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Worden, William.

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SANCHO PANZA, ILLITERATE LITERARY CRITIC, AND THE UNMASKING OF GENERIC CONVENTIONS IN DON QUIXOTE

William Worden

Cervantes destaca a Sancho contra toda aventura, a fin de que al pasar por ella la haga imposible. Esta es su misión. No vemos, pues, cómo pueda sobre lo real extenderse el campo de la poesía. Mientras lo imaginario era por sí mismo poético, la realidad es por sí misma antipoética.

[Cervantes sets Sancho against every adventure so that his involvement makes the adventures impossible. This is his mission. We do not see, then, how the field of poetry can extend itself over the real. While the imaginary was poetic in itself, reality in itself is anti-poetic.]

—José Ortega y Gasset, Meditaciones del Quijote

In the film Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery, a spoof of a highly codified genre (the James Bond spy thriller), the film’s villain, Dr. Evil, is having dinner with his rival, Austin Powers, when his teenage son, Scott Evil, enters. The following dialogue ensues:

Dr. Evil Scott, I want you to meet Daddy’s nemesis, Austin Powers.
Scott Evil Why are you feeding him? Why don’t you just kill him?
Dr. Evil In due time.
Scott Evil But what if he escapes? Why don’t you just shoot him? What are you waiting for?
Dr. Evil: I have a better idea. I’m going to put him in an easily escapable situation involving an overly elaborate and exotic death.

Scott Evil: Why don’t you just shoot him now? Here, I’ll get a gun. We’ll just shoot him. Bang! Dead. Done.

Dr. Evil: One more peep out of you and you’re grounded.¹

Dr. Evil knows, as does the film’s audience, that it would be unthinkable to kill Austin Powers; generic conventions of the spy thriller prohibit such resolute and irreversible action.² Scott Evil, however, seemingly unaware of the rules that govern the filmic universe he inhabits, injects humor into the situation by making plain—to the audience, if not as successfully to his father and Austin Powers—the absurdity of Dr. Evil’s reluctance to finish off his nemesis. As a character in the spy film but not of the genre (in which villains do not typically have teenage children), Scott Evil plays the complete outsider who fails to understand the norms of the world in which he lives. His question of “Why don’t you just shoot him now?” draws attention to the preposterous nature of the dinner scene that filmgoers have been watching. While Scott may appear to be totally ignorant of the codes governing the conduct of both his father and Austin Powers, it must also be remembered that his lines have been written by a screenwriter (Mike Myers) thoroughly conversant with generic conventions and intent on lampooning them. Through Scott Evil, then, Myers succeeds in making us laugh at the ridiculousness of the thoroughly established and accepted rules of the spy thriller.

This study will show how, in much the same way, Miguel de Cervantes makes use of Sancho Panza in Don Quixote to expose for the reader of his work the often absurd nature of the literary conventions of his day. Before making the case for the squire’s recurrent interactions with and commentaries on literature throughout the novel, it should be noted that as a matter of course, critics fail to take Sancho into account when writing about Don Quixote’s multitudinous observations about written texts.³ While they have analyzed the relationship to literature of Don Quixote, the Canon, Ginés de Pasamonte, and any number of other characters in the work, scholars have excluded Sancho from consideration of the literary within the novel simply because he cannot read. In fact, at first glance the persistent lack of critical interest in the figure of the squire as he relates to literature would seem to make sense. What possible connection can be made between Sancho, a nonreader, and an analysis of the role of literature in Don Quixote? I would answer that it is precisely because he is not a reader that Sancho plays such a key role in the novel’s treatment of literature. Like Scott Evil in the Aus-
tin Powers film, Sancho—a character unable to read who functions within the consummately literate world of Don Quixote—is cast as an outsider. The squire’s general lack of familiarity with written works, along with his ignorance of specific genres, affords him a unique perspective from which to view the bookish culture that surrounds him. My purpose in these pages is to investigate the ways in which Cervantes uses Sancho to look back and to comment on several popular literary genres of sixteenth-century Spain. We will see how the squire’s observations regarding the world around him can in fact be read as a critique of the book of chivalry, the pastoral novel, and the sentimental romance. For while Sancho is indeed illiterate, just as importantly, he is the creation of Miguel de Cervantes, an author intimately familiar with the generic conventions of his time and (as in the case of the Austin Powers film) looking to poke fun at their absurdity.

E. C. Riley remarked in Cervantes’s Theory of the Novel: “Life is one thing and art is another, but just what the difference is was the problem that baffled and fascinated Cervantes.” I would argue that throughout Don Quixote it is not the knight or the Canon but rather Sancho who makes plain the important distinctions between the two. Indeed, it is the squire’s bafflement when faced with literary convention that leads to the reader’s fascination with the very nature of literature as it is explored in the novel. Though unable to read and unschooled in literary traditions, the squire has much to tell us about the fundamental differences between literature and life. If, as Ortega y Gasset points out in the epigraph to this study, the imaginary is poetic while reality is antipoetic, it is Sancho Panza, the unlikeliest of literary critics, who reveals the fundamental differences between the two.

