his loins and his limbs so long and so big,  
Half a giant in earth I affirm he was. (136-140)

With that image, we get deeper into the legend of the Green Knight but it is still related to the one of *El del Verde Gabán*. This is Don Quijote's mental image of a knight. Both knights have a big body, though the second description is an overstatement of the first one. They both portray an elegant image as well, that is, they show respect and many enigmatic features that awake the interest of everybody that looks at them. So, in this point of the physical description we have *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* as a real one, the Green Knight as a fantastic one and Don Quijote as an attempt of a knight that extracts his beliefs about chivalry from the old legends.

The physical description does not only concern to the shape of the knight. In fact, we must also pay attention to the vestments, which were an important element in every single knight, as a proof of their nobility and loyalty. There is a short description about Don Quijote that summarizes his condition: "Se armó de todas sus armas, subió sobre Rocinante, puesta su mal compuesta celada, embrazó su adarga, tomó su lanza..." (45). These words show his intention to be a knight but from a different point of view, that is, he took everything he thought necessary to become a knight and started his own way. Here, the author uses a satiric tone in the description of the character, highlighting the poor image of his poor armour.

On the other hand, the description of the vestments of *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* is more complete:

Venía sobre una muy hermosa yegua tordilla, vestido un gabán de paño fino verde, jironado en terciopelo leonado, con una montera del mismo terciopelo...tenía un alfanje morisco pendiente de un ancho tahalí verde y oro, y los borceguíes eran de la labor del tahalí; las espuelas no eran doradas, sino dadas con un barniz verde, tan tersas y bruñidas, que, por hacer labor con todo el vestido, parecían mejor que si fuera de oro puro. (751)

In this excerpt, it is easy to notice that the character has a clear tendency for green clothes, just like the Green Knight, and even the details of both characters are related, proving that a parallelism exists between both of them. On the contrary, the narration of the Green Knight's vestments is much longer and more detailed, as evidenced in this fragment

And all garbed in green, this gallant and his clothes:

A straight coat full tight that stuck to his sides,

A merry mantle above, embellished within

With finely trimmed furs [...]

Neat well-fitting hose of that same green

that covered his calves, and shining spurs below. (151-158) (13)

The elements of the vestments they both display are the same, even with the same colours and a very similar description of the details. There are some small differences though, for example, *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* is said to be wielding an “alfanje morisco”, while the Green Knight bears a “spiteful ax”, and despite the weapon, none of the knights wears an armour or a helmet. Both of them wear elegant clothes, not for the battle, and they thus do not show any sign of violence. There are some elements in common, for example, “vestido un gabán de paño fino verde, jironado de terciopelo leonado” (751) is related to “straight coat full tight” and “a merry mantle above”. Another important feature of the vestment of both knights is the combination between green and gold. In both descriptions, each author mentions the spurs, in the first case “las espuelas no eran doradas, sino dadas con un varniz verde, tan tersas y bruñidas, que, por hacer labor con todo el vestido, parecía mejor que si fuera de oro puro” (751). And in the second case: “Neat well-fitting hose of that same green/ That covered his

calves, and shining spurs below/ Of bright gold, on silken borders embroidered full rich” (157-159).

It is interesting to talk about these spurs as they are very similar but they show a clear difference: their colour. We may wonder about Cervantes’s intention when changing the colour of the spurs. Despite the fact that it is different, both stories mention golden features. The first one is a more realistic, showing the description of a knight with all his green clothes, while the second story constantly mentions gold as a part of the knight, not only in the weapons but as we have seen before, in other parts, like the horse. We could even talk about simplicity in the comparison of both characters. The style of the Green Knight is more extravagant: everything is fulfilled with bright gems and pieces of gold, showing a more fantastic description if we consider all the features that have been previously mentioned. If we read both descriptions of the characters, we can conclude that both are too alike to be a coincidence, so for a specific reason, Cervantes wanted to create a parallelism between the stories, conceiving a real knight from a legend knight.

