

Cervantes and Don Quixote

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EMESCO

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We hope that the readers of these proceedings would find in its pages a cumulus of new ideas which would lead to new study, thus will honour the greatness of our author Miguel de Cervantes and his novel, and that the figure of the madman with good intentions will serve as an incantation for so many mad people of bad intentions roaming around the world.

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Quixote's Insanity and Sancho Panza's Wisdom

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The theme of insanity and wisdom in Cervantes' *Quixote* is, without doubt, a very complex question. But we could also then ask which theme is easy in Cervantes. If we look for the most distinctive aspect in all Cervantes' works, I dare say, it is certainly prohibited to simplify. And this aspect can be distinctly perceived in the theme of Quixote's insanity.

It is important to remember that in Cervantes' opinion the great inventive possibility in the books on chivalry is their only virtue. He declares that no other genre has such a wide possibility to move the pen through, because a writer can elaborate a huge number of adventures, describe thousands of characters and episodes endlessly. Cervantes seems to love this peculiarity. However we must also perceive the obstacle posed by verisimilitude at the end. This annoying problem of verisimilitude is solved by choosing an insane figure as protagonist, because the reader will believe all his actions, however incredible they might be. Don Quixote is insane and this condition will justify each adventure, however absurd it be, but the history as a whole will not be a huge amount of absurdities (as the chivalry novels are in Cervantes' opinion).

Nevertheless, this insanity of the protagonist enables the writer to elaborate a dense complexity of references or elements around insanity that scholars have outlined and I am going to enumerate them very briefly.

1) Many critics have pointed out the relation of *Quixote* with Erasmus and it is not worth remembering that *The Praise of Folly* plays also with multiple ironies and humorous ambiguities.

2) Many other scholars have studied the possible relation with the *Examen de ingenios*, by Huarte de San Juan, a book that analyses the complexities according to the dominant humour (phlegm, blood, bile and melancholia) and the different characters that could be very near insanity due to an excessive creativeness. Thus, Cervantes could have designed a very believable insane person following the physiological theories of this period.

3) The importance of carnival elements, which Augustin Redondo¹ has studied in-depth have also been emphasised. It is evident that the pair Don Quixote and Sancho reminds us of the fat and the thin and we could distinctively recognise Don Carnal and Doña Cuaresma. Don Quixote, allied to Lent, is glad with few weeds that are the food of many suffering knights, while Sancho misses the great meals such as those served in Camacho's wedding, although he could not always get them. His own surname "Panza" that is 'Belly', connects him with the carnival world. We can also perceive the strength of these substrata by examining the drawing, illustrations and engravings that have been published with the text along with many editions of the book since its first edition. There is a contrast not only in the two characters, the thin Don Quixote and the fat Sancho, but also between the skinny Rocinante

¹ ReDondo, 1997. And Márquez Villanueva, 1995.

and Sancho's corpulent Donkey. Insanity of Carnival kind and parody are found all over the *Quixote*, and the protagonists are not only very effective but the parody penetrates the whole narrative universe of this novel.

4) Such insanity is also related to the world of buffoons, which is equally important in this novel, for instance, the characters of the dukes of the second part perceive Don Quixote and Sancho as mere buffoons. The role of a comic developed by Sancho can be compared to that created by a buffoon. And other buffoons appear on many occasions, as it happens in the adventure of the cart of the courts of Death, where a buffoon shakes his bladders to scare away the horses of our protagonists, as if he wanted to expel two unexpected rivals. The ceremony of knighting of Don Quixote in the country inn, as Martín de Riquer has pointed out in his edition², is a grotesque parody that disqualifies Don Quixote, according to the old laws of chivalry, to be a real knight. The ridiculously funny burlesque ceremony deprives Don Quixote of the necessary dignity to fulfil his mission and outline the general insanity that dominates the process that will follow his adventures.

It is impossible to examine here all the forms and possibilities of Don Quixote's insanity and the role of his squire Sancho Panza. However, I want to analyse the general trajectory of Don Quixote's madness, because it will reveal, ironically, the craziness of many characters that consider themselves sane and wise.

Don Quixote: the Great Insane

At the very beginning of the Second Part, Don Quixote comes to know that his adventures had become so well known and

² Ver ed. de Riquer, pp. 48-49.

popular that the news of his adventures are reaching far and wide and are told in the books touched by children, read by young people, understood by men and celebrated by the elders. Deeply interested by what people say about him, Don Quixote asks Sancho (II, 2):

In the meantime, tell me friend Sancho, what do the folks say of me about this town? What opinion has the common people of me? What think the gentlemen, and what the cavaliers? What is said of my prowess, what of my exploits, and what of my courtesy? What discourse is there of the design I have engaged in, to revive and restore to the world the long-forgotten order of chivalry?³

With the condition that Don Quixote does not get angry, Sancho declares that:

First and foremost then, said Sancho, the common people take Your Worship for a downright madman and me for no less a fool. The gentlemen say, that not containing yourself within the bounds of gentility, you have taken upon you the style of Don, and invaded the dignity of knighthood, with no more than a paltry vineyard and a couple of acres of land, with a tatter behind and another before⁴.