Sancho and the Book of Chivalry

Sancho’s interaction with chivalric literature manifests his dual nature: he is extremely gullible in general—he expects to be rewarded with an island for his services—but he is skeptical at certain moments. The tension between believing or not believing what Don Quixote tells him provides a key to recognizing how the squire exposes as risible a number of conventions of the book of chivalry. Most often the squire is credulous, unquestioningly accepting chivalric practices that he encounters. At other moments, however, he turns skeptical, rejecting them as untrue to life; these moments of skepticism help draw the reader’s attention to far-fetched chivalric conventions.
From the moment that Sancho agrees to serve as a squire, he accepts Don Quixote as a knight errant and begins to learn the ways of the world of chivalry. His master convinces him that seemingly fantastic creatures such as giants and enchanters really do exist and that a faithful squire may be rewarded with the governorship of an island. Sancho’s credulous nature makes it easy for him to believe Don Quixote’s claims; as a faithful squire he is bound to put trust in what his master tells him. A reader of the work, aware of Don Quixote’s madness, may begin to wonder, as the Canon and barber do later, if there is anything that Sancho will not believe.

Though willing to assume Don Quixote’s worldview, at times Sancho resists the explanations given him by his master. Perhaps the most famous moment of doubt in the novel occurs during their first adventure together—Don Quixote’s attack on the windmills—when the squire quite innocently asks his master: “¿Qué gigantes?” [“What giants?”]. After the knight’s insistence that “ellos son gigantes” [“these are giants”], his bold attack, and his ultimate defeat, Sancho accepts Don Quixote’s explanation that the evil enchanter Frestón has changed what were giants into windmills, saying simply: “Yo lo creo todo así como vuestra merced lo dice” (I, 8:95–97) [“I believe everything your grace says” (58–60)]. In this case, Sancho has followed his inclination to test reality, but has decided in the end that it does indeed ring true. Despite his short-lived suspicion regarding the windmills (one of a number of momentary doubts that occasionally trouble Sancho), time and again the squire is convinced to see the world as his master sees it. Like Don Quixote (when facing the world in which he lives), and like the seventeenth-century reader (when facing a book of chivalry), the squire readily acknowledges the dominion of chivalric conventions.

Though Sancho almost always accepts Don Quixote’s explanations of what is happening around them, there are times when, despite his master’s insistence, he refuses to believe what he is told. These occasions of not momentary but rather persistent doubt can be seen as examples of the squire bumping into the conventions of chivalric novels and refusing to accept what he encounters. Sancho’s instances of skepticism call into question several of the implausible aspects of chivalric novels that readers of the genre, with suspended disbelief, and Don Quixote, with no disbelief at all, so readily accept.

The first example of Sancho’s unwillingness to be persuaded by his master (and of his concurrent refusal to accept generic conventions) occurs after Don Quixote’s battle with the Biscayan. Sancho recommends that since the Biscayan has been badly injured, both master and squire should seek refuge in a church in order to escape from the Santa Hermandad. When Don
Quixote asks his squire where he has ever read that knights errant are subject to justice, even if they have committed *homicidios*, Sancho responds: “Yo no sé nada de omecillos [...] ni en mi vida le caté a ninguno; sólo sé que la Santa Hermandad tiene que ver con los que pelean en el campo y en esotro no me entremeto” (I, 10:113) [“I don’t know anything about omecils . . . and I never did bear one in all my life; all I know is that the Holy Brotherhood deals with people who fight in the countryside, and I don’t want anything to do with that” (71)]. Though the work has followed chivalric conventions up to this point without any insurmountable objections by the squire, in this episode Sancho insists that chivalric customs are powerless. The squire reiterates his doubts in a similar fashion after the freeing of the galley slaves. Afraid of the trouble that they have caused by helping the criminals escape, Sancho explains to Don Quixote: “le hago saber que con la Santa Hermandad no hay usar de caballerías, que no se le da a ella por cuantos caballeros andantes hay dos maravedís, y sepa que ya me parece que sus saetas me zumban por los oídos” (I, 23:248) [“I’m telling you that you can’t use chivalries with the Holy Brotherhood because they wouldn’t give two maravedís for all the knights errant in the world; you should also know that their arrows already seem to be buzzing past my ears” (173)]. Once again Sancho is skeptical rather than credulous in asserting that the rules of chivalry have no power in this situation. His commentary of “no hay usar” [they are of no use] may be suggesting not simply the senselessness of chivalric custom when facing the Santa Hermandad but also the ineffectiveness of chivalric conventions within the literary world of *Don Quixote*.

When Sancho has experienced his unfortunate blanket-tossing at the inn, Don Quixote tries to convince him that the perpetrators of the deed were enchanters. Though in the past Sancho has been willing to accept the enchanters’ responsibility for any number of evil actions, this time the squire cannot agree with his master, but rather insists, “tengo para mí que aquellos que se holgaron conmigo no eran fantasmas ni hombres encantados, como vuestra merced dice, sino hombres de carne y hueso como nosotros; y [...] el uno se llamaba Pedro Martínez, y el otro Tenorio Hernández” (I, 18:186–87) [“in my opinion the ones who had so much fun with me weren’t phantoms or enchanted beings, as your grace says, but men of flesh and blood, like us; and . . . one was Pedro Martínez, and the other Tenorio Hernández” (124)]. In books of chivalry, the enchanters have magical powers and fantastic names. For Sancho—in this case at least—they are simply common men named Pedro and Tenorio.

