DON QUIXOTE AS A BURLESQUE HERO:
A RE-CONSTRUCTED EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY VIEW

The fashion of considering Don Quixote as a burlesque hero has long since passed. Yet clearly this is what he is—at least in some essential respects; and the methodical study of this aspect of his character ought not to be neglected as it has been. My basic position here agrees with that of Vicente de los Ríos, author of the lengthy "Análisis del Quijote," which preceded the Royal Spanish Academy edition of Don Quixote of 1780. There he maintained that Cervantes' novel was a classic example of a burlesque epic; and this kind of view was typical of Spanish Quixote criticism from Gregorio Mayans y Siscar (1738) to the mid-nineteenth century. My basic conception of Cervantes' hero conforms to that stated by Juan Pellioter, in the prologue to his edition of Don Quixote of 1798. There, referring to Cervantes' attitude to Spanish chivalric romances, he says:

Y para ridiculizar mas plenamente estos mismos libros ridiculiza al mismo hero, disponiendo que las acciones y aventuras, que en los demas caballeros se representan serias y graves, surtan en Don Quixote un efecto ridiculo y terminen en un exito jocoso. De suerte que, Don Quixote de la Mancha es un verdadero Amadis de Gaula, pintado a lo burlesco; o lo que es lo mismo una parodia o imitacion ridicula de una obra seria.

Assuming that the phrase "un verdadero Amadis de Gaula, pintado a lo burlesco" can be interpreted as referring not only to Amadis but also to heroes of his literary kindred, I shall argue that the idea it expresses covers most of the major aspects of Don Quixote's character, and not, as has usually been argued in modern times, merely preliminary or superficial aspects. I shall also identify some of the distinctive properties of Cervantes' methods of burlesque within the literary family that the genre of burlesque constitutes. I shall take the observations of eighteenth-century Quixote critics in Spain and England as a basic frame of reference for my argument.

First, some general definitions and classifications. Burlesque is a generic concept; it covers four recognised sub-species: parody, mock-heroic, travesty, etc. To my knowledge, Martín de Riquer is the only authoritative Quixote critic of recent times to have taken this line. See his book Cervantes y el Quijote (Barcelona, 1980), passim and especially sections 80 and 86.

The most influential spokesmen for this view were: Gregorio Mayans y Siscar, prologue to the Spanish edition of DQ published in London, 1738; Vicente de los Ríos "Vida de Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra y Analisis del Quijote," in the first Real Academia Española edition of DQ (Madrid, 1780); M. Fernández de Navarrete, "Vida de Cervantes," in the fourth R.A.E. edition of DQ (Madrid, 1819); Diego Cleman, the prologue to his own edition of DQ (Madrid, 1833-39). Critics of such authority as Hartzenbusch, Eugenio Ochoa, and Agustín Durán were still voicing this opinion in the decade 1840-50.

"Discurso preliminar," p. 80.
Hudibrastic.\footnote{My authorities for these classifications are Richmond P. Bond, *English Burlesque Poetry 1700-1750*, third edition (Harvard University Press, 1984), Chapter 1, and John D. Jump, *Burlesque, The Critical Idiom* 22 (London, 1972), pp. 1-2. George Kitchin, in his *Survey of Burlesque and Parody in English* (Edinburgh, 1931), uses similar classifications. These distinctions gradually evolved over the eighteenth century in England, then tended to blur together in the nineteenth, and were finally revived and clarified in the twentieth. The distinction between "high" and "low" burlesque was recognised from the beginning of the eighteenth century. Eighteenth-century Spanish critics use such terms as "fábula burlesca", "remedio burlesco", "parodia" for *Don Quixote* without showing awareness of the possibility of finer distinctions among types of burlesque.} The first two of the sub-species can be bracketed as "high burlesque" and the last two as "low burlesque". The high forms of the genre ridicule either a particular author or work (parody), or a more general literary class or mode (mock-heroic), by applying the style—usually the elevated style—characteristic of such literature to an incongruously low subject. Typically, "high burlesque" creates a magnificent storm in a teacup and maintains an external aspect of grave solemnity:

Apenas la blanca aurora había dado lugar a que el luciente Febo con el ardor de sus calientes rayos las líquidas perlas de sus cabellos de oro enjugase, cuando don Quijote, sacudiendo la pereza de sus miembros, se puso en pie y llamó a su escudero Sancho, que aun todavía roncaba.\footnote{From the Martin de Riquer edition (Barcelona, 1960).} *Don Quijote* Part II, Chapter 20

Cervantes was widely acclaimed in eighteenth-century England as a master of the art. Joseph Warton (1756) praised John Philips' *The Splendid Shilling* (1701)—a parody of Milton—as "an admirable copy of the solemn irony of Cervantes, who is the father and unrivalled model of the true mock-heroic".\footnote{From his *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope* (1756), cited in Bond, p. 104.} Here, Warton alludes to the poker-faced seriousness which Cervantes generally affects to narrate the undignified acts of Quixote and Sancho, and in particular, to the epic paraphernalia of invocations, dawn-descriptions (see above), exclamations, lamentations, apostrophes, propositions, "canto-divisions", battle-descriptions which adorn his narrative style.