Normally, knights come from a high-class family, so the place they lived in is part of their story. It was important as it would be a significant element in their education and behaviour in society. In the first case, Don Quijote was nor the poorest nor the richest person in Castilla so he lived in a house as an ‘hidalgo’: “tenía en su casa una ama que pasaba de los cuarenta y una sobrina que no llegaba a los veinte, y un mozo de campo y plaza que así ensillaba el rocín como tomaba la podadera”(36). There are brief mentions to the knowledge of the character, focusing on the aspect that he was keen on, that is, chivalry books, from which he would take his idea of becoming a knight. In relation to this concept, *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* seems to be living in a place that fits better to the idea of a knight, although the title of the episode does not clarify the place he lived in: “De lo que sucedió a Don Quijote en el castillo o casa del Caballero del Verde Gabán, con otras cosas extravagantes” (771). Thus, we create a blurry image of the house and it would depend on the person contemplating the house. Apart from the title there is also a description of the place: “la casa de Don Diego de Miranda ancha como de aldea; las armas, empero, aunque de piedra tosca, encima de la puerta de la calle; la bodega en el patio; la Cueva en el portal, y muchas tinajas a la redonda” (771) and “Aquí pinta el autor todas las circunstancias de la casa de Don Diego, pintándonos en ellas lo que contiene una casa de un caballero labrador y rico” (772).

That description corresponds to the standards of a rich person at that time, that is, Don Quijote is showed how the house of a noble man looks like. This is a realistic description of a castle, because he still believes in enormous fortresses on the top of the hills, as in many other stories he had read, in a more fantastic way, like the castle of the Green Knight.

A castle the comeliest that ever knight commanded,

Placed on an open meadow, a park all around,

With a spiked palisade penned in full thick[...]

The bridge was firmly raised,

The gates were shut up fast,

The walls were mightily made;

They feared no windy blast. (767-784) (59)

The narrator describes the castle in a long excerpt, which is full of details that create an idyllic idea in the mind of the reader. The castle was perfectly made from both aesthetic and strategic points of views. Therefore, there is an important contrast among the houses of our three knights: Don Quijote owns a normal house for an ‘hidalgo’, *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* owns a property that could be considered a castle in a very realistic way, and the last one, the Green Knight, owns a legend castle. The latter is full of fantastic elements, and it is exactly the kind of place Don Quijote seeks to find in his adventures. We are referring to a castle in the middle of a meadow, perfectly positioned, protected by a thick forest, surrounded by a lake and with beautiful towers and pinnacles. All in all, a perfect description of a castle for a perfect legend. Within the walls of the castle there are plenty of elements. In the description of Don Quijote, we notice that he lives in an empty house and that he sold everything with the only purpose of buying books to read. Apart from that, he lives with his niece and a housekeeper; he does not have a lady to live with, but he has that idyllic image of Dulcinea in his mind that would correspond to all he is looking for to be a real knight. In the house, there are no elements typical of a knight’s house so the place is not fantastic at all. On the other hand, the image that *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* creates is a bit different. He says: “paso la vida con mi mujer y con mis hijos y con mis amigos” (754), so he creates an image of a family within the walls, a normal life, while the Green Knight does not

represent the same image. The lord of the castle lives with his wife as well but in an idyllic way. Both fit the perfect descriptions of typical lords of a castle: they are educated and have no further intention than that of embracing the host, as *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* does with Don Quijote and The Green Knight with Sir Gawain.

Food is another important aspect to compare among the knights. In the first chapter of *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* we find this description: “Una olla de algo más vaca que carnero, salpicón las más noches, duelos y quebrantos los sábados, lantejas los viernes, algún palomino de añadidura los domingos, consumían las tres partes de su hacienda” (35-36). This suggests that the food in his house was enough to lead a normal life, but it would not be enough to do one of the banquets our other two knights constantly celebrate. In the case of *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* the banquets are real banquets. He mentions that: “Alguna vez como con mis vecinos y amigos, y muchas veces los convido; son mis convites muy limpios y aseados y nonada escasos” (754) so the knight himself admits that there is plenty of food in his house and that it would not be a problem to invite people to a banquet. This is a fact that Don Quijote corroborates when he contemplates the banquet: “la comida fue tal como Don Diego había dicho en el camino que la solía dar a sus convidados: limpia, abundante y sabrosa” (776). From this we can deduce that he was a good host for the guests. This is a brief description of what a real banquet looks like in comparison to the exorbitant image of the banquets of the Green Knight.