At times, Sancho displays a fascination with aspects of the world that he has entered, showing amazement regarding objects that characters in chivalric
literature take for granted. When he first learns from Don Quixote of the powerful healing properties of the balm of Fierabrás, for example, Sancho asks for the recipe to make it and hopes to retire with the money that he will earn from marketing the remedy. While other squires are willing to defend themselves and their masters at all times, unafraid of injury or death on the battlefield, Sancho informs his master: “Señor, yo soy hombre pacífico, manso, sosegado, y sé disimular cualquiera injuria” [“Señor, I'm a peaceful, mild, and quiet man, and I know how to conceal any insult”], adding, “en ninguna manera pondré mano a la espada, ni contra villano ni contra caballero, y que desde aquí para delante de Dios perdono cuantos agravios me han hecho y han de hacer, ora me los haya hecho o haga o haga de hacer persona alta o baja, rico o pobre, hidalgo o pechero, sin aceptar estado ni condición alguna” (I, 15:162) [“under no circumstances will I raise my sword against either lowborn or gentry, and from now until the day I appear before God, I forgive all offenses that have been done or will be done to me, whether they were done, are being done, or will be done by a person high or low, rich or poor, noble or common, without exception, and regardless of rank or position” (105)]. Though magical cures and courageous actions are the stock in trade of books of chivalry, Sancho makes clear that his vision of the world is far different from that of other literary squires.

One final instance of Sancho's unmasking chivalric conventions occurs at the end of the novel and revolves around the amorous intentions that Don Quixote seems able to arouse in the women who meet him. In this case, the unmasking comes not from a lack of belief in what he has been told, but rather from Sancho's view of Altisidora—a view completely at odds with his master's. As one of the many jokes played on Don Quixote during his stay in the ducal palace, the young and beautiful Altisidora repeatedly expresses deep feelings of love for him. Like the noble knights in novels of chivalry, Don Quixote, of course, remains ever faithful to Dulcinea, unwilling to consider Altisidora's advances. In a commentary on books of chivalry, and specifically on the courtly love convention of being faithful to one's paramour, Sancho admits that if he had his master's opportunity, his own intentions would not be so pure. The squire comments to Altisidora that she has had ill fortune in choosing to love his master, a man “con una alma de esparto y con un corazón de encina” [“with a soul of hemp and a heart of oak”]; then, for good measure, Sancho suggestively adds, “¡A fee que si las [venturas] hubieras connigo, que otro gallo te cantara!” (II, 71:1198) [“By my faith, if you'd fallen in love with me, you'd be singing a different tune!” (918)]. The squire's prurient interest in Altisidora, quite natural in life but counter to the expectations of chivalric characters, contrasts markedly with Don
Quixote’s unwavering fidelity toward Dulcinea and shows just how different (and unnatural) the world of chivalric literature really is.

Sancho and the Pastoral Novel

Beyond the book of chivalry, the pastoral novel is the kind of literature most present in *Don Quixote*. The genre evokes a fictional world both tranquil and bucolic, in which the protagonists are shepherds who spend almost all of their time speaking and singing of love. Don Quixote’s contact with the pastoral novel includes the evening spent with the goatherds early in the work, the following episode that tells of Grisóstomo’s burial, and the two false Arcadias—one mentioned by the goatherd who tells the tale of Leandra, and the other actually encountered by knight and squire after they leave the ducal palace. There is also, of course, Don Quixote’s interest in living the life of a literary shepherd once he has been defeated by the Knight of the White Moon, a desire shared by Sancho, who, at novel’s end, tries to revive his dying master by saying: “Mire no sea perezoso, sino levántese desa cama, y vámonos al campo vestidos de pastores, como tenemos concertado” (“Look, don’t be lazy, but get up from that bed and let’s go to the countryside dressed as shepherds, just like we arranged”).

Knight and squire first enter into the pastoral world when they are invited to share a meal with the goatherds. Soon after dinner, Don Quixote gives his discourse on the Golden Age, a paean to that time long ago when all was peaceful and knights errant were not needed to bring justice to the world. Though this encounter seems to have transported knight and squire into the very environment being praised, one in which humans and nature coexist harmoniously, Don Quixote’s words are so out of place that the goatherds are left “embobados y suspensos” (“stupefied and perplexed”), while the narrator refers to the speech as “esta larga arenga (que se pudiera muy bien escusar)” (“this long harangue—which could very easily have been omitted”). When Don Quixote has finished his remarks, Antonio, “un zagal muy entendido y muy enamorado” (“a smart lad, and very much in love”), sings of his love for Olalla. Though the setting is bucolic and Antonio’s song appropriately amorous, we are reminded that this world is not exactly that of the pastoral novel. It is important to remember that knight and squire have come across goatherds, not the shepherds typically found in pastoral works. Additionally, the goatherd who invites Antonio to sing also requests the song that he would like to hear—the one composed
by Antonio’s uncle the priest. Perhaps Cervantes’s novel is suggesting that the seemingly natural world in which those who tend their flocks also sing improvised love songs is not so natural after all.16