People say that Don Quixote is a downright madman and Sancho is also a fool. And we must agree that this hidalgo from La Mancha is a ridiculous knight-errant who does absolutely nothing

³ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. Ch. Jervas, vol. 2, pp. 21-22.

⁴ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. Ch. Jervas, vol. 2, p. 22.

right. Even Sancho Panza, who knows him very well, considers him as a crazy poor man. Bachelors, priests, noblemen and Dukes, shepherds and goatherds, members of the Santa Hermandad, innkeepers and pigmen recognise Don Quixote's insanity as soon as they met him, with his strange and sad figure. But their impression does not change when they hear him talk about all the reasons for reviving an archaic, old-fashioned chivalry in the world and society where he lives. What could those prostitutes think, when he addressed them with chivalric rhetoric which they were unable to understand (I, 2)?

Fly not, ladies, nor fear any discourtesy; for the order of knighthood, which I profess, permits me not to offer injury to any one, much less to virgins of such high rank as your presence denotes⁵.

Who could confuse, apart from an insane, these nomad prostitutes and of the lowest category, with high ladies, thing, as the narrator explains, so strange to their profession that makes them laugh?

The chivalry insanity

The narrator of the story has explained from the beginning how the knight gets to insanity, however he permits the reader to reach his own conclusions about its limits and functions. Obviously, we know the source of his insanity and we can foresee its dimensions and real objectives.

It is well known that Don Quixote gets a mental disorder by reading foolish books of chivalry:

⁵ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. Ch. Jervas, vol. 1, p. 19.

In short, he so bewildered himself in this kind of study, that he passed the nights in reading from sunset to sunrise, and the days from sunrise to sunset: and thus, through little sleep and much reading, his brain was dried up in such a manner, that he came at last to lose his wits. His imagination was full of all that he read in his books, to wit, enchantments, battles, single combats, challenges, wounds, courtships, amours, tempests and impossible absurdities. An so firmly was he persuaded that the whole system of chimeras he read of was true, that he thought no history in the world was more to be depended upon. [...] In fine, having quite lost his wits, he fell into one of the strangest conceits that ever entered the head of any madman; which was, that he thought it expedient and necessary, as well for the advancement of his own reputation, as for the public good, that he should commence as a knight errant and wander through the world, with his horse and arms in quest of adventures and to put in practice whatever he had read to have been practised by knights-errant; redressing all kinds of grievances, and exposing himself to danger on all occasions; that by accomplishing such enterprises he might acquire eternal fame and renown⁶.

Don Quixote wants to get eternal fame and become renowned. We could understand better that ambition if we consider, for a moment, the life (that Cervantes is not interested in telling us) that a poor hidalgo with a skinny horse and a dish of boiled meat, consisting of more beef than mutton, had led in a

⁶ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. Ch. Jervas, vol. 1, pp. 11-13.

place of La Mancha until that moment. Unamuno liked to imagine this life in his book entitled *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho* in this way:

He was a poor and idle man; he was inactive most time of the year. How many times in his early hunting he dreamt that his name was spread around those open spaces and reached all houses and was pronounced in the width of the earth and the centuries. In those forty years of dark life, he bred his heart with the deeds and exploits of those tough knights who aim at glory. His desire of glory was the impulse of his action.

My job, Don Quixote assures, is not that other values to those that are not of value and revenges those who receive unfairness and punishes treacheries, (I, 17).

Do we qualify this attitude as foolish? Yes, I agree this behaviour is one of an insane person, although it is a peculiar kind of insanity.

The Perception of Insanity

Of course, Don Quixote's insanity rests on two fundamental mistakes as Martín de Riquer has detailed in his edition of the novel.

The first one is his assumption that all that he has read in the novels of chivalry is a historic truth and a faithful account of real events. This belief presupposes incapacity to distinguish reality from literary fiction, as a famous scholar Edward Riley⁷ has remarked. An excess of readings and a lack of critical discrimination had provoked this state of incapacity.

⁷ Riley, 1999, pp. 67-69.

