

CUNY's Graduate Center. Again, migrant households. The Brooklyn

g scholar of Golden Age literature, um, but he was kind enough to ented, a paper on *Don Quijote* that in conjunction with similar papers Ricapito. Others, such as Cándido hoped to attend but were not able omni, retired and active, whom we might participate. To them we offer ge has produced many Hispanists; a all of them. My greatest desire is hose who were absent decide to I am sure would be as instructive g I would enjoy more than editing *Hispanism*.

WILLIAM SHERZER

## Cervantes and the Funny Book Syndrome

JOSEPH RICAPITO

IN AN INTERESTING, PROVOKING, yet flawed article, P.E. Russell published in 1969 an article that had the effect of influencing a good number of critics.<sup>1</sup> In this article Russell focuses on "the element of boisterous laughter" (312) and the various episodes that subject the Don to tricks and which produce laughter. Basic to Russell's point of view is the belief that Cervantes's intention was "to produce laughter of this kind" (312). Furthermore he states that the view that Europe received the *Quijote* as "a brilliantly successful funny book" (312). Suspecting, I believe, some response, Russell's protects himself and his hypothesis by stating that seeing this masterpiece as a "funny book" does not undermine the seriousness of purpose of the work or its "profundity as a work of art" (312).<sup>2</sup>

Neo-Aristotelian criticism, he avers, "had failed to develop any theory of high comedy capable of embracing the sort of comic book [Cervantes] had written in *Don Quijote*" (314). Russell cites both Quintilian and Cicero, and continuing in his task, Russell states that "between 1612 and the end of the eighteenth century...their authors [translators of *Don Quijote*] regarded this book (*Don Quijote*) as anything except a brilliantly funny book" (316). For Saint-Evremond the book was

<sup>1</sup> " 'Don Quijote' as a Funny Book," *MLR*, 64 (1969): 312-326. See also Anthony Close, *Cervantes and the Comic Mind of his Age*. Oxford: UP, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> See page 313 for his reference to some people who viewed some of the humor of the *Quijote* as being out of place in a book as important as the *Quijote*. It is this "older, pre-romantic view of the book's meaning" that Russell wishes to correct.

a funny book and don Quijote himself as a beguiling comic portrait of a madman" (317). Even Tomé Pinheiro da Vega saw don Quijote as "a figure of fun." Even King Philip III thought of Cervantes's masterpiece as a funny book (318). In his concluding remarks Russell reiterates his viewpoint that *Don Quijote* is a funny book and turns to the time of Cervantes for its understanding of "laughter, folly and madness" (319). Cervantes's ideas of laughter and the comic is no different from that of his contemporaries.<sup>3</sup>

Russell accepts the fact that a work "of literature may have an independent life which their authors could not foretell and that writers of all the ages have sometimes spoken as prophets and seers" (325). Russell rejects Sismondi's notion that *Don Quijote* is "the saddest book ever written" (325), and yet stresses again his contention that Cervantes meant to write a funny book and that readers of his time read it for the reason that it was such a funny book.

Russell's theory found a fertile field among other British Hispanists, notably Anthony Close, who in an early book commented on the hilarity of the *Quijote* and later in a lengthy and learned book repeats Russell's argument.<sup>4</sup>

Close brings to his task a great deal of knowledge and erudition but like Russell, he sees the *Quijote* as a static work, one that is petrified in its time and therefore unmovable as far as critical intent is concerned. This, of course, does not change how people in the seventeenth century may have read the work; the meaning and essence of a concept like humor can be seen differently in other times, thanks to added knowledge about humor which Cervantes and his contemporaries had not known but which is latent in the work.

Close begins by denying the image of Cervantes as a person "critical of the political regime and, by extension, social system and ideology of the Spain in which it was his lot to live" (30). In the course of his work on Cervantes he uses the example of *Lazarillo de Tormes* and other picaresque

works (also, in his view "funny books"; throughout his review of picaresque narratives words like 'comic' and 'funny' abound).

Another part of Close's theory is the effectiveness of comic fiction (47). Cervantes presumably has two sources: "burles and the depiction of mannerisms of character and speech" (49). Close cites passages that depict "pandemonium at the inn" (50-51). Cervantes supposedly has taken aspects of contemporary humor and "made it an emblem of a familiar predicament of conscience" (55). Whatever does not fit into Close's view becomes "untypical" of Cervantes's comic fiction.<sup>5</sup> Even language is supposed to reflect the comic vision: "Don Quijote's vocabulary by virtue of its bizarreness and familiarity, plays up the comic effect in untranslatable imaginative ways, which both overdo and undermine grandiloquence" (67).

Close also profiles examples of burlesque and farce. For Cervantes, his comic creations are "complementary to romance, rather than antithetical to it" (70).

For Close, "Cervantes saw his comic prose fiction as subject to the canonical poetics, and made a deliberate effort to bring it into line with that jurisdiction" (70). Moreover, "For Cervantes, the skillful and effective telling of a comic story is an end in itself and an art in its own right, requiring the highest qualities of taste, intelligence and wit" (70). Close also points to Cervantes's clever ability in handling comic characters and situations (71).

In conclusion to his chapter Close states "In sum, Cervantes's critical attitude to the comic genres of his age, his sense of their coarseness and vulgarity, acts as a conscious and active spur to his modifications of motifs taken from them" (72).

The genius of Cervantes, presumably, is to have presented "it [the humor of *Don Quijote*] from a central perspective which is, however, comical, basically enlightened or honourable" (74).

In reviewing the Classical sources of comedy, Close notes how close

<sup>3</sup> See also page 324 for more statements by Russell of his thesis.

<sup>4</sup> See Anthony Close, *Cervantes and the Comic Mind of his Age*. Oxford: UP, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> "The censorious, partly somber tone of the *Coloquio de los perros* makes it untypical of some important aspects of Cervantes's comic fiction...." (59).

Cervantes is to be identified with Classical comedy through "merriment, unpretentious style, and educative purpose" (75). Close notes how Classical comedy contributes to Cervantes's treatments of humor, farce and comedy. He also notes the links with other peninsular theatrical concepts such as decorum (118) and chronicle (130).

In a later chapter, Close observes the comic mentality so common of the era that exists between genteel viewpoint and risible object" (chap. 8). He points to López Pinciano and his ideas on style and the comic and how wit can be blended, creating the links between risibility and the social element. Humor also is seen as a safety valve for people on a higher social level. The link between the comic and the courtly viewpoint is noted in Tirso's *Cigarrales de Toledo*.

Close also notes other aspects of the comic in "the age's comic mentality: blasphemy, delight in derisive taunting, personification of these forms of humor in stereotyped rogues, the intensification of 'ugliness' and, in particular, the tension between all this and the courtly viewpoint which contemplates it" (270).<sup>6</sup>

Close repeats his perception of Cervantes's poetics of the comic which is his opposition "didacticism, lawlessness, as he saw it, of the *comedia*; the coarseness of the *novela* tradition (277).

He believes that Cervantes differed from his contemporaries in that "he recognized the need for synthesis and rationalization, whereas they, around 1600, tended to shun both things. His radical conception of the synthesis puts him several decades ahead of his time" (327). Cervantes also refines the kind of *burllas* one finds in contemporary literature, which remain ludic. Cervantes's humor, Close notes, relates him to "Renaissance Humanism rather than to any literary influence" (332).<sup>7</sup> In some ways although Cervantes conflicts with the degree of Alemán's didactic,

<sup>6</sup> With respect to practical jokes Close is impatient with modern critics who fail "to ask whether they [practical jokes] are 'crue!' in relation to the traditions and practices of which they are a natural extension" (272).

<sup>7</sup> For reasons unknown to me, Close ignores the obvious debt Cervantes has to Boccaccio. See my *Cervantes's Novelas ejemplares: Between History and Creativity*. W. Lafayette, IN.: Purdue UP, 1996.

novelistic mission, he does retain some identification with Mateo Alemán's presentation. In effect, according to Close "Cervantes's great originality lies in his ability to synthesize opposites that his contemporaries tended to treat as separate and irreconcilable" (335).