Given these preliminary indications that the circumstances do not quite match those found in the typical pastoral novel, let us examine how Sancho capitalizes on the incongruence between the pastoral world (in real life) and the pastoral world (as presented in literature) in order to unmask generic conventions. Night has fallen, the goatherds are gathered together, and the talk of love has begun. In the pastoral novel, frequently this is the beginning of an episode that will last all night long.17 In his own pastoral novel, La Galatea (published in 1585), Cervantes faithfully follows this convention; indeed, in his novel the instances in which the shepherds stay up until dawn discussing love are many. Galatea and Florisa, for instance, spend all night with Teolinda discussing her love for Artidoro, until “la serena noche, aguijando por el cielo el estrellado carro, daba señal que el nuevo día se acercaba” [the peaceful night, driving the starry carriage through the sky, gave a sign that the new day was approaching].18 In another moment, Elicio and Erastro listen to Lisandro’s tale of woe at night, “cubiertos con el resplandor de la hermosa Diana” (188) [covered with the brilliance of the beautiful Diana], and when Lisandro finally finishes his tale, the three “reposaron lo poco que de la noche quedaba” (204) [rested the scant fraction of the night that remained].19 In Don Quixote, after hearing Antonio’s song, the knight asks to hear another and the scene seems to be heading toward a replication of those just mentioned.

Antonio, the other goatherds, and Don Quixote himself all appear happily ensconced in the pastoral tableau that Cervantes has painted for the reader. At precisely this moment, when pastoral conventions appear ready to invade Don Quixote in full force, Sancho interrupts the proceedings. The text of the novel explains: “aunque don Quijote le rogó [a Antonio] que algo más cantase, no lo consintió Sancho Panza, porque estaba más para dormir que para oir canciones” (I, 11:127) [“although Don Quixote asked him to sing something else, Sancho Panza did not concur because he was readier for sleep than for hearing songs” (80)]. Not only is the squire himself unwilling to eschew sleep in order to listen to songs and poems of love, but he also adds, with reference to the goatherds: “el trabajo que estos buenos hombres tienen todo el día no permite que pasen las noches cantando” (I, 11:127) [“the work these good men do all day doesn’t allow them to spend their nights singing” (80)]. As a result, the singing stops and the scene quickly ends. The point of the pastoral novel, of course, is that shepherds have all the time they need to sing of love because they do little else; Sancho points
out that the real world is a different story altogether. By insisting that both sleep and work are necessary elements of the goatherds’ life, Sancho disrupts generic conventions and propels *Don Quixote* from the world of the pastoral novel back into its own, uncodified world.20

The squire again interacts with the pastoral world near the end of the first part of the novel, during the telling of Leandra’s story. The episode begins when a goatherd (Eugenio) in search of a stray goat enters into an already bucolic setting.21 After a brief discussion with both the Canon of Toledo and Don Quixote, Eugenio relates the tale of Leandra, a beautiful woman who runs off with a soldier who soon abandons her. After her father places Leandra in a nunnery, a number of her admirers decide to leave their village in order to lament their misfortunes in idyllic surroundings while tending flocks of sheep and goats. Such is the popularity of pastoral life that Eugenio explains: “parece que este sitio se ha convertido en la pastoral Arcadia, según está colmo de pastores y de apriscos, y no hay parte en él donde no se oiga el nombre de la hermosa Leandra” (I, 51:581) [“this place, so crowded with shepherds and sheepfolds, seems to have been transformed into the pastoral Arcadia, and no matter where you go you will hear the name of the beautiful Leandra” (437)].22

In the case of the earlier night spent with the goatherds, Sancho had brought the evening’s events to a halt by stressing the need for sleep.23 At the start of the Leandra episode the squire manages to disrupt generic conventions in a different way. When Eugenio first offers to tell a tale, Don Quixote says exactly what a character in a pastoral novel would say: he assures the storyteller that everyone present will listen with interest.24 Listening, after all, is of fundamental importance in works filled with shepherds telling stories, reciting poems, and singing songs. Showing this characteristic enthusiasm for hearing others’ stories, the knight commands the goatherd: “Comenzad, pues, amigo, que todos escucharemos” (emphasis mine) [“Begin, then, my friend, and all of us shall listen”], to which Sancho immediately responds: “Saco la mía [. . .], que yo a aquel arroyo me voy con esta empanada, donde pienso hartarme por tres días” (I, 50:575) [“I pass . . ., I’m going over to that brook with this meat pie, where I plan to eat enough for three days” (433)]. The squire, about to be thrust yet again into a situation straight out of a pastoral novel, shows that he is not of the genre; instead, he insists that the *todos* mentioned by Don Quixote does not include him. Eugenio does indeed tell the story of Leandra, but Sancho never hears the tale, as he has gone off alone to satisfy his stomach. Effectively, the squire is saying in his first contact with the pastoral novel, “That’s enough music for tonight; these goatherds have to work tomorrow,” and in this episode, “I’m not interested
in listening to your story because I’m hungry.” In both cases, a seventeenth-century reader of *Don Quixote*, familiar with pastoral novels, would most certainly have noticed the not-of-the-genre nature of Sancho’s commentaries. His interest in sleep and food, traits not shared by the shepherds of pastoral novels, makes the squire a less literary and more real-world presence. Far from being a typical fictional character acting in accordance with the norms of a given literary genre, Sancho defies convention time and again.