"High burlesque" also applies to characterisation and plot. In Addison's formula (1711), it involves representing "mean Persons in the accoutrements of Heroes", i.e., making them behave like heroes.\footnote{From *The Spectator*, 249, December 15, 1711. The context reads: "The two great Branches of Ridicule in Writing are Comedy and Burlesque. The first ridicules Persons by drawing them in their proper Characters, the other by drawing them quite unlike themselves. Burlesque is therefore of two kinds, the first represents mean Persons in the Accoutrements of Heroes, the other describes great Persons acting and speaking like the basest among the People. *Don Quixote* is an Instance of the first, and Lucian's Gods of the second". Cited in Bond, p. 40.} Addison took Cervantes' portrayal of Don Quixote as a classical example of this technique, doubtless on the grounds that the *hidalgo*'s age, appearance, social standing, choice of mistress, and so forth make him too "mean" to be what he claims. As the editorial notes to *Don Quixote* of John Bowie (1781) and Diego Clemencín (1833-39) amply demonstrate, Cervantes' character-portrayal...
carries burlesque far beyond these elementary circumstances; the hero’s behaviour and discourse throughout the novel are saturated with reminiscences of the chivalric romances and are a send-up of all the matter contained in them. Should we class this portrait as parody or as mock-heroic? Usually, parody is a term reserved for the comic imitation of a specific model—the idiosyncracies of a particular author, or at the widest, of a distinctive school like Gongorism. Cervantes’ target is a large class of novels and therefore might seem more properly to qualify as mock-heroic. Yet his butt, unlike that of much mock-heroic, has clearly defined contours; it is Spanish chivalric romances, not heroic narrative in general. I shall therefore call this portrait a parody, making clear that it is a free and synthetic type of parody whose target consists of generic stereotypes rather than individual mannerisms. Being a parody of prose-fiction, it ridicules plot-situations and character-traits as much as, or perhaps rather more than, affectations of style. In some ways the characterisation of the hero undoubtedly widens out into mock-heroic. Mainly copying Spanish chivalric fiction, Don Quixote draws ancillary inspiration from the matter or style of Spanish ballads, Italian heroic romances, pastoral novels, Petrarchan and cancionero love-poetry—indeed, from any literary form germane in spirit to chivalric romances and therefore liable, by virtue of the hero’s peculiar bent for literary mimicry, to be assimilated to his imitation of them. Despite his hero’s eclecticism, Cervantes’ satiric quarrel is with chivalric romances and nothing else.

Another major, and often very exact, form of parody in Don Quixote consists of the clever charades enacted before the hero by his many hoaxers. Here, the fact that the participants are merry impostors in disguise, and that the stories which they act or narrate, though superficially grave and chivalresque, are covertly facetious in all their circumstances, fully promote that “meanness” of personage and subject-matter which Addison required of “high burlesque”.

Next, “low burlesque”. Here we are particularly concerned with travesty, which aims at a determinate work or species of works. (“Hudibrastic” employs a banal verse-style to diminish a subject which need not be literary, and therefore does not concern us.) In travesty, instead of miming a serious manner, one accosts a serious theme with irreverent vulgarity and familiarity, or to quote Addison once more, one “describes great Persons acting and speaking like the basest among the People”. Dido talks like a fish-wife; the poet re-writes the Iliad in slang; he portrays mythological gods and goddesses as scoundrels. Travesty occurs in Don Quixote every time that a character acts a chivalric part and blatantly ruins it either out of malice or foolishness. Altisidora’s impish love-lament, with which she serenades the hero in Part II, Chapter 44, sets the key exactly:

Oh tú, que estás en tu lecho,
entre sábanas de holanda,
durmiendo a pierna tendida
de la noche a la mañana,
caballero el más valiente
que ha producido la Mancha . . . etc.