In spite of the authority and the erudition of Close's book, it fails, as does Russell's article, to understand that the literary work of art can transcend the bounds of its own creation. This is what happens to the *Quijote*, which is a compendium, an encyclopedia of life and life's experiences, of which humor is a basic part.

Close speaks of linkages between Cervantes's view and that of others. Cervantes is involved with giving as close and complete an understanding of what the basic aspects of life are, its positives as well as its negatives. Humor, like love, has many faces, and the eclectic mind of Cervantes displays itself in an intergeneric manner.

In response to Russell, and Close, I can say that *Don Quijote* (and *Lazarillo de Tormes* as well) are *not* a part of the "funny book syndrome," no matter how hilarious things may seem in the book. Humor and comic action are pieces of a larger mosaic, and the statements to the effect that contemporaries regarded the work as a "funny book" do not mitigate the view of current readers who may have a strongly different point of view.

Those who do not think that *Don Quijote* is a funny book, but rather one where humor had a basic part, but that the ultimate effects are not humorous, are legion.

My purpose is to show where and how the *Quijote* is not a funny book, although it contains many parts where the humor and comic action represent a first level toward a more serious one. The final chapter of the work frames the *desengaño* aspect of the work, where the frivolity and humor pale at the final resolution of the novel. I intend to disprove that the *Quijote* is by definition "a funny book," or that it belongs to the "funny book" syndrome. To do this I shall be examining some features and aspects of the humor of the *Quijote* and I shall analyze certain parts and aspects of the work through the modern, psychological view of humor, its origins and its effects. I shall also be reflecting on some aspects of the nature of the *Quijote*, and how humor figures in its composition.

One of the best examples in support of my position has been proposed by Howard Mancing in his influential book.<sup>8</sup> Mancing points out that Pero Pérez and others are really Don Quijote's enemies. They are "the real enchanters in his chivalric world who use and abuse him for self-aggrandizement and for entertainment" (2). Don Quijote is also subjected to "humiliation and ridicule" (*ibid.*, 3). Moreover, Cervantes places in don Quijote's mouth linguistic archaisms which a reader of another era might find humorous. I take this to be a form of authorial subversion where the speeches and acts of the central character produce laughter and other comic effects; that don Quijote's actions are an aspect of humiliation. Mancing says: "The events at the inn are brought to a conclusion with the enchantment of don Quijote by his friends. After two days and nights of being ignored, laughed at, humiliated, and incapacitated as a knight-errant, this enchantment comes almost as a 'welcome relief'" (100). We are not speaking just of comic acts but rather the application of attitudes and motives that are less than funny.

Another episode which exposes the value content of supposedly comic acts directed against Quijote is when don Quijote is placed in a cage and returned home. This is done in the middle of the day, when exposure to the *qué-dívin* would be at its maximum. As Mancing says, "It would never occur to the priest and the barber to take any precautions to avoid ridicule for don Quijote" (111). He continues: "With friends like these, don Quijote has no need of enemy enchanters" (111). He also notes that when don Quijote returns home and is dutifully put to bed, "Don Quijote is no longer a participant; rather he is a mere object, evoking laughter, pity, or anger" (111).

Mancing quotes Gerald Brenan who "identifies don Quijote with Cervantes and sees the book as 'twice over a tragedy that depicts 'the defeat of the man of noble feelings by the second rate and the vulgar' and simultaneously convinces us the 'defeat was right'" (123).

After reading these observations by Mancing and Brenan, we can hardly subscribe to Russell's and Close's view of the *nature* and *purpose*

<sup>8</sup> Howard Mancing, *The Chivalric World of Don Quijote: Style, Structure and Narrative Technique*. Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1982.

of humor. Mancing goes on to restate the problem in convincing and succinct terms: "There is no question that *Don Quijote* is an immensely funny book and that the protagonist is the appropriate object of much humor. Nor can we have any quarrel with those who want to determine what the work meant to its contemporary readers. This task is valid and valuable but ultimately insufficient. As stated in section 1.2, the first step that must be taken in an attempt to comprehend a literary work from a past age is precisely that of trying to view it again as clearly as possible, through the eyes of its contemporaries. But to stop at that point is, it seems to me, to deny the reality of our own times" (125).

In commenting on Vladimir Nabokov's lectures on *Don Quijote*, Guy Davenport attempts to penetrate Nabokov's motives in his analysis and reading of *Don Quijote*. He says, "Here was a state of affairs that Nabokov liked to go at *hec et omnia*. He began to find symmetry of sorts, in the sprawling mess. He begins to suspect that Cervantes is unaware of the book's 'disgusting cruelty'" (xviii).<sup>9</sup> Davenport goes on to say "*Don Quijote* remains a crude old book, full of peculiarly Spanish cruelty, pitiless cruelty that baits an old man who lays like a child into his dotage" (xviii). One could apply Nabokov's opinion of the book to critics like Russell and Close when he says, "I shall have a good deal to say, later, about the brutality of the book and about the curious attitude toward that cruelty on the part of experts and laymen alike, who view it as a kindly humane work" (15). Instead of "kindly humane work" we could substitute "a comic work" of Russell and Close. He goes on to say: "I must apologize for listing these gruesome details—but we need them so as to refute the champions of wholesome fun, of humane titers" (15). Nabokov goes on to say that "When don Quijote recants at the end of the book in its saddest scene, it is neither from gratitude to his Christian God, nor is it under divine compulsion—but because it conforms to the moral utilities of his dark day" (18).

Focusing on another episode of the book, Nabokov further advances the non-comic aspect of the book: "And the two curves cross in that

<sup>9</sup> Bowers, Fredson, ed. *Vladimir Nabokov. Lectures on Don Quijote*, with an introduction by Guy Davenport. N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1983

saddest of adventures, one of the cruelest in the book, when Sancho enchants Dulcinea, bringing the most repulsive of realities: a Dulcinea coarse, uncouth, and reeking of garlic" (23).

Nabokov says the following: "Scholars who speak of sidesplitting episodes in the book do not reveal any permanent injury to their ribs. That in this book the humor contains, as one critic puts it 'a depth of philosophical insight and genuine humanity, in which qualities it has been excelled by no other writers' seems to me to be a staggering exaggeration" (24). He also touches on the meaning of the *burla*. He says: "Finally... the mystification theme, the cruel burlesque jest (the so-called *burla*), which can be defined as a sharp-petaled Renaissance flower on a hairy medieval stem" (31).

Nabokov devotes a chapter to "Cruelty and Mystification," in which he wishes "to illuminate a corner of the torture house by means of my little torchlight, and this is the first thing I shall do today—samples of cheerful physical cruelty in part one" (51). Later he talks about mental cruelties, i.e., various enchantments and enchanters. As for the composition of these episodes, Nabokov says: "The author seems to plan it thus: Come with me, ungentle reader, who enjoys seeing a live dog inflated and kicked around like a soccer football" (51). Keeping in mind Russell's and Close's views on the "funny book syndrome," note how Nabokov reacts to some of Aubrey Bell's views of the "sensitive, keen-witted folks, humorous and humane." Nabokov says: "Humane indeed! What about the hideous cruelty—with or without the author's intent or sanction—which riddles the whole book and befouls its humor?" (52). Further he says: "Both parts of *Don Quijote* form a veritable encyclopedia of cruelty. From that viewpoint it is one of the most bitter and barbarous books ever penned. And its cruelty is artistic" (52).

In reviewing some episodes of *Don Quijote*, he notes that an innkeeper "allows a haggard madman to stay at his inn just in order to laugh at him" (53); the beating of Andrés by Haldudo; the beating don Quijote receives at the hands of a mule driver; how Sancho is beaten by the "servants of some traveling monks" (53); a beating Rocinante receives at the hands of carriers. Nabokov says "What a riot, what a panic" (53). He also reviews other painful experiences like that of Sancho Panza in

chapter 15; don Quijote's loss of an ear; a bevy of punches. He sarcastically adds, noting Sancho Panza's blanketing, how some people "amuse themselves at Sancho's expense by tossing him in a blanket as men do with dogs at Shrove-tide—a casual allusion to humane and humorous customs" (54).