*Sancho and the Sentimental Romance*

An important convention in the sentimental romance, as in the pastoral novel, is the placing of great significance on the expression of emotions. No matter what the situation, characters are always intent on expressing their feelings of love, sadness, or rejection. As Cervantes must have noticed, at times such an interest in and ability to speak of sentiments borders on the improbable. In the romance *Cárcel de Amor*, for example, as Leriano is dying, he decides to defend women against Tefeo and all others who speak badly of them. On the verge of death, Leriano not only gives “veinte razones por que los hombres son obligados a las mugeres” (“twenty arguments to prove that men are indebted to women”), he also manages to prove “por enxeplos la bondad de las mugeres” (“by examples the goodness of women”). After two such long speeches, the *auctor* of the work notes without irony: “Mucho fueron maravillados los que se hallaron presentes oyendo el concierto que Leriano tuvo en su habla, por estar tan cercano a la muerte, en cuya sazón las menos veces se halla sentido” (“Those who were present were greatly amazed when they heard the coherence with which Leriano had spoken, for he was very close to death, and at such a time it is rare to find such lucidity”).

Sancho comes into contact with the sentimental romance during the episode of the two young lovers, Basilio and Quiteria. As is common in the genre, the couple’s desires are frustrated: Quiteria’s father prefers that his daughter marry the rich Camacho instead of Basilio. On the day of the wedding, Basilio, without hope and on the verge of losing Quiteria forever, shows his desperation by throwing himself on his sword. Though seemingly close to death, Basilio is able to fashion an elegant and moving speech that convinces Quiteria to marry him, claiming that after the impromptu wedding ceremony he will be able to die peacefully, having been able to marry his love. On hearing the long speech of the (apparently) dying lover, Sancho punctures the tragic sentiment of the moment by commenting to his master:
“Para estar tan herido este mancebo [...] , mucho habla” (II, 21:806) [“For someone who’s so badly wounded . . . , this young man certainly talks a lot” (595)]. Yet again Sancho has shown how artificial accepted literary practices can be. By questioning what the other characters accept as normal—the long-windedness of a man at death’s door—Sancho makes obvious the unreal nature of sentimental romance conventions.30

Another point of contact with the genre occurs after the ill-fated adventure with the pigs, when Don Quixote and Sancho are forcibly brought back to the palace of the duke and duchess. Knight and squire are carried into the courtyard, where they see the dead body of a beautiful girl lying on top of a tomb. A handsome young man dressed in a Roman toga appears next to the tomb and, while playing the harp and singing, explains the unfortunate fate of Altisidora: “muerta por la crueldad de don Quijote” (II, 69:1186) [“killed by the cruelty of Don Quixote” (909)]. The knight willingly (and even boastfully) accepts as true the unfortunate fate of Altisidora, a death typical of the sentimental romance. He explains to his squire what has happened, and indeed what regularly occurs according to the conventions of the genre: “Grande y poderosa es la fuerza del desdén desamorado, como por tus mismos ojos has visto muerta a Altisidora, no con otras saetas, ni con otra espada, ni con otro instrumento bélico, ni con venenos mortíferos, sino con la consideración del rigor y el desdén con que yo siempre la he tratado” (II, 70:1191) [“Great and powerful is the strength of love scorned, for with your own eyes you saw Altisidora dead, not by arrows or sword or any other instrument of war, or by deadly poison, but because of the harshness and disdain with which I have always treated her” (912)].

After Altisidora herself proves to be alive and admits that “[t]odo lo que habéis visto esta noche ha sido fingido” [“[e]verything you saw tonight was pretense”], Sancho immediately accepts her words as true and adds a clear denunciation of the sentimental romance: “esto del morirse los enamorados es cosa de risa: bien lo pueden ellos decir, pero hacer, créalo Judas” (II, 70:1196) [“all this about lovers dying makes me laugh: they can say it easily enough, but doing it is a story only Judas would believe” (916–17)]. Dying for love—the death of Leriano, the death of other sentimental romance characters, even (it would seem) the death of Grisóstomo—is so improbable that, for the squire, it is simply a laughing matter.31 Sancho goes on to affirm that “no he visto en toda mi vida randera que por amor se haya muerto, que las doncellas ocupadas más ponen sus pensamientos en acabar sus tareas que en pensar en sus amores” (II, 70:1197) [“I’ve never seen in all my life a lacemaker who’s died for love; maidens who are occupied think more about finishing their tasks than about love” (918)]. Finally, in a statement reminiscent of
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the parody of courtly love in *Celestina*, the squire brings a less-than-noble subject into the discussion about love—himself. In much the way that the love between Pármeno and Areúsa parodies the love between Calisto and Melibea in *Celestina*, Sancho lowers the level of the discussion of love by noting his own amorous sentiments. Following up on his comment that it is not at all common to spend all day thinking of love, the squire adds: “Por mí lo digo, pues mientras estoy cavando no me acuerdo de mi oíslo, digo, de mi Teresa Panza, a quien quiero más que a las pestañas de mis ojos” (II, 70; 1197) [“At least that’s true for me, because when I’m busy digging I never think about my better half, I mean my Teresa Panza, and I love her more than my eyelashes” (918)]. If in the sentimental romance noble lovers constantly think of love and often even die for love, Sancho points out that the real world is different altogether.