Other examples abound. The inn-keeper mutters a pseudo-litany during the dubbing-scene with the account-book for the animal fodder open before him (*DQ* I, 3); Sancho narrates his embassy to Dulcinea's palace as though he had paid a visit to a farm-yard wench (*DQ* I, 31); even the hero stoops to travesty on occasion, e.g., in his debased account of the enchanted heroes and heroines in Montesino's palace. In the author's narrative style, the impudently derisory attitude typical of much travesty (cf. Altisidora's ballad above) is not typical of Cervantes. However, a subtle form of such disparagement can be found in his tendency to drop into familiarity, triteness, chattiness, flippancy at moments of dramatic climax. Examples are: his off-hand description of the hero's fatal sickness and death (*DQ* II, 74); his tongue-in-cheek and digressive accounts of the hero's contests—against the vizcaino, the lion, the Duke's chaplain ; his various laconic asides, like "Y era la verdad que por él caminaba" (*DQ* I, 2).

From this brief survey it emerges that three of the four main forms of burlesque are thoroughly represented by important aspects of *Don Quixote*. Their purpose is to ridicule the hero, and through him, chivalric romances. Two features of the novel, one outside and one within the hero's character, are surely not intended as burlesque. The first consists of the interpolated stories in Part I and their more subtly disguised counterparts in Part II. The second consists in what the hero says in his "lucid intervals".8

Usually, the comedy of burlesque is some form of The Ludicrous, and its theatre of action is Wonderland—a world of dream, fantasy, or nonsense. These features are typical by-products of the extreme disproportions that the genre involves between narrator's viewpoint and his subject-matter, or style and content, or status and behaviour. In Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (from 1712) the subject is a trivial high-society quarrel over the snipping-off and capture of a belle's lock of hair; yet the poet treats his theme with incongruous epic magnificence. Sylphs attend Belinda's toilet ;

8 I take the "lucid intervals" to be self-evidently, rather than just "surely", wise and admirable, since repeated statements by the author and discreet characters support this view. The "surely" is a concession to modern *Quixote* critics who maintain the contrary. Some discrimination is needed to separate wise from nonsensical remarks in the hero's discourse. As Vicente de los Ríos rightly observed in his "Análisis del Quijote" (1780), wisdom and nonsense are not detached from each other with artificial neatness, but flow continuously into one another (pp. 66-7). Thus, the Arma versus Letters speech starts from the mad premise that knight-errantry is part of the profession of Arms. Cervantes does not intend the confluence of the two elements to make us suppose that nonsense is ennobled or that wisdom is undermined. Salas Barbadillo, a contemporary of Cervantes, clearly appreciated this. In his *El caballero puntual* (Part I, 1614; Part II, 1619), he portrays a mad social climber whose career is explicitly likened to Don Quixote's. In Part II, he allows the hero sporadic moments of wisdom which, though jumbled up with his snobbish nonsense, are intended to be seen as extraneous to the nonsense: e.g. "Asi dijo; pareciendo en esta ocasión en partes cuerdas, y en partes confesando la flaqueza de su vano sujeto". Alonso Jerónimo de Salas Barbadillo, *Obras* (Madrid, 1809), II, p. 183.
she vents tantrums in grandiloquent laments; there is a journey to the Cave of Spleen. The poem is a splendid example of mock-heroic; and the unnaturalistic distortions are typical of burlesque. Cervantes has an unusual place within the genre since he avoids Wonderland altogether and, in the character of the hero, admits The Ludicrous only in very refined form.

Some essential mechanisms of Cervantine burlesque are patently exposed in the scene describing Don Quixote's interception of Maritornes on her way to the bed of the mule-driver from Arévalo (DQ I, 16). Cervantes insists throughout this scene that Don Quixote's view of events—that is, his impression that the daughter of the lord of the castle has come to seduce him—is a chimera begotten of compulsive literary make-believe:

Esta maravillosa quietud, y los pensamientos que siempre nuestro caballero traía de los sucesos que a cada paso se cuentan en los autores de su desgracia, le trujo a la imaginación una de las extrañas locuras que buenamente imaginarse pueden . . . y, teniendo toda esta quimera, que él se había fabricado, por firme y valedera, se comenzó a acuciar y a pensar en el peligroso trance en que su honestidad se había de ver, y propuso en su corazón de no cometer alevosía a su señora Dulcinea del Toboso.

Because of this, Don Quixote's psychological experience, here and wherever else that he imitates chivalric romances, is of a quite different nature from that of a sane person. His motives, sentiments, aims, and actions are an improvised theatrical performance, by which he attempts to re-create in his own life the experiences ascribed to heroes in a certain kind of fiction. His qualms of conscience and chaste resolves in this scene are therefore just imaginary figments. We, the readers, can recognise this, though Don Quixote, because he is mad, cannot. On our perception of this pivots the comedy of the extreme arbitrariness and irrelevance of the hero's behaviour.