Speaking of the second part, Nabokov repeats his sarcastic remark, viewing the second part as "Our humane, humorous book" (56). "Compared to the fun in the first part, the mirth-provoking cruelty of the second part reaches a higher and more diabolic level in regard to the mental forms it takes and sinks to a new low of incredible crudity in its physical aspect" (56-57). As for the episode with the cats (II, 46), he refers to "the so-called side-splitting but in reality atrocious and brutal and fundamentally foolish episode of the cats" (69). The accent on don Quijote's usefulness (only in a context of being used) is stressed when Nabokov observes that in a situation when don Quijote is completely exhausted, and when "don Antonio, seeing no further fun can be squeezed out of the martyr, has his servants carry him off to bed" (73). Nabokov further highlights the non-comical quality of the jests when don Quijote turns on his tormentors saying "'Away with you, ministers of Hell! I am not made of brass so that I do not feel such unusual torture as this!'" (74). Apparently the readers that found don Quijote such a funny book must have overlooked an episode such as this one (and that of the cats) for them (and I include critics like Russell and Close in that group) to have seen the book as funny and comical. Referring to chapter 43, Nabokov studies an episode in which Martirnes plays a prank on don Quijote. Nabokov says: "This is an excellent scene from an artistic point of view but its cruelty is appalling (147-48). This is the episode when don Quijote is made to hang from his wrist.

Without necessarily carrying my own point too far, Nabokov does bring up the question of the varying mores and standards between Cervantes's time and our own time. He says: "Cervantes himself, an educated person, finds 'droll' forms of cruelty that are absolutely impossible today in this country [USA] or in England and are, of course, censured by all civilized people in modern times. One suspects that now and then the author himself does not quite realize how disgustingly cruel

the priests, barbers, innkeepers, etc. were in relation to don Quijote" (157).

As Russell and Close speak of the hilarity that is the response of readers of the seventeenth century, one is forced to wonder where and what the sensibilities of such people are. For people as religious as the seventeenth-century Spaniard must have been, it becomes unthinkable that the treatment accorded don Quijote would be laughed at so coldly.

Perhaps one way the public of the time of *Don Quijote* regarded it was the same way people regard slapstick comedy today. No one takes slapstick comedy seriously. Pratts, slipping on banana peels, falling from tall buildings; no one believes that there will be a realistic consequence to these situations. On the other hand, is the *Quijote* to be placed in the same category as the Marx Brothers or Abbott and Costello? There is an undoubtable dimension of the work that can simply be called "serious," in spite of the comical experiences that don Quijote has. Duffield (as quoted by Bowers) says the following: "It is therefore of the greatest interest to us to be assured that Cervantes knew what he was about when he began to make his map of the human mind. He was perhaps the first to navigate its darkest regions, to tell us of the quality of this terrible darkness, and to show how it could be shined upon with the healing blessedness of light. There is as much pleasure to be obtained in proving this statement as in following the adventures of don Quijote in his native land" [editor's comment] (9). The image of the "map of the human mind" is a very apt and useful one. No one thinks in such terms about farce and slapstick. It is for this reason that Russell and Close are far off the mark.

There is another aspect to the thinking of Russell and Close. To insist on the literary work of art as frozen in its own time and place is too narrow an approach and a misapplication of the principle of historicism. When M. Bataillon saw the *Lazarillo de Tormes* as a "l'ivre pour faire rire," he had obviously forgotten the advice that Lázaro gives in the prologue to the effect that those who wished to accept the work on its first level of acceptance were free to do so, but for those who wished to delve deeper

there was more to be found.<sup>10</sup> Russell and Close have remained on the surface of the text and have not delved *below* the comical events to see what is to be found there.

Having laid out the terrain of this question—the "funny book syndrome versus the deep and comprehensive book, it becomes my purpose to show what Mançing had alluded to above: that even in the presence of obviously comic material, the *Quijote*, when seen in its totality, is indeed a serious book with a serious purpose and not a "l'ivre pour faire rire."

My task, therefore, is to do a survey of the comical and funny episodes and experiences of the *Quijote* in an effort to understand their place in the *whole* work.

It would do well to review *Don Quijote* with the purpose of defining what exactly is meant by the humor of the *Quijote*.

No doubt the reader and the critic are faced with the very subjective nature of this task. What one person finds funny another may not laugh at. But I believe that a dissection of the subject could be made by using a general classification, in which case the subject of humor can be seen over a large number of possibilities, always governed of course by customs of a given society. The task may be more difficult than it seems, but there are certain experiences in the book that may strike one as obvious at some level of humor. The purpose of this exercise is to see if the *Quijote* or the *Lazarillo* belong to the funny book syndrome.

Like so much of Cervantes's work, it cannot rightly be defined in a strict manner. Cervantes's works often defy an easy classification but I believe a close examination of the examples of humor would not support Russell's and Close's view of *Don Quijote* as belonging to the "funny book syndrome."

<sup>10</sup> Morel-Fatio, A. transl. *La Vie de Lazarillo de Tormès (La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes)*. Introduction by M. Bataillon. Paris: Aubier, 1958. See also Joseph H. Silverman's cogent response to Bataillon's notion that *Lazarillo* was a "funny book": *RPh*, 15 (1961): 88-94.

Only a fool would stand up and say that there is no humor in the *Quijote*. But to say that the book belongs to the "funny book syndrome" is just as erroneous. There are episodes there that would negate this concept, but more importantly, the meaning and value of the work when seen in a comprehensive whole would reject a classification such as the "funny book syndrome." Seen in its totality, the *Quijote* contains humor of different kinds but the dénouement would deny it the title of a "funny book"; quite the contrary.

Another consideration that must be dealt with and which forms the basis of Close's book, is the standard of humor during the author's time, and the fact that the *Quijote*, like the *Lazarillo*, has been seen as a "livre facéieux" by various critics. Close makes a cutoff point between contemporary critics (of Cervantes's time and shortly after) and Romantic critics. These latter ones accepted the sad or tragic contours of the *Quijote*, and would then be regarded, as Close does, as "Romantic" readers.<sup>12</sup> Close's method is too easy and too simple. That some contemporary critics of Cervantes saw the *Quijote* as a funny book only means that one sector of readership holds this as true; but this does not mean that such a point of view is universal; it is not incised in stone.

At the same time, one would have to ask why the *Quijote* is read and appreciated century after century (quite apart from the question of its purported humor). It is because it has something to say to each generation. It does contain elements of common value to more than one era but at the same time there is an *evolution* of values and this evolution may account for why one generation appreciates a work and another one rejects it. A modern generation, perhaps a more enlightened one to be sure will see a canonical work through the lens of new ideas and new sensibilities. Close would put precedence of Cervantes's contemporaries over that of more modern readers. Humor is in some ways constant, but in other ways is subject to change. There is nothing stodgier than an old joke or one that is out of style. Literature speaks many tongues and its humor is variable. What for Close is humorous may not be so for others.

<sup>12</sup>The *Romantic Approach to Don Quijote: A Critical History of the Romantic Tradition in Quijote Criticism*. Cambridge: UP, 1978.

To repeat, I accept the presence of humor in the *Quijote*, but I deny that this makes the work a "funny book."