*Don Quixote* is quite rightly considered a self-conscious novel, defined by Robert Alter as “a novel that systematically flaunts its own condition of artifice and that by so doing probes into the problematic relationship between real-seeming artifice and reality.”[^32] I believe that this definition provides an expedient optic through which to conclude our discussion of Sancho’s literary criticism. If Cervantes has fashioned the “artifice” that is the text, it is Sancho who “flaunts” (makes conspicuous) that very condition of artifice. As readers, we are left to “probe into” the implications of the squire’s literary commentaries, to question generic conventions, and to consider in a larger sense the problematic relationship that exists between literature and life.

Though the squire’s astute observations with reference to various literary genres clearly contribute humorous elements to *Don Quixote*, Sancho’s role as literary critic involves more than simple amusement. Regarding the development of the novel as a consequence of its interaction with other genres, Linda Hutcheon observes: “The origins of the self-reflecting structure that governs many modern novels might well lie in that parodic intent basic to the genre as it began in *Don Quijote*, an intent to unmask dead conventions, by challenging, by mirroring.”[^33] While Cervantes’s novel itself mirrors the widely accepted literary norms of his day, Sancho, as we have seen, plays an important role by making obvious to the reader how laughable those conventions can be. E. C. Riley points out that “[e]l *Quijote* no podría ser lo que es, si no hubiera tenido su autor un refinado sentido de las distinciones genéricas. Los géneros nuevos se crean de los ya existentes, sea mediante la combinación, variación o contradicción de éstos” [*Don Quixote* would not be what it is if its author did not have a refined sense of generic distinctions. New genres are created by those that already exist, either through combination, variation, or contradiction of them].[^34] In *Don Quixote*, Cervantes...
shows an acute awareness of the generic distinctions of sixteenth-century Spanish literature, but he does so in an unexpected way: by unmasking the conventions of the book of chivalry, the pastoral novel, and the sentimental romance through the perceptive observations of Sancho Panza—the illiterate literary critic. Much in the way that Scott Evil is used to call attention to the peculiarities of the genre in which he appears, throughout both parts of Don Quixote the squire seems to be saying to those around him (and, by extension, to the readers of the work in which he appears): “Why don’t you just shoot him now?”

University of Alabama

Notes


2. The death of the protagonist, after all, would not only bring an end to the current storyline but would also forestall the possibility of producing lucrative sequels to the original movie. As is the case with James Bond, there have indeed been continuations of Austin Powers’s adventures: Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me (1999) and Austin Powers in Goldmember (2002).

3. R. M. Flores, Sancho Panza Through Three Hundred Seventy-Five Years of Continuations, Imitations, and Criticism, 1605–1980 (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 1982), provides evidence of critical disinterest in the topic. Flores gives abundant examples of scholars who have investigated a variety of different aspects of the squire, such as his use of proverbs, his relationship to his master, his governorship of the Insula Barataria, and his development through the course of the novel. Tellingly, there is not a single reference to a critic who has analyzed Sancho’s relationship to literature.

4. Robert Alter aptly notes that Don Quixote is a novel in which “virtually everything is mediated by literature, whether the body of literary works and conventions outside this novel or the various literary inventions generated within the book itself.” Robert Alter, Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1975), 25.

5. Scholars of Spanish Golden Age literature have pointed out how modern-day readers, unfamiliar with Amadís de Gaula and similar works, often fail to understand Don Quixote’s parody of the novels of chivalry. Indeed, the very act of reading Don Quixote today as a novel is quite a different undertaking from that of reading it in the age of Cervantes, when readers’ literary backgrounds were so markedly different. I believe that the unfamiliarity of contemporary readers with the literary genres of sixteenth-century Spain, along with the rather limited view of Sancho’s role in the novel shared by many Cervantine scholars, has contributed to a lack of understanding regarding the squire’s importance as a critic of belletristic artifice.


7. In his article “The Example of Cervantes,” Harry Levin suggests that the author of Don Quixote was “just the man to dramatize a distinction which has since become an axiom, which has indeed become so axiomatic that it might well be called Cervantes’ formula. This is nothing more nor less than a recognition of the difference between verses and reverses, between words and deeds, palabras and hechos—in short, between literary artifice and that real thing which is life itself. But literary artifice is the only means that a writer has at his disposal. How else can he convey his impression of life? Precisely by discrediting those means, by repudiating that air of bookishness in which any book is inevitably wrapped.” Harry Levin, “The Example of
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8. At the end of the first part of the novel, the Canon is amazed not only by Don Quixote’s disparates [nonsense] but also by “la necedad de Sancho, que con tanto ahínco deseaba alcanzar el condado que su amo le había prometido” (I, 50:573) (“the simple-mindedness of Sancho, who so fervently desired to obtain the countship his master had promised him” (431)). Likewise, early in the second part of the work the barber says: “no me maravillo tanto de la locura del caballero como de la simplicidad del escudero, que tan creído tiene aquello de la ínsula, que creo que no lo sacarán del casco cuantos desengaños pueden imaginarse” (II, 2:641) (“I’m not as astounded by the madness of the knight as I am by the simplicity of the squire, who has so much faith in the story of the island that I don’t believe all the disappointments imaginable will ever get it out of his head” (470)). Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quijote de la Mancha, ed. Francisco Rico, 2 vols. (Barcelona: Instituto Cervantes-Crítica, 1998). The English translation is from Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quixote, trans. Edith Grossman (New York: Ecco, 2003). Further citations from these editions appear in the text.