Cervantes has thus conceived a hero whose main psychological motive is a lunatic urge to re-enact the genre that he (Cervantes) wants to ridicule; and this conception enables the author to achieve the typical distortions of burlesque without sacrifice of verisimilitude. Vicente de los Ríos was, I believe, the first to make these points:

Los caballeros andantes encontraban a cada paso una aventura, y el todo de estas aventuras era el asunto de las historias que Cervantes quería desterrar, y Don Quijote intentaba imitar: así el fin del autor y del Héroe requerían que su acción fuese un tezido continuo de aventuras procedidas todas de la locura del actor, y unidas con ella. Así en cada aventura hay por lo regular dos obstáculos y dos éxitos, uno efectivo en la realidad, y otro aparente en la aprehensión de Don Quijote, y ambos naturales, deducidos de la acción, y verosímiles, sin embargo de ser opuestos.

Vicente de los Ríos’ main argument in the context from which the second quotation is taken is that the hero's delusions present the reader, in effect, with two separate but parallel stories, and that the clash of these stories

* "Análisis del Quijote", pp. 54 and 56 respectively.
affords the reader constant amazement and delight. The amazement comes
from seeing the bizarre metamorphoses which mundane reality undergoes
in the hero's imagination; the delight from the incongruity of his delusions
to their context. Vicente de los Ríos praises Cervantes' ingenuity in dis-
covering a way "para que las aventuras de Don Quijote ridiculizasen su
accion en la realidad, y la hiciesen plausible en su imaginacion" (p. 57),
leaving him plausibly confirmed in his sense of superiority, with a quite
different evaluation of the crisis and resolution of the adventure from that
which the reader entertains. This critic also commends Cervantes for having
hit on a means of re-creating exactly the adventures of Amadís and similar
heroes, without incurring in the cloying implausibility that their feats assume
in the romances: "De que procede que los mismos hechos que en las historias
de Amadís, Belianis, y demas caballeros andantes son enfadosos e increibles,
son al contrario verosímiles y agradables en el Quijote, porque en este se
presentan como una apariencia de su loca imaginacion, y en aquellas como
sucesos reales y efectivos" (p. 56).

If one takes this last perception a stage further (Vicente de los Ríos does
not), one locates perhaps the most distinctive feature of Cervantine burlesque.
Cervantes takes considerable care to make the mad version of events self-
consistent, serious on its own terms, and psychologically intelligible. The
last point, concerning psychological intelligibility, is the most important.
Before Don Quixote's imaginary adventure begins, Cervantes describes the
marvellous silence in the inn, the solitary lantern burning in the porch, the
hero bruised and sleepless in a state of delirious fantasy. When Maritornes
steals furtively into the bedroom it is not surprising that in this eccentric
brain, in these circumstances, she should be mistaken for a love-sick princess
of romance: perhaps Princess Elisena, who comes clad in nightie and dressing-
gown to the bedchamber of King Perión and thus brings about the union
from which Amadís of Gaul is born; or perhaps the Infanta Beladina, who,
in Florambel de Lucea (1632), offers herself in similar manner to Floriseo
when he lodges in the Castillo del Deporte; or perhaps the Princess Imperia
who, in Belianís de Grecia Book II, Chapter 24, comes to confess her love
to the hero and is rejected by him, as Don Quixote rejects his princess in
the episode described by Cervantes. A favourite Cervantine trick, in setting
the scene for the hero's adventures, is to make reality seem to meet delusion
half-way: the flock of sheep is a large, inscrutable cloud of dust before it
becomes a flock of sheep; the barber's basin is something that glitters from
afar before it becomes a barber's basin. In Part I, Chapter 16, the technique
serves to bring the hero's hallucination powerfully to life, and by this means
immerses the reader vicariously in the atmosphere of suspense, high romance,
and tender feeling of Amadís de Gaula Book I, Chapter 1, and similar epi-
sodes—an atmosphere that the hero's mosaic of fantasies faithfully re-
creates: "la camisa . . . de finísimo y delgado cendal", "preciosas perlas
orientales", "un olor suave y aromático".
By this means Cervantes secures for his burlesque an advantage additional to verisimilitude. He achieves a particularly pure form of parody in which not only the external form of the original is copied (we are told that "él la pintó en su imaginación de la misma traza y modo que lo había leído en sus libros de la otra princesa que vino a ver el mal ferido caballero, vencida de sus amores, con todos los adornos que aquí van puestos"), but also the spirit is preserved. By this I mean that Don Quixote's delusions evoke chivalric romances as they seem normally to serious readers. In most parody, that kind of perspective on the original exists outside the work of parody; the author relies on the reader to evoke it for himself.