One of the first aspects of humor in the book is the appearance of don Quijote. From the very first, we read "Frisaba la edad de nuestro hidalgo con los cincuenta años; era de complexión recia, seco de carnes, enjuto de rostro, gran madrugador y amigo de la caza" (I, 1, 19a).<sup>12</sup> Throughout the work, the appearance of don Quijote will be the cause of wonderment, of trouble. But there are aspects of his appearance that are also of a humorous nature. The above quote begins with a certain absurdity of the character, of being out of touch with his time. Don Quijote adopts a "new" way of life that is discordant with the mores of his peers. He is looked upon in certain humorous fashion because of his appearance and his particular use of language.<sup>13</sup> If his appearance at the beginning of the work provokes humor, at the beginning of the second part it has a similar function and affect:

"Visitáronle, en fin, y halláronle sentado en la cama, vestida una almilla de bayeta verde, con un bonete colorado toledano, y estaba tan seco y amojamado, que no parecía sino hecho de carmemonia" (II, 1, 269a). In both cases his appearance defies any contact with what one would normally expect in this regard.

In the second part, Cervantes gives the reader a perspective of what his appearance was when he was returned home in a cage. Don Quijote's ama does this when she speaks to Sansón Carrasco. She says: "La vez primera nos le volvieron atravesado sobre un jumento, molido a palos. La segunda vino en un carro de bueyes, metido y encerrado en una jaula, adonde él se daba a entender que estaba encantado" (II, 6, 290a).

These perceptions of don Quijote, even in cases where some cruelty is involved, elicits no doubt some humorous reaction.

When don Quijote and Sansón Carrasco decide to do battle, their

<sup>12</sup> All quotations from *Don Quijote* are taken from, Miguel de Cervantes, *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Prólogo de Américo Castro. Séptima edición. Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Porrúa, 1967.

<sup>13</sup> See below for other observations on the use of language and humorous results.



squires retire to a safe spot to avoid any combat themselves. Neither Sancho Panza nor don Quijote know that the opposing knight is Sansón Carrasco and his squire. Both wear masks, and in this case Tomé Cecial, Sansón's squire, has a disguise with a very big nose. Quite apart from the nature of their conversation, the picture of Tomé Cecial is smilering and has something to do with theatrical effects. The mask, as in the *Commedia dell'arte*, is used not to deceive, as Sansón and Tomé Cecial think they are doing, but to put their figures in a humorous frame.<sup>14</sup>

An excellent example of the reaction of others caused by don Quijote's appearance can be seen when he goes to don Diego Miranda's house:

"Esta última razón de don Quijote tomó barruntos el caminante de que don Quijote debía ser algún mentecato y aguardaba que con otras lo confirmase" (II, 16, 322b). It is don Quijote's appearance, subtly juxtaposed with don Diego's, plus his strange manner of being, and the decidedly strange mission he is on that brings don Diego's doubts on him. Later don Diego will retract his suspicions about don Quijote's sanity. His first reaction to don Quijote is, "Detuvo la rienda el caminante, admirándose de la apostura y rostro de Don Quijote, el cual iba sin celada, que la llevaba Sancho como maleta en el arzón delantero de la albarda del rucio" (II, 16, 321b), later don Diego observes: "Lo que juzgó de don Quijote de la Mancha el de lo Verde fue que semejante manera ni parecer de hombre no le había visto jamás: admiróle la longura de su cuello, 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" (II, 16, 321b). The verb "admirar," used in this context can easily belong to 'surprise' 'to evoke laughter'. This same reaction is to be seen shortly after at the beginning of the chapter dealing with the wedding of Camacho. When some students and *labradores* meet don Quijote, they have the same reaction as don Diego:

"y así estudiantes como labradores cayeron en la misma admiración

<sup>14</sup> The uses of disguise will be further explored below.

en que caían todos aquellos que la vez primera veían a don Quijote" (II, 19, 334a). Once again, don Quijote's appearance is a matter for surprise, if not the benign humor caused by the impression that they are dealing with someone who is not quite right in the head.

We see another example of don Quijote's person at the home of don Diego during the party and where the narrator informs us of don Quijote's person, i.e., his appearance: "Estas dieron tanta prisa en sacar a danzar a don Quijote, que le molieron, no solo el cuerpo, pero el ánima. Era cosa de ver la figura de don Quijote largo, tendido, flaco, amarillo, estrecho en el vestido, desatado y, sobre todo, no nada ligero" (II, 62, 493a). From the very beginning his appearance is a matter of jest and his appearance, together with his strange manner of speech, renders him a strange object to others, and this strangeness leads to humor or practical jokes, some of which are in the poorest taste for any century.

One of the common ploys when dealing with a suspected madman is to go along pretending all is well. However, there is a boomerang effect to this in the *Quijote*. When someone "goes along" with the madman and adopts that person's quirks, he/she inadvertently becomes as mad as the supposed madman. In fact, an early episode begins on several notes of humor beginning with don Quijote's appearance. His perceptions or misperceptions set the stage for humorous happenings. He sees the prostitutes at the door of the inn as ladies and the inn a castle. So different is he that the "distráidas mozas" seemed to him to be "elegant ladies": "Mirábanle las mozas y andaban con los ojos buscándole el rostro, que la mala visera le encubría, mas como se oyeron llamar doncellas, cosa tan fuera de su profesión, no pudieron tener la risa" (I, 2, 2, a,b). Moreover, we are told, "El lenguaje, no entendido de las señoras, y el mal tallo de nuestro caballero acrecentaba en ellas la risa" (I, 2, 23a). Don Quijote's appearance even catches the attention of the inn-keeper: "viendo aquella figura contrahecha, armada de armas tan desiguales como eran la brida" (I, 2, 23a). The innkeeper joins the madcap affair by adopting some of don Quijote's language: "Si vuestra merced, señor caballero, busca posada, amén del lecho (porque en esta venta no hay ninguno), todo lo demás se hallará en ella en mucha



abundancia" (1, 2, 23 a,b).

The subsequent dubbing of don Quijote as a knight is full of contained humor. The innkeeper, not one to let an occasion for fun to go by, focuses on the event. The narrator says, "El ventero, que, como está dicho, era un poco socarrón y ya tenía algunos barruntos de la falta de juicio de su huésped, acabó de creerlo, cuando acabó de oírle semejantes razones, y por tener que reír aquella noche, determinó de seguirle el humor" (1, 3, 25a). The participation of the "damas" continues the thread of the make-believe dubbing. "Hecho esto, mandó a una de aquellas damas que le ciñese la espada, la cual lo hizo con mucha desenvoltura y discreción, porque no fue menester poca para no reventar de risa a cada punto de las ceremonias" (1, 2, 27a).

All of this is done with much staging, but by acceding, the characters themselves become "mad" as it were, and from a longer and further perspective, the whole inn seems like an insane asylum. The ultimate change and irony is that the innkeeper does not charge don Quijote for his stay: "El ventero, por verle ya fuera de la venta, con no menos retóricas, aunque con más breves palabras, respondió a las suyas y, sin pedirle la cosa de la posada, le dejó ir a la buena hora" (1, 2, 27b).

This technique, which shall be repeated in different ways throughout the *Quijote*, is a method of depicting a mildly humorous situation with touches of irony punctuating the events.

There are several characters that contribute to the air of humor and comic action. The innkeeper, whom we have just studied, throughout the episode takes the role of comic provoker. It is especially useful to note that from the beginning of the episode, there are small points which punctuate the happenings like the dubbing itself: "en mitad de la leyenda alzó la mano y dióle sobre el cuello un buen golpe, y tras él, con su misma espada, un gentil espladarazo, siempre murmurando entre dientes, como que rezaba" (1, 3, 27a). The innkeeper becomes an unforgettable character because he imitates a serious ritual with comic overtones and because of his change of spirit in not charging don Quijote for his lodging.

The case of Andrés, the shepherd who is being beaten by his master, Haldudo, is a good case in point because the three characters are indelibly brought together in this episode which contains various levels of humor. Don Quijote's vision does not allow the whole episode to be seen in toto; in fact, the episode is structured oddly. Haldudo and Andrés perceive the same thing, i.e., Andrés is being punished for his theft or for the loss of the sheep through carelessness. They can both see the problem equally clearly, but don Quijote does not see the full picture. He can only see what his mental condition will allow him to see. In this divergence consists the humor, although the beating that Andrés receives is not funny at all. The obvious physical aspect of the episode is later crowded out by don Quijote's fantasy that he has complied with one of his functions as a knight errant, with don Quijote going off happily as Haldudo goes back to beating Andrés. The light humor which marked don Quijote's perception comes to an end. The episode will be further developed and finished when don Quijote again meets Andrés later in the work and the boy destroys don Quijote's belief that he had in fact carried out a good deed.