9. Throughout the work, Sancho maintains this firm belief that enchanters were not responsible for his maltreatment. In a later episode when Don Quixote mentions “cosas de encantamiento” [“works of enchantment”], the squire responds: “Todo lo creyera yo [...] si también mi manteamiento fuera cosa dese jaez, mas no lo fue, sino real y verdaderamente” (I, 37:435) (“I’d believe everything [...], if my tossing in the blanket was that kind of thing, but it wasn’t, it was real and true” (322)). Later he reiterates that his blanket-tossing “realmente sucedió por via ordinaria” (I, 46:535) [“really happened by ordinary means” (402)], while the narrator adds: “jamás llegó la sandez de Sancho a tanto, que creyese no ser verdad pura y averiguada, sin mezcla de engaño alguno, lo de haber sido manteado por personas de carne y hueso” (I, 46:536) [“Sancho’s foolishness [...] never was so great that he did not believe it was the pure and absolute truth, with no admixture of deception, that he had been tossed in a blanket by flesh-and-blood people” (403)].

10. The squire explains to his master: “Si eso hay [...] yo renuncio desde aquí el gobierno de la prometida ínsula, y no quiero otra cosa en pago de mis muchos y buenos servicios sino que vuestra merced me dé la receta de ese estremado licor, que para mí tengo que valdrá la onza adondequiera más de a dos reales, y no he menester yo más para pasar esta vida honrada y descansadamente” (I, 10:115) (“If that is true [...], I renounce here and now the governorship of the island you have promised and want nothing else in payment for my many good services but that your grace give me the recipe for this marvelous potion, for I think an ounce of it will bring more than two reales anywhere, and I don’t need more than that to live an easy and honorable life” (72)).

11. Earlier, Sancho had contrasted his master’s attitude toward Altisidora with his own, acknowledging: “Yo de mí sé decir que me rindiera y avasallara la más mínima razón amorosa” (II, 58:1099) (“For me, I can say that at her smallest word of love I’d surrender and submit” (836)).

12. “The traditional materials are simple enough, and have been described countless times: a peaceful landscape of meadows, brooks, fountains, and shady groves; in it, herdsmen devote the leisure afforded by their calling to singing of their love: its joys and, much more frequently, its sorrows (caused by the indifference, the absence, or the death of the beloved), and the beauty of the shepherdesses.” Amadeu Solé-Leris, The Spanish Pastoral Novel (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 17.


14. The pastoral genre “became the carrier of a closely related and even more powerful myth—that of the Golden Age, mankind’s eternal dream of a place and time in which men led
simple, innocent lives in harmony with a beneficent, gentle nature” (Solé-Leris, The Spanish Pastoral Novel, 17).


16. “El romance de Olalla, cantado por el pastor, pero compuesto por su tío, nos sitúa en el mundo amoroso de los pastores de la realidad (contraste con el estilo del discurso, contraste con lo pastoral), los cuales hasta pueden saber leer y escribir y tocar un instrumento popular, pero no son poetas” [“The ballad of Olalla, sung by the shepherd but composed by his uncle, situates us in the love-filled world of real shepherds (a contrast with the style of the discourse, a contrast with the pastoral), who know how to play a popular instrument and can even read and write, but are not poets”]. Joaquín Casalduero, Sentido y forma del “Quijote” (Madrid: Ediciones Ínsula, 1949), 77.

17. In Jorge de Montemayor’s La Diana, for example, when Selvagia explains how she met Ysmenia, she explains that the two of them began to talk of love: “Y así estuvimos hasta que amaneció, hablando en lo que podría imaginar quien por estos desvariados casos de amor ha pasado” (144) [“And so we remained until dawn, talking of what only one who has been caught in the delirium of love can imagine” (72)]. In a later scene near the end of the third book, the time—“ya eran más de tres horas de la noche” [“it was already three in the morning”]—and the activity—“cada uno escogió el lugar de que más se contentó para pasar lo que de la noche les quedaba, la cual los enamorados pasaron con más lágrimas que sueño” (254) [“each one chose a suitable spot in which to spend the remainder of the night. The ones in love spent it with more tears than with sleep” (144)]—also evidence how the genre privileges the desire to express emotion over baser human compulsions like the need to sleep. Jorge de Montemayor, La Diana, ed. Asunción Rollo (Madrid: Cátedra, 1991). The English translation is from Jorge de Montemayor, The Diana, trans. RoseAnna M. Mueller (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989).


19. La Galatea is replete with scenes of this type: “se volvió a su cabaña a pasar lo más de la noche en sus amorosas imaginaciones” (236) [he returned to his hut to spend the better part of the night thinking amorous thoughts]; “Gran parte era ya pasada de la noche, cuando los pastores acordaron de reposar el poco tiempo que hasta el día quedaba” (328) [Much of the night had already passed when the shepherds decided to rest the short time that remained before daybreak]; “algunos de los pastores se dividieron y apartaron a buscar algún apartado y sombrío lugar donde restaurar pudiesen las no dormidas horas de la pasada noche” (605) [some of the shepherds broke away and went off to look for some dark, remote spot where they could recover from the unslept hours of the past night].

