Statue of Don Quixote in Guadalaja, Mexico
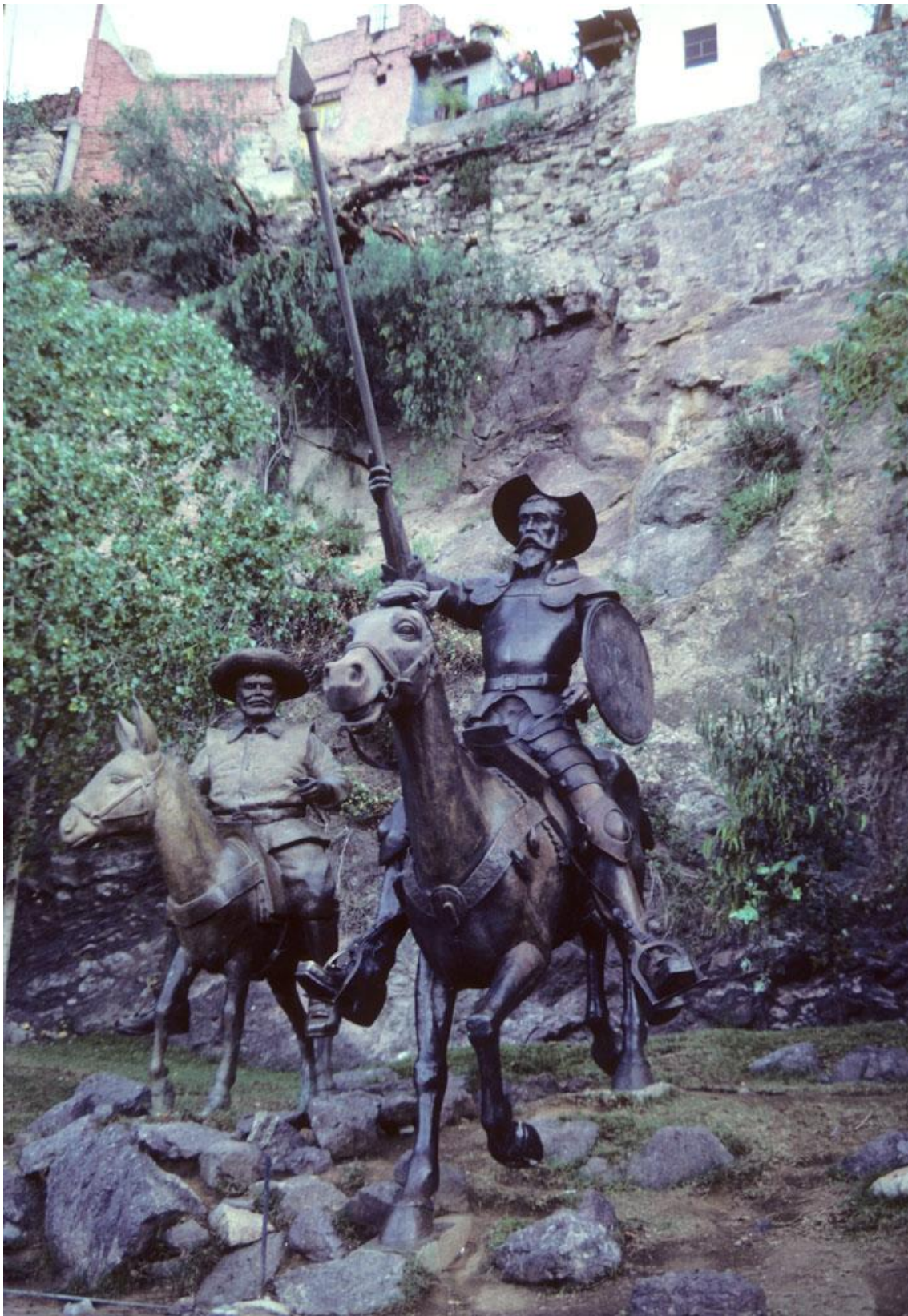
Statue of Don Quixote in Guadalaja, Mexico

A life-sized statue of Don Quixote de la Mancha and Sancho Panza sit at the bottom of a rock cliff. At the top of the bluff are several colorful houses. Don Quixote is a fictional character made famous by the Spanish author, Miguel de Cervantes. At the time the story of Don Quixote was written, Guanajuato was an important colonial city because of the area's large silver deposits. Silver continues to be a major export, while tourism and industry round out the balance of the economy. Because it was an important colonial site, the city boasts of lavish colonial architecture and a historic city center that is recognized by UNESCO for its cultural heritage. Guanajuato is also famous for one of the most important battles in the early push for independence. In 1810, Miguel Hidalgo led his ragtag peasant army to the rich city of Guanajuato. The undermanned Spanish garrison was routed and the surviving soldiers and many wealth citizens barricaded themselves in the granary. The insurgent army then lit the granary on fire, killing all the occupants. Ironically, the granary fire at Guanajuato may have actually slowed down the independence movement because many moderate Mexicans feared the violent insurgents more than the corrupt colonial officials.

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