There is a certain amount of humor created toward deliberately implausible things or happenings. It is also a matter of some humor for the reader to hear Sancho Panza talk about the promised island: "Decíate entre otras cosas, don Quijote que se dispusiese a ir con él de buena gana, porque tal vez le podía suceder aventura, que ganase, en quitame esas pajas, alguna insula, y le dejase a él por gobernador della" (1, 7, 38b). The humor derives from the discordant juxtaposition of governing by a bumpkin. Moreover, the word *gobernador* in the mouth of such a fellow who is considered to have "poca sal en la mollera," becomes funnier. All the incidents related to his assumption of office in Barataria are an important function of the comic in *Don Quijote*.

Of further comic value is the conversation between don Quijote and Sancho concerning the fasting habits of knights. It comes as a mild shock to Sancho to hear his master say, "Hágote saber, Sancho, que es honra de los caballeros andantes no comer en un mes, y ya que coman, sea de aquello que hallaren más a mano" (1, 10, 48b). A similar effect is achieved when don Quijote insists that knights do not carry money around with

them. Don Quijote's answer after some commentary by Sancho is that "—No digo yo, Sancho— replicó don Quijote—, que sea forzoso a los caballeros andantes no comer otra cosa sino esas frutas que dices; sino que su más ordinario sustento debía de ser dellas y de algunas hierbas que hallaban por los campos, que ellos conocían, y yo también conozco" (I, 10, 48b). This of course does not bode well with Sancho who has higher thoughts and ambitions with regard to satisfying the demands of his stomach.

Well into the first part the reader becomes accustomed to the fact that don Quijote will undergo considerable difficulties in achieving his goal as a knight errant. Some of these episodes are humorous, but lest the reader not get the picture of don Quijote that Cervantes has prepared for him, he transfers to his steed the same examples. This process of literary refraction is common throughout the *Quijote* but to extend it to animals is unexpected. Rocinante undergoes the problems of equine libido and is rejected roundly by the mares. Then the harriers attack him: "viendo los harrieros la fuerza que a sus yeguas se le hacía, acudieron con estacas, y tanto palos le dieron, que le derribaron mal parado en el suelo" (I, 15, 64a). This episode is fairly clear. Cervantes gives us another look at don Quijote and his knightly endeavor but through his steed.

The principal feminine focus of the *Quijote* is Dulcinea, although she does not appear except in the imagination and fantasy of don Quijote. However, other women have an important place in the work, and I think of Maritornes, who has a close tie with Dulcinea, even if only as a complete opposite of her.

The episode I prefer to is the one dealing with don Quijote when she goes to a tryst with a harrier. She walks into don Quijote's arms, who thinks that she is the daughter of the innkeeper. Maritornes is caught in don Quijote's arms and the harrier rains down blows on him. This episode is clearly of a farcical nature, and like all farce, it ends in physical aspects. Don Quijote, who is deeply involved in a fantasy about this supposed princess receives a beating at the hands of the harrier.

Another character who is very much involved in episodes of a physical nature is Sancho who is victimized by being blanketed: "y allí,

puesto Sancho en mitad de la manta, comenzaron a levantarle en alto, y a holgarse con él, como perro por carnestofeñidas" (I, 17, 74b).

There are of course other characters that do things that can be considered humorous, but the above is just an example of how Cervantes creates different kinds of humor through characterization.

Another form of humor that appears in the book is the use of implausible things. Perhaps the best example of this deals with the game the author/narrator plays with the manuscripts of the work: "Pero está el daño de todo esto [the battle with the Vizcaino] que en este punto y término deja pendiente el autor desta historia esta batalla, disculpándose que no halló más escrito destas hazañas de don Quijote, de las que deja referidas. Bien es verdad que el segundo autor desta obra no quiso creer que tan curiosa historia estuviese entregada a las leyes del olvido, ni que hubiesen sido tan poco curiosos los ingenios de la Mancha, que no hubiesen en sus archivos o en sus escritorios algunos papeles que deste famoso caballero tratasen; y así con esta imaginación, no se desesperó de hallar el fin desta apacible historia, el cual, siéndole el cielo favorable, le halló del modo que se contará en la segunda parte" (I, 8, 43b).

In the beginning of the following chapter the narrator writes about how he accidentally came across the continuation of the battle with the Vizcaino. It is the work of a "morisco aljamiado": "Estaba en el primero cartapacio pintada muy al natural la batalla de don Quijote con el Vizcaino, puestos en la mesma postura que la historia cuenta, levantadas las espadas" (I, 9, 45a).

It is this kind of outlandish coincidence that could not have been done except within the view of humor or satire. It is the kind of benign humor that Cervantes delights in, not farce, but not-too-subtle but happily arranged and composed happenings. This is also a part of Cervantes's commitment to tongue-in-cheek humor.

There is another good example of this kind of humor that Cervantes indulges in and that is to be found in the Cautivo episode. Zoraida wrote in Arabic with a cross. There are some epistles that follow this pattern of highly implausible things. Zoraida decides to use a novel method of communication; she used a long stick of cane to which is attached the letter.

"Acacé, pues, que un día, estando en un terrado de nuestra prisión con otros tres compañeros, haciendo pruebas de saltar con las cadenas, por entretener el tiempo, estando solos, porque todos los demás cristianos habían salido a trabajar, alcé acaso los ojos y vi que por aquellas cerradas ventanillas que he dicho parecía la caña, y al remate della puesto un lienzo atado, y la caña se estaba blandando y moviéndose casi como si hiciera señas que llegásemos a tomarla" (I, 40, 199a).

Cervantes injects into this episode the elements of these implausible happenings. The prisoners are under careful watch, and so the possibility of being caught at the game is very high if seen in a realistic sense, but realism and practicality are not one of Cervantes's particularly necessary ingredients in this part of the *Cautivo* episode. Following the dictum of satire as "treating serious things humorously or treating silly things seriously," Cervantes adds these touches to the story because he knows that such touches are a delight to the readers, as Cervantes indulges in his own brand of satirical humor with respect to the happenings of the romance of chivalry or the Greek romance.

All critics are in agreement over the interpretation of *Don Quijote* as a work of great irony. Someone once defined irony as taking a tortuous path to its object. To be sure, there are several fundamental episodes that co-involve humor. The message of these episodes, if, indeed, there is a message to be drawn, is tightly allied with the major theme of the *Quijote*. The chapters dealing with the baciyelmo provide such ironic humor. The treatment begins benignly:

"De allí a poco, descubrió don Quijote un hombre a caballo, que trató en la cabeza una cosa que relumbraba como si fuera de oro, y aún él apenas le hubo visto cuando se volvió a Sancho y dijo..." (I, 16, 91a).

The reader by now becomes accustomed to don Quijote's (mis)perceptions. Sancho does not think it is the Yelmo de Mambrino. We have here one of the fundamental themes of the book — perception of the individual and its possibility being denied or reflected by other perceptions. In Chapter 45, part I, the problem of whether it is a barber's basin or Mambrino's helmet reappears. Once again supporters of the

Yelmo face the supporters of the barber's basin. The consternation of the put-upon barber is best expressed when he says: "— ¡Válame Dios! — dijo a esta sazón el barbero burlado —. ¿Que es posible que tanta gente honrada diga que ésta no es bacía sino yelmo? Cosa parece ésta que puede poner en esta admiración a toda una Universidad, por discreta que sea. Basta: si es que esta bacía es yelmo, también debe de ser esta albarda ¡aiez de caballo, como este señor ha dicho" (I, 45, 226b).