20. Though in many ways La Galatea is very similar to other pastoral novels, even in this early work Cervantes shows an awareness of how generic conventions can be limiting. At the end of the novel, Aurelio proposes to the other shepherds that each should come up with a question or riddle to be answered by someone else; though this may seem a strange departure for the pastoral novel, Aurelio goes on to explain that “con este ejercicio se granjearán dos cosas: la una, pasar con menos enfado las horas que aquí estuviéremos; la otra, no cansar tanto nuestros oídos con oír siempre lamentaciones de amor y endechas enamoradas” (605–6, emphasis mine) [with this exercise two things will be gained: one, spending more enjoyably the hours that we will be here; the other, not tiring our ears so much always hearing laments of love and melancholy love songs]. From within the pastoral novel, then, Cervantes’s character complains about the very generic conventions ruling the fictional world that he inhabits.

21. The Canon of Toledo’s servants, “haciendo mesa de una alhombra y de la verde yerba del prado, a la sombra de unos árboles se sentaron, y comieron allí, porque el boyero no perdiese la comodidad de aquel sitio” (I, 50:573–74) [“making a table of a rug and the meadow’s green grass, . . . sat in the shade of some trees and ate their meal there so that the ox driver could take advantage of the grazing for his animals” (431)].
22. Cervantes comments suggestively on the pastoral world even beyond Sancho’s observations. Javier Herrero writes of the Leandra story: “in a clearer way than in the Grisóstomo-Marcela episode, Cervantes stresses the conventional, literary character of much of the madness of the counterfeit shepherds. In the first episode, we read about shepherds dressed in a mourning attire of black sheep-skins and covered with garlands of cypress and oleander; we are obviously seeing dandies following a cultural, literary fashion. This aspect is even more clearly stated here, where we find suffering lovers who had never even spoken to Leandra” (Herrero, “Arcadia’s Inferno,” 294).

23. After the cerdosa aventura [porcine adventure], Sancho yet again comments on the relationship between literature and sleep when he tells Don Quixote: “Vuesa merced coplee cuanto quisiere, que yo dormiré cuanto pudiere” (II, 68:1181) [“Your grace should versify all you want, and I’ll sleep all I can” (905)].

24. The knight explains: “Por ver que tiene este caso un no sé qué de sombra de aventura de caballería, yo por mi parte os oiré, hermano, de muy buena gana, y así lo harán todos estos señores, por lo mucho que tienen de discretos y de ser amigos de curiosas novedades que suspendan, alegren y entretengan los sentidos, como sin duda pienso que lo ha de hacer vuestro cuento” (I, 50:575) [“Because this matter seems to have some shadow of a knightly adventure, I, for my part, shall hear you very willingly, brother, and all of these gentlemen will do the same, for they are very intelligent and are fond of curious and extraordinary things that amaze, delight, and entertain the senses, as I think your story undoubtedly will” (432–33)].


29. Sancho earlier attends Grisóstomo’s burial, another incident sharing much in common with the sentimental romance—especially considering that Grisóstomo commits suicide because his love for Marcela is unrequited. The squire, however, says nothing during the entire episode, from I, 12 through I, 14.

30. It should be remembered that when Sancho comments on Basilio’s loquacity, all signs indicate that the unfortunate lover is indeed about to die. Stanislav Zimic perceptively reminds us: “El supuesto suicidio se efectúa de tal manera que al lector, impresionado por la tragedia, no se le ocurre ni la sospecha de una burla. Magistralmente, Cervantes hace que los personajes, como también el lector, participen emotiva, seriamente en la acción. Aunque a Sancho, quien también presencia el ‘suicidio,’ le parece que Basilio ‘para estar tan herido…mucho habla,’ el lector no acepta esta observación como preanuncio de un desenlace desesperado y cómico, porque está ya acostumbrado a las graciosas observaciones de Sancho en otras situaciones serias. Sólo después de haberse explicado la estratagema, se da cuenta el lector de que el sentido común del famoso escudero, en este caso, fue más penetrante que la inteligencia de Don Quijote, de los demás personajes y del mismo lector” [The supposed suicide takes place in such a way that it doesn’t even occur to the reader, who is moved by the tragedy, that it could all be a trick. Cervantes masterfully arranges it so the characters, as well as the reader, participate emotionally and seriously in the action. Although it seems to Sancho, who also witnesses the ‘suicide,’ that ‘for someone as badly wounded as this young man . . . [Basilio] certainly talks a lot,’ the reader doesn’t interpret this observation as a prefiguration of an unexpected and comical outcome, because the reader is already accustomed to Sancho’s humorous observations in other serious situations. Only after the stratagem has been explained does the reader realize that in this case
the common sense of the famous squire was more perceptive than Don Quixote's intelligence, that of the other characters, and even that of the reader]. Stanislav Zimic, *Los cuentos y las novelas del "Quijote"* (Madrid and Frankfurt: Iberoamericana & Vervuert, 1998), 24.

31. Perhaps Sancho had nothing to say during Grisóstomo’s burial because he could not bring himself to believe that the student shepherd’s death had, in fact, been caused by love. Marcela herself seems to be of the same opinion. During her speech, she says of Grisóstomo: “bien se puede decir que antes le mató su porfía que mi crueldad” (I, 14:154) [“it is correct to say that his obstinacy, not my cruelty, is what killed him” (99)] and “a Grisóstomo mató su impaciencia y arrojado deseo” (I, 14:155) [“his impatience and rash desire killed Grisóstomo” (100)].