Moreover, we must mention the great banquets in the castle of the Green Knight, which did not only take place when Sir Gawain remained in the castle, but it was a custom and each of them was even more incredible than the previous one:

Place-mats, and saltcellars, and silver spoons[...]  
With many excellent stews, seasoned of the best,  
Double portions, as was fitting, and fish of many kinds,  
Some baked in bread, some broiled on the coals,  
Some seethed, some in stews savoured with spices[...]  
The fighter called it a feast. (886-94) (67-69)

This kind of banquets in the castle seem to be common for any kind of celebration, showing a really high social position as there is plenty of food and a variety of dishes are served. Abundance is a good word to summarise this fantastic banquet in the castle. There are big differences among the knights and their ways of living. It is clear that the last scene is an idealization of what a banquet would look like in the house of a normal noble man, as it is in the case of *el Caballero del Verde Gabán*. In contrast, in Don Quijote's house banquets do not have those epic dimensions.

A very important part of those epic celebrations were the ladies that accompanied the lord. Every single book of chivalry has a gorgeous lady that shows all the good features of the nobility. An important hero must always have lady in mind so as to do everything for her, and Don Quijote is aware of this condition. He would choose a peasant to be her lady and he idealizes the idea of this woman, as she is a farmer that works in the fields, but in his mind, she becomes a noble lady with a terrible spell. In this sense, the fantastic dimension in which Alonso lives is an important resource for his adventures and for his intentions to free the lady from that horrible cast. The tone that Cervantes uses in the picture of Dulcinea is not exactly kind: apart from saying that she is not a clean woman, he says of her: “dicen que tuvo la mejor mano para salar puercos que otra mujer de toda la Mancha” (108). This image of a normal woman contrasts with the image that Alonso Quijano has in mind, that is, for him Dulcinea is “virtuosa, emperatriz de la Mancha, de sin par y sin igual belleza” (74).

Being a real knight, *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* has a real lady in the castle. The conception of the woman is that of an educated person that lives in a castle: “La señora, que doña Cristina se llamaba, le recibió con muestras de mucho amor y de mucha cortesía” (772). In this excerpt, it is easy to see the qualities that the lady of the castle should portray, that is, she must be charming and courteous. We do not know about her physical description as the narrator focuses on her behaviour and education with the guests. The woman intends to welcome Don Quijote when he gets into the house: “por la venida de tan noble huésped quería la señora doña Cristina mostrar que sabía y podía regalar a los que a su casa llegasen” (773). Later, and following this courteous behaviour, the guest stayed in the castle during four days. In the case of the Green Knight, there is also a gorgeous lady, who is described in the following terms: “She was the fairest in complexion, of flesh and of skin,/ And of stature and color and customs, compared to all others,/ And more lovely than Guenevere, as the warrior thought”

(943-945). This is the description of a beautiful lady, both physically and mentally. She is said to be educated and a woman of perfect image. There is even a comparison to the lady of the castle in Camelot, saying that she is prettier than the Queen, and highlighting her beauty. The description goes further as the narrator gives more details about her physical appearance: “Her breast and her bright throat bare displayed,/ Shone more shining than snow that sheds on hills” (955-956). The white colour has been traditionally identified with beauty and this woman is as white as snow, the prettiest lady on earth. As part of her kindness she welcomes Sir Gawain in her house as did the woman of The Green Knight with Sir Gawain. In fact, both ladies interacted with the knights during the four days they stayed in the castle.

We could say that the three ladies are seen from very different points of view. Dulcinea is not what she is thought to be: she is not a real lady as she is a simple peasant so she has no relation with the nobility. In the case of doña Cristina, she is indeed the lady of a castle although we do not find any physical description of her beauty, thus appearing as a real woman. But in the last case the lady is said to be perfect in all dimensions, becoming the loveliest woman in the world as well. These three descriptions are closely related to the reliability of their knights. Dulcinea is not a real lady as Don Quijote is neither a real knight; doña Cristina is a realistic lady for a realistic knight, Don Diego de Miranda; and the last lady represents an idyllic image that perfectly matches the ideal of a legendary knight, the Green Knight.