In Cervantes's view of the world nothing "is" things are subjected to relative perceptions. Essentially, if you think it is a barber's basin, so be it. It is not the final decision that is important, but the tongue-in-cheek humor that emanates from the discussion. It is this kind of humor that Cervantes is expressing, one that is subtle, not audacious or raucous in the tradition of Latin theater, for example.

A similar form of humor in this same vein is the episode of the puppet show. Cloaked in the commonplace of the chivalric tradition, the play deals with the freeing of Melisendra by Gafieros. The puppet master presents a little drama together with music and effects. Don Quijote succumbs to the action of the mini-drama and ends up destroying the pageant, puppets and all.

As in other episodes, the humor derives from don Quijote's confusion between play and reality. We see a visual spectacle worthy of a comedy, especially with the destruction of the tableau. No subtlety here. The visual object of seeing someone dressed in the same manner of the characters of the play breaks the barrier between drama and the conventional spectator, and the play is humor-provoking. The irony, of which the humor is a sub-set, consists of the subtle connection between play and reality; for don Quijote one is equal to the other. The humor is to be seen when Cervantes says: "Viendo y oyendo, pues, tanta morisma y tanto estruendo don Quijote, parecióle ser bien dar ayuda a los que huían y levantándose en pie, en voz alta dijo: — No consentiré yo que en mis días y en mi presencia se le haga superchería a tan famoso caballero y a tan atrevido enamorado como don Gafieros. ¡Deteneos, malhadada canalla; no le sigáis ni persigáis, si no, conmigo sois en batalla!" (I, 26, 364b). It is this misperception, this confusion of levels that creates the humor.

The episode recalls don Quijote's innocent misapprehension of the chained convicts who go to the galleys against their will. The humor derives from don Quijote's ignorance of the real status of the convicts, an episode analogous to the Andrés/Haldudo experience. What trips the wire of don Quijote's fantasy world is the sight of people he believes are being dragged against their will. The play exists between the public outside of the chivalric imagination of don Quijote and the reader. For the spectator of this episode there is no sense other than that don Quijote is crazy and to see him functioning on one level of knowledge, opposed by another one, which is what creates the humor. The comic quality of the episode ends when don Quijote asks the prisoners to go to the El Toboso and to tell Dulcinea that don Quijote freed these persons in her name. The pelting by stones of don Quijote and Sancho ends the comic aspect of the episode.

Equally, the episode of the lions (II, 17) provides other aspects of comic relief. But here the author provides the character and readers with a bona fide antagonist, the lions.

At the beginning of the episode there is a tension created by the on-lookers who are afraid that don Quijote will be devoured by the lion and there is every reason to believe that this could be so. When the lion cage is opened and everyone scatters for protection, don Quijote is standing in a one-on-one situation with a truly dangerous animal. But the tension is dissipated when the lion fails to take don Quijote's challenge. The lion's reluctance, signified by the turning of his hind parts on don Quijote, is what creates the humor, and the characters that climbed up trees to be out of the reach of the lion are equally funny. The subversion of don Quijote's valor is what causes the humor. What was initially a very dangerous and potentially catastrophic situation ends in the laughter of the reader, (and not necessarily the other characters in the episode).

There are several other categories of humor that can be noted. There are the unknowing conclusions where someone like Fernando swearing he will marry Dorothea, without knowing there is at work a greater moral and religious law operative. Fernando does not know that he is stepping deeper and deeper into marriage. The skeptical reader smiles, probably

well-informed of the changes in Counter Reformation rules concerning marriage. Fernando's promise, although not made in good faith, will boomerang upon him later.

All of the chapters dealing with Dulcinea's letter are based upon a number of misconceptions. Sancho forgets the letter and he must invent excuses. The nature of the excuses constitutes a vivid example of humor, since the reader and Sancho know the truth.

Two of perhaps the best known episodes of the *Quijote* are those of the Cave of Montesinos and the flight of Clavileño. In the former, don Quijote tests the credulousness of others by insisting that he had been down in the cave for several days instead of the hour that Sancho calculates. On the one hand Cervantes suggests the comparison of heuristic time with *durée*, but Cervantes uses his character to create a humorous situation. Even Sancho gives a laugh of disbelief when Quijote says he has been in the cave for several days. Don Quijote is asking people to believe him in the same way he wants people to swear that Dulcinea is the most beautiful woman in the world, even though they have not seen her. What he saw in the cave is supposed to be endorsed also as true. The reader, however, is as skeptical as Sancho and others there present. The reader knows that don Quijote is probably joshing and the reader's attention shifts to the description of the tale. Cervantes is attempting a major coup here. In order to show that he is in fact joshing, the author has don Quijote add a detail which clearly gives away the invention. Don Quijote says that the heart of Durandarte has been salted so that it would not smell and be preserved (see II, 23, 351a). The incongruence of salting the heart and the general environment of a chivalric ballad is obvious. One salts pork or other foods, but salting the heart of Durandarte surely belongs to the world of humor and kidding, not the seriousness of the chivalric novel. But the meaning and consequence of the episode is not final; that is to be found in the Clavileño episode.

Sancho essentially repeats the antics of don Quijote with respect to the question of belief. Don Quijote tested the faith of others by inventing an outlandish tale; Sancho Panza does the same. Both of them had witnesses to their exploits. The witnesses must find Sancho's account of

what he saw in the skies quite humorous, and it is a credit to Sancho's powers of imagination. Cervantes puts the process of faith in its proper relative context:

"—Sancho, pues vos queréis que se os crea lo que habéis visto en el cielo, yo quiero que vos me creáis a mí lo que vi en la cueva de Montesinos. Y no os digo más" (II, 42, 417b).

Both episodes are interlarded with humor-provoking ingredients, in spite of the very serious questions that their actions provoke.

When don Quijote is defeated in various battles, many times he uses different excuses. In the windmills episode there are *encantadores* that have changed the substance of things. This is done in several instances, as well as when don Quijote outrightly lies, as when he says he fought ten giants (I, 5).

A rather low-level form of humor occurs when there are disguises, the funniest of which is when Tomé Cecial assumes the role of squire to Sansón Carrasco. Sancho is entranced by the disguise of Cecial, especially the nose: "cuando la primera que se ofreció a los ojos de Sancho Panza fue la nariz del escudero del Bosque, que era tan grande que casi le hacía sombra a todo el cuerpo" (II, 14, 316a). The mask is very reminiscent of those used in the *Commedia dell'Arte*. No one can react other than with a smile.

The Priest and the Barber also assume disguises. At first, the priest dresses as a woman but then realizes that it an offense to decorum, but the idea that he and the Barber would dress in a different fashion merely belongs to the template of "dressing up," just as don Quijote "dresses up" as a chivalric figure.

Dorothea uses disguises twice, the first when she sets out in search of Fernando and then when she assumes the role of the Princess Micomicona. Even Ginés tries the disguise of a "gypsy" (I, 30). These examples all function within a perspective of some humor, no matter how farcical or subtle it may be.

Another excellent example of farce is when don Quijote is in the battle in the inn (I, 16). Here the humor reaches farcical proportions when don Quijote mistakes Martiornes for an angelic character and embraces her, speaking in chivalric language. Later in I, 35, the melodra-

matic episode of trying to convince Lotario by putting on a drama of his own steps into the area of farce, especially with the use of blood as a falsely certifying detail to his farce. The farcical aspects appear when don Quijote slashes at the wine skins, thinking it is the head of a dragon. Even the second battle in the inn where the government officials come to arrest don Quijote for freeing the prisoners is humorous (I, 22). To complete this picture in the second part, the adventure of the *rebuznados* is not only farcical but it practically enters the area of surrealism.

Cowardice has been used by writers and dramatists for comic effects, and Cervantes is no different. Both don Quijote and Sancho Panza tremble before the carts of death and the dead body, eliciting fear and worry. This achieves its humor due to the fact that don Quijote has pretensions to courage. This inconsistency between valor and cowardice devaluate the characters, rendering them silly and funny.