I do not mean that Don Quixote's legend of events, if artificially wrenched from its prosaic context, could stand by itself as a serious chivalric novel, still less that his literary mimicry constitutes an enactment of real chivalric virtues, such as love, gallantry, loyalty. Even considered in isolation, that legend is a parody. A sure sign of this is the inconsistency between the sensuous flirtatiousness of Don Quixote's attitude to the amorous intruder and his professed devotion to Dulcinea:

\[Y \text{ era tanta la ceguedad del pobre hidalgo, que el tacto, ni el aliento, ni otras cosas que traía en sí la buena doncella, no le desenganaban . . . antes le parecía que tenía entre sus brazos a la diosa de la hermosura. Y, teniéndola bien asida, con voz amorosa y baja le comenzó a dezir. . . .}\]

Such blots on his performance are recurrent. Typically, however, they have to be perceived beneath the surface of authenticity that his behaviour presents. They are consistent with the ironically grave manner of jesting which is characteristic of Cervantine "high burlesque", and which, in the words of an English critic writing in 1730, is designed to inflict "a surer wound" on its victim:

\[The \ Language \ next: \ from \ hence \ new \ pleasure \ springs; \ For \ Styles \ are \ dignify'd, \ as \ well \ as \ Things. \ Tho' \ Sense \ subsiste, \ distinct \ from \ phrase \ or \ sound, \ Yet \ Gravity \ conveys \ a \ surer \ wound. \ The \ chymic \ secret \ which \ your \ pains \ wou'd \ find \ Breaks \ out, \ unsought \ for, \ in \ Cervantes' \ mind; \ And \ Quixote's \ wildness, \ like \ that \ King's \ of \ old \ Turns \ all \ he \ touches \ into \ Pomp \ and \ Gold.\]

The depiction of a hero who regards and comports himself solemnly

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10 The references to specific circumstances suggest that Cervantes has a definite scene in mind. Clemencon, in his notes to this passage, considers the episode in *Florimel de Lucea* and an encounter between Amadís de Grecia and the Doncella del Castillo in *Florídel de Niquea* Part III, Chapter 42, as the likeliest sources. Since Cervantes refers to the scene as if it was well known, the episode at the beginning of *Amadís de Gaula* Book I seems more probable. The snag here is that King Pélén, even though the worse for wear after a day which includes combats against two wicked knights and a lion, is not specifically said to be "mal ferido". One's uncertainties as to Cervantes's source is a good indicator of the synthetic nature of his parody.

while acting ludicrously represents part of the "serious air" which eighteenth-century English critics so admired in Cervantes' burlesque methods. (The other part is the "solemn irony" of his narrative style.) Charles Jarvis, in the preface to his translation of *Don Quixote* (London, 1742), takes to task a previous English translation, by Peter Motteux, for the following reasons:

> It is full of what is called the *Faux brillant*, and openly carries throughout it a kind of low comic or burlesque vein. **Motteux** is so injudicious as to value his version upon this very air of comedy, than which nothing can be more foreign to the design of the author, whose principal and distinguishing character is, to preserve the face of gravity, generally consistent through his whole work, suited to the solemnity of a Spaniard, and wherein without doubt is placed the true spirit of his ridicule. **Jarvis**, who wrongly believed that Cervantes' target was the excesses of the Spanish code of chivalry (i.e. a historical institution), assumed that Don Quixote's character was an embodiment of the typical ethos of the Spanish gentleman, especially in respect of these qualities: *gravedad*, *lealtad*, and *temor de Dios*. The first of these consists in "a punctilious zeal for the service of his [the gentleman's] mistress" and "makes the chief subject of the present satire" (p. v). Jarvis' misapprehension is a testimony to the care with which Cervantes causes his hero "to preserve the face of gravity" in his imitation of Amadis and similar heroes. This care is evident in the fact that Cervantes has avoided the easy options of making his burlesque knight a lecher, a rascal, or a hypocritical braggart; rather, he has given him mad courage, propriety in sexual matters, literary fluency and sensibility.

However, Cervantes does not sacrifice "low burlesque". Thanks to the hero's deluded viewpoint in Part I, Chapter 16, which "turns all he touches into Pomp and Gold", one of the objects that he "touches", Maritornes, becomes a travesty of a princess in chivalric romance. She does so as a result of being measured, by the reader, against the idealised misconceptions of the hero. Unlike such impertinent pranksters as Altisidora (who serenades Don Quixote in Part II, Chapter 44), the Asturian wench does nothing which directly travesties the actions of fictional princesses. She is just an honest whore going quietly about her business. Cervantes has contrived a form of "low burlesque" which, like his "high burlesque", finds a naturalistic

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13 Pope used the phrase in *The Dunciad* (1728, 1743), lines 21 ff., addressed to Dean Swift:

> Oh thou, whatever title please thy ear,
> Dean, Draper, Bickerstaff or Gulliver,
> Whether thou choose Cervantes' serious air
> Or laugh and shake in Rabelais' easy chair.