The relationship with the knights and the companies in the castle are also worth analysing. Don Quijote is said to be living in a normal house, as we mentioned before, but in the company of “una ama que pasaba de los cuarenta y una sobrina que no llegaba a los veinte, y un mozo de campo” (36). He has some privileges but they cannot be compared to those of *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* and the Green Knight. He is surrounded by some of his friends, maybe ‘acquaintances’ would be a more acceptable word in this case. He does not have a wife or children either. On the contrary, when *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* introduces himself, he says: “paso la vida con mi mujer y con mis hijos y con mis amigos” (754). The character is very explicit in this description: he declares he has a wife, the lady of the castle, and children. Actually, he mentions that he has an issue with his son, and he also talks about friends: “Alguna vez como con mis vecinos y amigos, y muchas veces los convido” (774). We can then guess that he has social life in his house. The mention of the son is relevant too: “Yo, señor Don

Quijote -respondió el hidalgo-, tengo un hijo, que, a no tenerle, quizá me juzgara por más dichoso de lo que soy, y no porque él sea malo, sino porque no es tan bueno como yo quisiera” (775). This gives a more human attitude to the knight, as he is declaring that everything is not perfect in his life and that he, like everybody else, can have problems of different kinds. In this case, he is talking about a matter related to his family and his descendants, that is, a real problem for a real knight.

However, the case of the Green Knight is more enigmatic. Along the book there is no mention of the words ‘son’, ‘daughter’, ‘child’ or ‘descendant’; we do not know, if he had children or not, or if he has plans to have them. The only part of his family we know is his wife, mentioned previously. In this sense, there is a lack of realism in the story, as all the lords in the castle were very enthusiastic with the descendants because they would be the only way to preserve the legacy. If the Green Knight had children, this fact seems not to be relevant for the development of the story. But we know for sure that he was in the constant company of his friends and his loyal knights in the court: “There were guests to go upon the gray morn./Therefore long they stayed awake, and the wine drank,/Danced all unceasingly with dear carols” (1024-1026).

Another aspect that I would like to comment is hunting, which is an important element for a knight. This act shows a high position in society as the men could do this activity, which was considered nobler than working in the fields. Our three knights are hunters and they show an upper-class life, though in different degrees. Don Quijote was “gran madrugador y amigo de la caza” (36) and this was his hobby before he became obsessed with chivalry books: “los ratos que estaba ocioso, se daba a leer libros de caballerías, con tanta afición y gusto, que olvidó casi de todo punto el ejercicio de la caza” (37). He focuses just on reading and forgets about the rest, and he is said to be “un hidalgo de los de lanza en astillero, adarga Antigua, rocín flaco y galgo corredor” (35). So, the dog would be a typical hunting dog, that would accompany him before he forgets about this practice. Besides, we need to take into account that there were different kinds of hunting and Alonso even mocks about the way *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* hunts. Thus, when *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* introduces himself, he says: “mis ejercicios son el de la caza y pesca, pero no mantengo ni halcón ni galgos, sino algún perdigón manso o algún hurón atrevido” (754). In this case, the knight does not practice an aggressive kind of hunting but a calm one where he hunts with inoffensive animals and this is not a privileged way of hunting. There is a huge difference with the

hunting of the Green Knight and even Don Quijote mocks about this fact. He says: “Váyase vuesa merced, señor hidalgo -respondió Don Quijote-, a entender con su perdigón manso y con su hurón atrevido, y deje a cada uno hacer su oficio” (763). There is a satiric tone in the excerpt, with the adjectives referred to the animals, emphasizing the fact that this kind of hunting is not appropriate for a noble man. In the case of the Green Knight, this activity is more epic than in the previous knights. The knight does not go alone hunting: “Before any daylight gleamed upon earth,/ he with his horsemen on high horses mounted” (1137-1138).