Another area of humor in the *Quijote* is the use of language. From the very first, when don Quijote adopts his lifetime project he is essentially stepping back in time to an age long gone by whose language could not necessarily stop evolving. The temporal span of don Quijote's activity is placed in the Middle Ages and therefore his speech reflects that time. In I, 1, don Quijote pronounces the all-important speech of "La razón de la sinrazón." It was this kind of language that he loved to read in the romances of chivalry and consequently will use himself in his adventures. It is precisely this incongruence between the speech patterns and vocabulary of the Middle Ages and his own use of such speech that easily creates some humor and occasional silliness. Later, at the first inn, he speaks: "—Dichosa edad y siglo dichoso aquel donde saldrán a luz las famosas hazañas mías, dignas de entallarse en bronce, esculpirse en mármoles y pintarse en tablas, para memorias en lo futuro. ¡Oh tú, sabio encantador, quienquiera que seas, a quien ha de tocar el ser coronista desta peregrina historia" (I, 2, 22a). This kind of speech immediately puts people on their guard, and after some thinking, a person realizes that he/she is dealing with a strange duck. From then on, don Quijote is not taken seriously; in fact, he is looked upon as a crazy man and it gives him very little credibility and mostly a lot of derision.

When facing the Toledan merchants, don Quijote, in a spirit of

challenge, deals with them in the language of the chivalric romance: "—Non fuyáis, gente cobarde; gente cautiva, atendida que no por culpa mía sino de mi caballo estoy aquí tendido" (II, 4, 30b). Arriving at home, the *labrador* says: "—Abran vuestras mercedes al señor Valdovinos y al señor Marqués de Mantua, que viene mal ferido, y al señor moro Abindarratez que trae cautivo el valeroso Rodrigo de Narváez, alcalde de Antequera" (I, 5, 32b), thereby showing how don Quijote's antics are contagious and how others, like the *labrador*, will ape him. Later in the same episode, don Quijote would say: "—Tenganse todos; que vengo malferido, por la culpa de mi caballo. Lévenme a mi lecho, y llámesse, si fuere posible, a la Sabia Urganda, que cure y cate de mis heridas" (I, 5, 32b).

In the coincidentally-found second manuscript of the work which continues the interrupted fight, don Quijote addresses the ladies: "—Por cierto, hermosas señoras, yo soy muy contento de hacer lo que me pedis; mas ha de ser con una condición y concierto" (I, 9, 46b).

During the episode of the Yelmo de Mambrino, don Quijote gives a long disquisition within which he uses several older forms such as "fermosas," "fablar" and "furto." This use of antiquated language makes don Quijote look and sound foolish and belongs to his Janus-like double face of comedy and tragedy.

Don Quijote's *carta de amor* to Dulcinea represents a significant part of the plot, and it is all bound up with silliness. The question of the letter is a parallel action to the essence of the "truthfulness" of the very book. It will pass through various hands and authors. Don Quijote asks Sancho to see to it that the letter be transcribed by a literate individual, but the humor of the matter derives from the fact that Dulcinea is illiterate: "Dulcinea no sabe escribir ni leer, y en toda su vida ha visto letra mía ni carta mía" (I, 25, 117a).

Even Sancho uses don Quijote's language, and becomes "Quijotesque" when he addresses Dorotea, now the Princess Micomicona: "—Dichosa buscada y dichoso hallazgo—dijo a esta sazón Sancho Panza—, y mas si mi amo es tan venturoso, que destaga ese agravio y enderece ese tuerto, matando a ese hideputa dese gigante" (I,

29, 141a). The principle of incongruity applies here where someone like Sancho would use a diction alien to his station, flaunting thereby one of the fundamental tenets of Renaissance literary theory, decorum.

An important source of humor is based on the changes in the loco-cuerdo axis. The episode dealing with both the Toledan merchants and the Biscayan, are examples of that humor.<sup>15</sup>

In the former, the Vizcaíno confronts don Quijote, who sins on the mad side of the equation when he insists that all swear to Dulcinea's supreme beauty. The Vizcaíno responds, and this leads to a singular physical battle between them. Here the *cuerdo* part takes over, and the narrator describes one of the fiercest battles that don Quijote has. There is no interference by the "malos encantadores." In fact, most of these episodes, like the windmills, the galley slaves, the lion, all fall into this category of the loco-cuerdo theme, and each one of them provides the readers with pleasant humor.

There is another form of humor that can be called, for better or worse, "slight and subtle humor." These are episodes and events that offer interesting insights into the character. For instance, the *celada de encaje* that don Quijote repairs and reconstructs brings a smile to our face, if only because it provokes our curiosity and makes us think more about what is happening; the reader knows that the *celada* will not resist a second strong blow. The whole story of Barataria is filled with humorous episodes, from the concept of someone like Sancho Panza receiving it as a reward for his services to putting Sancho on a bare subsistence diet; the false battle; the chapters relating to Dulcinea's letter including the attempt to pass off the three country women as Dulcinea and her attendants.

Cervantes decides to use the figure of Sansón Carrasco as the Caballero del Bosque. The use of masks and Sansón's adoption of don Quijote's role bring a smile to our face as well as the parallel action of the

<sup>15</sup> There is an interesting feature of the humor that is the fact that the Vizcaíno is speaking Castilian and not so well either. "[The Vizcaíno] se fue para don Quijote y asiéndole de la lanza, le dijo, en mala lengua castellana y peor vizcaína, desta manera" (I, 8, 42b).



squires. All of these make for entertaining reading.

The aesthetics of disappointment are operative in the episode of the lions, where the valor of don Quijote is destroyed by the indolent lion. The twin episodes of the Cave of Montesinos also provide moments of mirth as when don Quijote and Sancho relate what they saw in their respective experiences.

More than just mirth occurs when don Quijote destroys the puppet tableau, and reality and imagination conflict. We smile over the fact that Sancho is supposed to give himself 3,300 lashes. Many of the episodes at the castle of the Duke and Duchess entertain us. Don Quijote's second set of advice to Sancho Panza as governor is amusing, especially since they come in the wake of his serious advice. Sancho's decisions as a judge are as witty as they are wise. How the Duke sets up a situation in which don Quijote is to defend the honor of doña Rodríguez's daughter; the turnabout in the story of Basilio at Camacho's wedding. All these episodes exist on a lower level of humor and are a part of the first level of consciousness of the work.

There is another category that forms a part of the mosaic that is the cruel jokes that are perpetrated on don Quijote and/or Sancho. Within the purview of carnival, Sancho's blanketing may be seen as acceptable, but for the modern person such an act has a cruel basis to it. While this may have been the gusto of the time, it does not make it any less cruel. As was said earlier, there is a discharge of extra energy through laughter and this is probably one of the kinds of humor that Freud saw.<sup>16</sup>

There are several other forms of "humor" that stand in direct contrast and opposition to the type of humor that I have been discussing above. It is cruelty of the basest kind, without explanation for its cruelty. An example of this is to be found in I, 43, where don Quijote is hung by the hand: "Parecióle a Maritornes que sin duda don Quijote daría la mano que le habían pedido y, proponiendo en su pensamiento lo que habían de hacer se bajó del agujero y se fue a la caballeriza, donde tomó el cabestro del jumento de Sancho Panza, y con mucha presteza se volvió

<sup>16</sup> For psychological observations on humor see Martin Grotfahn, a Freudian psychoanalyst: *Beyond Laughter*. New York: Blakiston, 1957.

a su agujero a tiempo que don Quijote se había puesto de pies sobre la silla de Rocinante, por alcanzar a la ventana enrejada donde se imaginaba estar la ferida doncella" (I, 43, 219b). "Tomad," which don Quijote does but later, "Ahora lo veremos — dijo Maritornes; y haciendo una lazada corrediza al cabestro, se la echó a la muñeca, y bajándose del agujero ató lo que quedaba al cerrojo de la puerta del pagar muy fuertemente. Don Quijote, que sintió la aspereza del cordel en su muñeca..." (I, 43, 220a). But later the narrator gives a better description of how don Quijote feels. "Estaba, pues, como se ha dicho, de pie sobre Rocinante, metido todo el brazo por el agujero, y atado de la muñeca, y al cerrojo de la puerta, con grandísimo temor y cuidado que si Rocinante se desviaba a un cabo o a otro, había de colgar del brazo" (I, 43, 220a). The cruelty of this practical joke needs no extra explanation. Moreover, the narrator does not describe it as funny although the "risibility factor" of the age might see it as something worthy of Buster Keaton. The narrator uses words like "temor" and "cuidado" that would have no place in a "funny" account of the story. Later the text reads "cuando se desviaron los juntos pies de Don Quijote, y respalando de la silla, dieran con él en el suelo, a no quedar colgado del brazo, cosa que le causó tanto dolor que creyó, o que la muñeca le cortaban, o que el brazo se le arrancaba;" (I, 43, 221b). Once again, what we have here is pain and terror on the part of don Quijote. There is no way one can see this as a funny episode. Cervantes does not intend for it to be so; he intends for it to belong to the design of cruelty that some inflict upon others.