14 P. iv. Cf. Tobias Smollett's preface to his own translation of *DQ*: "The translator's aim, in this undertaking, was to maintain that ludicrous solemnity and self-importance by which the inimitable Cervantes has distinguished the character of Don Quixote, without raising him to the inimpid rank of a dry philosopher, or debasing him to the melancholy circumstances and unentertaining caprice of an ordinary madman". From the second edition (London, 1761), p. xxx.
explanation in the hero's mania, and which, by virtue of this plausibility, can co-exist with "high burlesque" in perfect consistency. I take Cervantes' ability to achieve the co-existence of the "high" and "low" forms in this manner as another mark of originality. In effect, he has split the traditional figure of travesty in two: not gods and goddesses speaking the language of the stews, as in Lucian, but a prostitute speaking and acting as a prostitute and misconceived as a "diosa de la hermosura". He is faithful to the methods of travesty in that he tends, in Part I at least, to choose a low-level reality (e.g. Maritornes) for his hero to misapprehend. However, he is not committed by his system to a debased caricature of reality, and he frequently veers away from it. He can afford to preserve natural proportions in the delineation of character; and the kinds of reality that he depicts in collision with the hero's viewpoint comprise much of the teeming social history of the Spain of around 1600.

All modes of burlesque in Cervantes' novel derive their level and nature from their relationship to the hero's delusion. This is true of the burladores, and is even true of the narrator. Matching that delusion's "face of gravity", they achieve "high burlesque"; falling short of its decorum, they strike "low burlesque". The artistic strength of Cervantine burlesque in Don Quixote is largely due to its being centred firmly round an interesting character in a social setting, and not offered as a virtuoso war between author and literary target.

In the encounter with Maritornes the hero is totally alienated from reality; and this state of hallucination or self-absorption, typical of Don Quixote at the climaxes of his imagined adventures, would hardly make interesting characterisation possible if Cervantes had sustained it without variation. What makes Don Quixote a character in the full sense is that Cervantes more typically presents him—e.g. in conversation with Sancho between adventures—behaving towards persons and objects in a more natural way and at least partly seeing reality as it is. He is still "being" or (from our viewpoint) playing, the chivalric hero; yet his performance shows much adaptation to the facts of life, as they are outside the glamorous world of fiction. Without ceasing to believe that Sancho is a squire who will one day be rewarded with an island, he rightly sees him as gluttonous, idle, impertinent, and over-talkative; he can express absurdities with the eloquent style, the aphorisms, the erudition, and range of reference proper to a man-of-letters of the early seventeenth century; in his view of society, the realistic and the contemporary keep intruding upon the fabulous—as in his proposal that a small band of knights like himself be assembled to protect the coast of Spain against the threat of invasion by the Turkish fleet (DQ II, 1); the goodness and candour of Alonso Quijano, so Cervantes

14 Avellaneda, in his El Quijote (1814), does in fact sustain it thus; and the result is a much more wooden hero, much less responsive to his environment. Dialogue with him is mainly restricted to that form in which the interlocutors completely play up to the madman's fantasies.
tells us in the final chapter, infiltrate the mad personality of Don Quijote. By such means Cervantes turns what might have been a mad mask into a human face. He brings this feat off outstandingly in the marvellous sensitivity to experience that the hero displays—witness the natural transitions from arrogance, to impatient resignation, to resigned indulgence, to rage, to contrition, to serene amicability that he shows towards Sancho in the _batañes_ episode and its immediate sequel (DQ I, 20 and 21).

The question arises whether the hero’s behaviour outside his “adventures” qualifies as burlesque. I refer specifically to that large part of the hero’s dialogue—with Sancho, the Duke and Duchess, Sansón Carrasco, and many others—in which the topic of conversation is chivalry and his career as knight-errant.

If we were to take Henry Fielding’s word for it, the answer to our question should be No. In the preface to _Joseph Andrews_ (1742), which according to its sub-title is “written in imitation of the manner of Cervantes, the author of Don Quixote”, he states that the business of the writer of comic fiction is to depict in a true-to-life manner “the ridiculous” in human nature. By “the ridiculous” Fielding means mankind’s common foibles and affectations, which he reduces in essence to vanity and hypocrisy. He then sets out the reasons which have prompted him to admit burlesque to the “diction” of his novel (meaning, the narrator’s style and attitude), but to exclude it from the characterisation:

> For there [in the sentiments and characters] it is never properly introduced, unless in Writings of the Burlesque kind, which this is not intended to be. Indeed, no two Species of Writing can differ more widely than the Comic and the Burlesque: for as the latter is ever the Exhibition of what is monstrous and unnatural, and where our Delight, if we examine it, arises from the surprizing Absurdity, as in Appropriating the Manners of the highest to the lowest, or _converso_; so in the former, we should ever confine ourselves strictly to Nature, from the just imitation of which will flow all the pleasure we can this way convey to the sensible reader.15

Fielding rounds off this antithesis by comparing the comic novelist with the “comic history painter” (meaning Hogarth) and burlesque with the technique of caricature. He evidently considered, as we no doubt would now, that the depiction of the ridiculous, in his special sense of the term, is an area in which Cervantes excels.16 Since “the ridiculous” and “the monstrous” are, on Fielding’s reasoning, mutually exclusive, it follows that Cervantes cannot simultaneously be a “comic history painter” and a “caricaturist”—that is, a creator of novelistic comedy and a creator of burlesque—in the area of character and sentiment, including the character

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16 In _Joseph Andrews_ Book III, Chapter I, _Don Quijote_ is cited as an example of a work which “imitates Nature as it is universally”; and this is tantamount, on Fielding’s criteria, to hailing Cervantes as a masterly comic novelist.
and sentiment of the hero. This conclusion, if Fielding did in fact reach it, seems to me unjustified. However, the problem that Fielding discusses is an important one, which ought to have been tackled by eighteenth-century Quixote critics. They praised Cervantes as an exemplary imitator of nature; they praised him as a master of burlesque. Yet are the two arts so easily reconciled?

Let us see how Cervantes reconciles them by considering a sample of his art as a “comic history painter”:

“No hay que llorar”, respondió Sancho, “que yo entretendré a vuestra merced contando cuentos desde aquí al día, si ya no es que se quiere apear y echarse a dormir un poco sobre la verde yerba, a uso de caballeros andantes, para hallarse más descansado cuando llegue el día y punto de acometer esta tan desemejable aventura que le espera.”

“¡A qué llamas apear o a qué dormir?”, dijo don Quijote. “¡Soy yo, por ventura, de aquellos caballeros que toman reposo en los peligros? Duerme tú, que naciste para dormir, o haz lo que quieras, que yo haré lo que viene con mi pretensión.”

“No se enoje vuestra merced, señor mío,” respondió Sancho, “que no lo dije por tanto.”

This fragment of dialogue, which occurs when the knight discovers Rocinante’s mysterious paralysis in the batanes episode, could be said to exemplify much of the essential comedy of the Quixote/Sancho relationship. The master’s attitudes are here ironically undermined by the servant’s, which by their silliness and unheroic indignity fall short of the decorum of conduct that the master aspires to sustain. Considered on its own, Don Quixote’s rejoinder is a crushing refutation straight from the rhetorical text-book. It answers Sancho’s delightfully tactless suggestions—the first frivolous, the second contrary to chivalric ethics—with high-minded scorn. (Don Quixote has just won his “victory” over the funeral cortège, and is puffed with arrogance.) The use of rhetorical questions, the mimicry of what the adversary has said in more elevated style, the irony which suggests contempt by feigning ignorance, the hyperbole—all this should appear superb. It oozes the fastidiousness of a gentleman and an egg-head. However, by virtue of being ludicrously disproportionate to its trivial occasion, the high-minded indignation appears as offended self-importance and the condescension as the humourless sarcasm of the schoolmaster. In extreme contrast with these attitudes are Sancho’s deferential familiarity of style (“no hay que llorar”, “yo entretendré a vuestra merced contando cuentos”), his transparent anxiety to cajole, flatter, and soothe his master into acceptance of the situation, and the base fear patent beneath this casuistry. Cervantes’ delicate observation of character, his handling of dialogue, and his sense of the preposterous are perfectly illustrated here. One admires also the elegance of his irony. The viewpoint to which it corresponds is not articulated within the Quixote/Sancho relationship—as it usually is in the parallel galán/
gracioso relationship in the Golden Age comedia—since neither master nor squire are in any full sense aware of how much the latter’s remarks undermine the former’s pretensions. The discovery of “the ridiculous” is thereby left to the reader’s aloof perception; it is not signalled by the characters, nor by the author.