There is an important different element then, that is, they use horses to hunt, showing the high class of the knight. In the narration, he goes hunting on several occasions so his rewards were different depending on the day: “Such a sum he there slew till the sun went down, of does and other deer, wondrous to declare” (1321-1322). The first day he hunts several good deer; the second day he hunts a huge wild boar; and the last day a fox that was a problem for the knight. All these adventures are told in the highest tone, remarking the important position of the lord of the castle. In this case, the three knights are depicted in their different conditions. Don Quijote used to do an average hunting before craziness arrived to his life and he does not want to hunt anymore: he thinks he should hunt like a medieval knight. *El Caballero del Verde Gabán* does an innovative and practical hunting which is not thought to be worthy for a knight, that is what Don Quijote thinks. In the last case, we find the idyllic hunting of the Green Knight, in which case everything is magnified, and this kind of hunting is the one Don Quijote thinks to be proper for the medieval knight he wants to be.

Another important feature of the medieval knight is religion. They needed to commend themselves to their faith, as done by all the good enough knights. Don Quijote maintains a deep respect for the Catholic Church: “Levantados, pues, los manteles, y dadas gracias a Dios y agua a las manos” (776) and he continues saying: “Bendito sea Dios -dijo Don Quijote habiendo oído el soneto a Don Lorenzo” (780). The same happens with the character of *el Caballero del Verde Gabán*, who in his own description says that he is deeply commended to it: “Soy devoto de Nuestra Señora y confío siempre en la misericordia infinita de Dios Nuestro Señor” (755). This character is religious, but there is no element of fantasy in that fact, as it appears in the Green Knight. Religious references are constant throughout the story in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The king with his fellows go to the church on several occasions, they

celebrate Catholic festivities, and even the final scene of the book takes place in a church: “This is a chapel of misfortune; may bischief betide it!/ It is the cursedest church that I ever came in!” (2195-2196). Despite the Christian features the Green Knight manifests, there is a magic reminiscence in the story: “Through might of Morgan la Fay, who in my house lives,/ And quaint lore of clergy, by crafts well learned,/Many of the magic arts of Merlin has she taken” (2446-2448). There is a magical background in this story that does not appear in *el Caballero del Verde Gabán*, facing what would be the lord of a castle from a legend with his magical arts and what would be a knight in the real life, like *el del Verde Gabán*. In contrast to that, Don Quijote would like to be a knight but believing in magic and curses, and even thinking that her beloved had been cursed, as it was typical in medieval literature. So here we have again the three same images of knight: Don Quijote wants to become a legendary knight and he believes in magic; Don Diego does not show any kind of reminiscence of magic; and the Green Knight uses magic for his purposes, being a legendary and magic knight.

Apart from that, a knight had many other features that were important, like inspiring respect to everyone and maintaining a loyal and courteous attitude. Otherwise a knight would not be appreciated. Don Quijote is aware of that, and he tries to be respectful and kind with everyone, but his madness would interfere in his purpose and he would obtain a different result:

No sé lo que te diga, hijo -respondió Don Diego-; solo te sabré decir que le he visto hacer cosas del mayor loco del mundo y decir razones tan discretas, que borran y deshacen sus hechos: háblale tú y toma el pulso a lo que sabe, y, pues eres discreto, juzga de su discreción o tontería lo que más puesto en razón estuviere, aunque, para decir verdad, antes le tengo por loco que por cuerdo. (773)

Don Quijote does everything with his best intention: that of being loyal to the image of the medieval knight. Despite that fact, he does not display a rational attitude, as Don Diego says “antes le tengo por loco que por cuerdo” (773). This is a good summary of the attitude that all the characters of the book would have with him, and of the new image of a knight at a time when knights were not in fashion anymore. On the other hand, the character of *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* inspires admiration, as it happens when Sancho meets him: “Déjenme besar -respondió Sancho-, porque me parece vuesa

merced el primer santo a la jineta que he visto en todos los días de mi vida” (755). Sancho, as Don Quijote’s squire, thinks of this image of a knight that *el del Verde Gabán* represents, and he thinks that his own master should be like him. *El caballero del Verde Gabán* displays a rational thought and in the encounter of Don Quijote with the lions, the former says: “Pues ¿tan loco es vuestro amo -respondió el hidalgo-, que teméis y creéis que se ha de enfrentar con tan fieros animales?” (763). Don Quijote tries to impress him and to show a heroic behaviour, while *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* shows a good judgement, a feature that would fit better a real knight than the reckless heroism of Don Quijote.