There is still another episode which would fall into the category of a cruel joke and that is the episode of the cats. "Aquí llegaba don Quijote de su canto, a quien estaban escuchando el Duque y la Duquesa, Altsidora y casi toda la gente del castillo, cuando de improviso, desde encima de un corredor que sobre la reja de don Quijote a plomo caía, descolgaron un cordel donde venían más de cien cencerros asidos, y luego tras ellos derramaron un gran saco de gatos, que asimismo tratan cencerros atados a las colas. Fue tan grande el ruido de los cencerros y el mayor de los gatos, que aunque los Duques habían sido inventores de la burla, todavía les sobresaltó, y, temeroso don Quijote, quedó pasmado" (II, 46, 431b). Don Quijote is taken by surprise, he unsheathes his sword

and begins swinging it at the cats: "aunque uno, viéndose tan acosado de las cuchilladas de Don Quijote, le saltó al rostro y le asió de las narices con las uñas y los dientes, por cuyo dolor don Quijote comenzó a dar los mayores gritos que pudo" (II, 46, 432b). For once, the Duke and Duchess, in whose castle don Quijote finds himself, "le [don Quijote] dejaron sosegar, y se fueron, pesarosos del mal suceso de la burla: que no creyeron que tan pesada y costosa le saliera a don Quijote aquella aventura que le costó cinco días de encerramiento y de cama" (II, 47, 432b). The text makes it explicitly clear that don Quijote is subjected to a terrible experience, fueled by bad judgment and hostility. There is nothing funny about these two episodes that I use to show that the term "funny book" misses the point of the book by a wide margin.

There is another level of hostility that is to be seen in the treatment of don Quijote. I refer to his return home at the end of the first part. The Priest and the Barber entice don Quijote into a cage, which is demeaning enough. But there is a detail in timing. They return to town "adonde entraron en la mitad del día, que acertó a ser domingo, y la gente toda en la plaza, por mitad de la cual atravesó el carro de don Quijote" (I, 52, 256a). The text also adds "Cosa de lástima fué oír los gritos que las dos buenas señoras alzaron, las bofetadas que se dieron" (I, 52, 256a).

The characters of the inner text are just as shocked as the readers outside the text. Symbolically, don Quijote is reduced to an animal status. These are all in the text, and their consequences are not looked upon happily or as something over which to rejoice.

The final point to be made in qualifying (but not totally rejecting) Russell's and Close's hypothesis deals with a variety of episodes in the text, beginning with the story of Crisóstomo and Marcela, and the suicide of Crisóstomo. While critics agree upon the substance of the "Curioso impertinente" as a use of the Italianate tale, it also involves two "unfunny" things—the end of what seems like a perfectly good marriage and the death of Anselmo and the retirement of Camila to a convent (as well as the death in battle of Lotario). There is no way of looking upon these as funny.

In the story of Leandra and Vicente de la Roca we find out "Vicente de la Roca la había engañado, y debajo de su palabra de ser su esposo la

persuadió que dejase la casa de su padre" (I, 51, 251b). Or the tragic story of Claudia Jerónima, who takes the law into her own hands and kills her violator. After she shoots Vicente Torrellas, unlike Basilio who leaps up in glory and joy having convinced Quiteria to marry him, Claudia's story has no such dénouement: Volvió de su desmayo Claudia; pero no de su parasismo don Vicente, porque se le acabó la vida" (I, 60, 486a).

The strategies of don Quijote's defeat at the hands of Sansón Carrasco belong to a two-part plan. The first where Sansón challenges don Quijote, but is legitimately beaten by him, is certainly humorous, brought about largely by our expectation that the younger man will prevail. However, don Quijote surprises us all and, together with his *simpatía*, he earns our respect and affection. There is certainly something humorous about don Quijote's victory, but his demise is something else. Here the turnaround (Sansón's victory over don Quijote) produces no humor but rather a tragic and sad sense. It signifies the end of don Quijote's *simpatía*, his *proyecto vital*. This has all the earmarks of a tragedy rather than a funny account. Moreover, don Quijote's death by melancholia and depression do not make for the close of a funny book.

Taken in toto, the book contains a few examples of farre, many examples of humorous incidents, but a sad and tragic finale.

It is, I insist, an error to see the *Quijote* as belonging to the funny book syndrome. The humor of the book belongs to the author's wish to present life in a complete perspective; it is not a completely funny book, because I have shown episodes that are tragic, nor is it fully a tragic book because there are numerous positive examples. Cervantes, I sense, wishes to give his reader the idea that a life fully lived has examples of everything.

Don Quijote's death constitutes the final seal not of a funny book, but of a sad one. The reader should return to *Lazarillo de Tormes*'s prologue, alluded to above, which suggests the double-faceted structure of the work: "pues podría ser que alguno que las lea halle algo que le agrade y a los que no ahondaren tanto los deleyte" (91). The key words here are "no ahondaren tanto," signifying that there are several levels. In the *Quijote*, the superficial level presents humor in its many facets, but the substructure and subtext are very serious indeed, and I am not talking

about the kind of seriousness that a great book purports to have. I am talking about emotions, sentiments and feelings that are not funny at all. This substantial reading demands a deeper view of the text, and for this the reader and critic must stand back and see the work in its totality. *Don Quijote* is not a funny book, but one that touches on all aspects of life.

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## Cervantes's Dialogue with Madness<sup>1</sup>

BENITO BRANCAFORTE

THE REPUDIATION OF the simplistic view of *Don Quijote* as a funny book has elicited a variety of approaches and analyses aimed at the complex narrative and psychological structure of the novel. The uncertainties and doubts confronting critics of *Don Quijote* are well expressed by Marthe Robert when she refers to the work as a "livre impossible, sans cesse à faire et sans cesse à recommencer," in which there is always "quelque chose d'indéchiffrable... une multiplicité de sens possibles dont aucun n'est indiscutable."<sup>2</sup>

By dividing the narrative voice into "first author" and "second — or third — author," into historian and translator-messenger, Cervantes creates an unstable and dialectical structure, which later on Bakhtin will consider as the main characteristic of the novel, the dialogic discourse, that is, an open-ended discourse in debate with itself, in which there is no single point of view, but rather a plurality of voices and *personae*. It is this feature that ultimately might explain the impossibility of reducing the *Quijote* to one single dimension.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the Spanish by Iluminada Amat-Holloway. A longer version of this essay was published in *Homenaje a José Antonio Maravall*, Ed. María del Carmen Iglesias, Carlos Moya, and Luis Rodríguez Zúñiga (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1985), vol. I, pp. 329-342.

<sup>2</sup> M. Robert, *L'Ancien et le nouveau: de don Quichotte à Franz Kafka* (Paris: B. Grasset, 1963), p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. R. M. Rotsel (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973), p. 4ff. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981).