This, surely, is the kind of thing that Fielding had in mind when he marked out the comic novelist’s sphere of operation. Prima facie, the case for excluding it from the category of burlesque carries some force. If parody, which is what I believe Don Quixote’s little speech to be, is defined as a caricature which manages to preserve a feature-by-feature correspondence with the original, then this speech fails to meet the definition. Don Quixote’s imitation of chivalric romances here is not the close replica that he produces in Part I, Chapter 16. It could not be. In Spanish chivalric romances after Amadis de Gaula, heroes often find themselves amorously accosted by princesses, but rarely talked to by their squires, and never relentlessly exposed by their authors to a Sanchopanzine barrage of necedades. Yet Don Quixote’s basic motive in the conversation with Sancho is the same as in the encounter with Maritornes: to behave as Amadis would have done, to play to the gallery where sits the unseen sabio encantador recording his history. What his imitation in Part I, Chapter 20, may lose in surface similarity to the romances, it gains in similarity at a deeper level. Cervantes makes his hero improvise, in down-to-earth contexts where heroes are never seen to talk and think, a dimension of personality-traits and a rationale of his profession consonant with a knight-errant’s principles of conduct. We have just considered some of the personality-traits. Let us consider precisely what the rationale consists of, since this feature of the hero’s personality is what most gives him an individual mental life and most appears to remove him from the category of burlesque.

In the little speech to Sancho, the rationale, which is the core of the speech, consists of the ethical proposition that knights-errant remain vigilant in danger. This is a tiny part of a crazily sophistical world-view which the hero improvises, augments, and modifies under the duress of experience, always remaining essentially faithful to the mad beliefs that he evolved immediately prior to his first sally. It resembles in form, though not in content, a sane person’s life-philosophy, containing projects for the future, rationalisations of the past, ethical axioms and ad hoc principles, even a miniature epistemology, history, and sociology. It contains ideas like these: that everything that happens to chivalric heroes must unfailingly happen to him; that knights-errant need not pay hotel-bills; that being in love is a necessary part of the job; that he is pursued by malignant enchanters who keep changing things (e.g. helmets, princesses) out of their real form into a delusive form (e.g. basins, country-wenches). It is evident that all the premises of this rationale come direct from the romances, and furthermore, that there is unbroken continuity between what he does in
his "adventures," which are without doubt feature-by-feature parody, and what he says in his rationale. Thus, if he rejects the overtures of a princess in Part I, Chapter 16, he elaborates, before and afterwards, the philosophy of amatory service to Dulcinea on which this action is based: e.g. "Ella pelea en mí, y vence en mí, y yo vivo y respiro en ella, y tengo vida y ser" (DQ I, 30). His reasoning carries the practical act of imitation forward to the level of reflective discussion, apology, and explanation, and therefore constitutes, as he himself believes it does, imitation of chivalric romances also.

Consequently, the fragment of dialogue with Sancho should be accounted a form of parody; it conforms to the type of parody which consists in "following a train of thought precisely along the lines that the original author would have pursued from the given premises". It operates according to the same basic mechanisms as those identified in Part I, Chapter 16; and one may therefore legitimately conclude that Sancho's discourse in Part I, Chapter 20, like Maritornes' behaviour in the earlier episode, is a form of travesty. Lastly it follows that master and squire—the former directly, the latter in dependent relation to the former—are two examples of the hybrid that Fielding declared impossible: the compound of burlesque caricature and Hogarthian naturalism.

The following question might be raised against these conclusions. If Cervantes can depict Don Quixote's attitudes so naturalistically, does he in fact continue to regard the hero's motivation as being of the madly artificial kind exemplified by his behaviour towards Maritornes in Part I, Chapter 16? How can psychological experience generated by mere literary make-believe be visualised as being so similar to normal human behaviour? The answer to our question is indirectly given by Cervantes in the scene where the hero quarrels with Cardenio over the question of Queen Madasima's alleged adultery: "¡Estrano caso; que así volvió por ella como si verdaderamente fuera su verdadera y natural señora: tal le tenían sus descomulgados libros!" (DQ I, 24). The peculiar nature of his madness causes him to respond to the figments of literature or of his own imagination as though they had living substance, and to evince the same passionate concern about them as that which a sane man might feel for real persons and objects. Clearly, we are meant to see his rage over the insult to Queen Madasima as springing from a vaporous cause. His indignation and condescension in the conversation with Sancho spring from the belief that he is a knight-errant and that it is therefore beneath his dignity even to hear counsels of carfree relaxation. This belief is vaporous; and so, intrinsically, are the emotions generated by it.

In offering this re-constructed eighteenth-century view, I do not commend the eighteenth-century Quixote critics in Spain and England as definitive oracles on Cervantes' novel. On the contrary, I have selected ideas from their "lucid intervals," discarding some ingenuous nonsense, much common-

17 Bond, p. 13.
sensical triteness, and qualifying or carrying further those ideas that seem to me sound. Where they have something to teach us is in their basic assumptions about Cervantes' novel, which were formed in an age of burlesque and satire, nearer to his epoch than ours, and therefore provide a saner vantage-point for understanding *Don Quixote* than the intuitions of the post-Romantic era.

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