Our last knight, the Green Knight, is admired as well. When he goes into the court nobody dares to speak, as his astonishing image leaves the court speechless. Even in his own castle he is totally admired by his liegemen:

And all the men inside that moat   made much joy  
To appear in his presence   promptly that mine,  
Since all price and prowess   and pure manners  
Append to his person,   and praised are ever;

Before all men upon earth   his honor is the most. (910-914)

The Green Knight represents the perfect image of the lord of a castle, as he is admired by all his subjects in the highest place and he is said to show the purest manners and the most prowess in all aspects. This is an extremely idyllic portrait of a person, but it was the way it worked in medieval literature as they could be taken as a source of inspiration.

Don Quijote is clearly an interesting character. He has two different faces: the first one is his good sense in all the matters that are not related to chivalry; and the other one is his insanity in topics related to chivalry. *El Caballero de la Triste Figura* is admired when he behaves as Don Diego de Miranda. This new concept of the knight should become a model to imitate by Don Quijote but he still prefers to think in other kinds of knights, those from the legends. With his actions, he declares that he wants to be like the Green Knight, a knight worthy of admiration and a proper knight for a proper legend.

Don Quijote is considered to be a sane lunatic which means that the behaviour of this character changes through the story. He shows a clear reasoning when he talks about many topics, issues as literature and politics. He is admired as he proves having a good sense about these topics and he can maintain a reasonable conversation, defending his arguments with a very sane attitude. It is seen by Don Diego's son as a very intelligent man in relation to literature. Don Quijote even proves that the fact that Don Diego's son devoted his life to literature was not a real problem, as it is something the son can do because he had had a good education, and it turns out to be a privilege. On the other hand, he is seen as a lunatic when he wants to be a knight, and in his encounter with the lions this insanity is totally proved. What Don Quijote thinks to be a reasonable behaviour for a knight is seen as a mad action by the rest of the world. Therefore, there are no knights anymore. That kind of actions were appropriate for legends but not for real life, and quests were believable in literature but it was something that could not be done in the new modern time. That kind of heroism was something of the past and suitable for the Arthurian legends and the Green Knight, but not for the new man of the Renaissance and for *el Caballero del Verde Gabán*.

## 5. Conclusion

After the thorough analysis of the three chapters of *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* where *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* appears and the whole book of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, we can conclude that the similarities among our characters are not just a mere coincidence. Cervantes's intention was to put a mirror in front of Don Quijote, showing what a real knight would look like against those legendary knights he has in mind, as it happens in many other episodes of the book. The Spanish author places Don Quijote face to face with a real Spanish knight of his same age, a model one, indeed, but he decides to ignore this realistic model and he continues imitating the literary ones. Don Quijote suffers a shock with this new concept of the knight and he seems not to recognize him. *El Caballero del Verde Gabán* does not portray all those idealised concepts of a medieval knight and Don Quijote is conscious of that. The large number of characteristics shared by *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* and the Green Knight show that Cervantes made an effort to include this character in the book, introducing a humanized version of a legendary knight and showing Don Quijote what he could achieve, but he does not want to contemplate that idea and wants to become a knight suitable for a legend.

As we have seen through the different points in the analysis, there is a pattern that is always the same. Different elements are shared by the three knights but in different scales with the three different prototypes of knights. The character of *el Caballero del Verde Gabán* shows the characteristics of a real knight that belongs to the Renaissance, so he would have a normal lifestyle for his social position. Thus, there are no outstanding features in this character. On the other hand, the Green Knight would show all the idealized characteristics of a legendary knight from an epic poem, having several exceptional features. In a middle point between those two knights, we find Don Quijote, who is bound to the real world but he wishes to be a knight from a legend, a distinguished one.

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