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ARTH 535B/Early Modern Art
LANDSCAPES AND TEMPORALITIES

The written word and things no longer resemble one another. And between them, Don Quixote wanders off on his own. (48)

It is enough to recognize [in the nineteenth century] a philosophy deprived of a certain metaphysics because it has been separated off from the space of order, yet doomed to Time, to its flux and its returns, because it is trapped in the mode of being of History. (220)

Foucault, *The Order of Things*

For Foucault, *Don Quixote* is emblematic of the discontinuity between the Renaissance world of resemblances and the Classical Age, with its spatial order manifested in classification tables (grammar, scientific, exchange); Don Quixote is unable to recognize that what is legible is no longer visible, that things, in other words, are no longer the same as each other but are instead perceived through their differences. Don Quixote “is writing itself,” his madness an expression of the translation of signs into poetry, metaphors, allegories, dreams, and *trompe l’oeil* visions, the games that stand in contrast to measurement and order. If differences—in “form, extent, movement” for Descartes—define the age of representation, we ourselves are bound up in the age of history that emerged in the nineteenth century with the development of the human sciences that has constituted us as subjects (history, psychoanalysis, ethnology) (369). Foucault explores the conditions of possibility for understanding things by considering how those conditions were configured in relation to space and time.

I use Foucault here to introduce the evolving stakes of space and time as categories—often fraught—for understanding the world, categories that have founded a range of disciplines. The primacy of one over the other, and even whether they exist at all—as one British physicist recently asked of time—are questions that frame a range of debates in the humanities and the sciences, and that this seminar seeks to explore. I also use the figure of Don Quixote—a kind of nomad traversing the same terrain—as a synecdoche for the historical concerns of the early modern period, when encounters with others—expected or not—generated similar kinds of misunderstandings concerning what is legible and what is visible, between the rational and the irrational. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed a massive dislocation of people because of religious conflicts, travel, and the discovery of worlds previously unknown to Europeans, which call attention, in part, to what was at stake in diverse spaces, from emerging nation states to botanical gardens.

In recent decades interest in space has prompted studies of a variety of contexts (the Atlantic, the Mediterranean), forms and case studies (nationhood, colonialism, imperialism, the plaza, the coffee house, cartography). Yet landscape, which emerges as an independent genre during the period, has been largely neglected, or taken up in terms of iconography or in relation to

an artist's oeuvre. The goal of the seminar, then, is to explore critically a vast range of images and media—from maritime views to gardens to travel imagery—and in so doing, to develop new theoretical frameworks to understand better how these genres operated. That process—and this is a premise of the seminar—also requires a consideration of time, which is usually understood by art historians as narrative, or memory. Instead, through readings that probe our understanding of space and time, the seminar seeks to understand the complex ways in which images mediated experiences of the world.

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