The second mistake of Don Quixote is the thought that it was possible to restore chivalry of old times at the beginning of the Seventeenth Century. It would be impossible to defend all those ideals that will soon clash against the new ways of life and the new value systems Don Quixote's insanity does not consist exactly in what has been defined as his idealism, but rather his insanity depends on his intention of putting into practice some ideals in a world that is completely different from the one described in his books.

In conclusion, the problem is that Don Quixote is unable to understand the immediate reality in which he lives, and that he observes the world from a dislocated perspective through his chivalric obsession. That's what explains his continuous failure. Each time he wants to make amends for an unjust action, he damages the victims even more. Among many other episodes, we could recall that of the young shepherd Andrés, beaten by his employer Juan Haldudo the rich, neighbour of Quintanar, for his carelessness in his work. Due to the knight's intervention and threats the employer promises to pay him his salary and forget the punishment. But as soon as the knight goes away, Haldudo comes back to tie the shepherd boy to the tree and reproduces his stripes, while he makes fun of the boy (I, 4):

But to show you how much I love you, I am resolved to augment the debt, to increase the payment. And taking him by the arm, he tied him again to the tree, where he gave him so many stripes, that he left him for dead.

— now, master Andrés, call upon that redresser of wrongs. You will find that he will hardly redress this, though I believe I have not quite Done

with you yet. For I have a good mind to flay you alive, as you feared but now⁸.

The victories dreamt of by Don Quixote are never achieved. The only thing he receives is beatings and stones that break his teeth and bones. But we have to recognise his insanity as well as his heroism. It requires real courage to go on fighting against so many giants and odds that can be found in the world. We cannot deny the fact that he acts in this way only due to his insanity because his insanity is partly his heroism. It requires great energy and a strong will to change the world and to transform prostitutes and dishwashers of a country inn into high ladies or to free chained prisoners. They can be thieves, murderers and galley slaves, but this thing does not affect the insane Don Quixote who is devoted to the task of helping the oppressed. And if he begins to show some signs of weakness under given circumstances, Sancho strengthens him. Don Quixote complains: "I have always heard it said that to do good to low fellows is to throw water into the sea. Had I believed what you said to me, I might have prevented this trouble; but this is done. I must have patience and take warning from henceforth". Will Don Quixote learn his lesson? "Your worship will as much take warning as I am a Turk" (I, 22-23). Miguel de Unamuno exclaims after reading this sentence: "How well do you know, heroic Sancho that your master could not avoid doing good acts and fulfil true justice".

This purpose is a real identifying mark of our hero, who overcomes his insanity, steady also until his tragic ending.

However, the scholars have pointed out an important difference between the first and the second part.

⁸ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. Ch. Jervas, vol. 1, p. 33.

Don Quixote's insanity in the first and in the second part.

In the first part, Don Quixote confuses the reality with his readings. The country inns are castles for him, the windmills are enemy giants and the flocks of sheep are armies in the battlefield. In the first part of the novel, Sancho represents the realistic vision that warns his master of the insanity of such fantasies, in an evident contrast between Quixote's craziness and Sancho's judiciousness (I, 8):

look yonder, friend Sancho Panza, where you may discover somewhat more than thirty monstrous giants, with whom I intended to fight and take away all their lives. With whose spoils we will begin to enrich ourselves; for it is lawful war, and doing good service to take away so wicked a generation from off the face of the earth.

— What giants? said Sancho Panza.

— Those see yonder, answered his master, with those long arms; for some of them are wont to have them almost of the length of two leagues.

— Consider, sir, answered Sancho, that those which appear yonder are not giants, but windmills; and what seem to be arms are the sails, which, whirled about by the wind, make the millstone go⁹.

⁹ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. Ch. Jervas, vol. 1, p. 59-60.

The same antithetical structure forms the episodes of the country inn-castle and the armies of sheep. The determination of Don Quixote, facing reality from his mistaken position, will end always, as it is known, in a failure, logical result of this inappropriate perception of the things that the Don Quixote's insanity imposes.

In the second part, Don Quixote sees neither castles nor country inns; nor giants or windmills. He perceives things as they really are, but this new perception does not make him abandon his chivalric purposes. Now, curiously, there will be other characters who will try to deceive him so that Don Quixote could recognise a reality that is not so real. We can only remember the episode in which Sancho Panza wants to convince his master that those coarse and rustic peasant girls are Dulcinea and her female companion. It is also important to consider the different jokes in the Dukes' palace, where they prepare the necessary stage so that Don Quixote could get into a fictitious world. Although he was able to form this imaginary world in the first part by himself, he seems to be refractory to it in the second part. It could be said that there is a process from the first to the second part in the evolution of the knight and that this hostile reality is defeating his fantastic fiction. As an example of what I am saying, I could quote the implicit confession at the end of the Montesino's cave, when he asks Sancho not to inquire more into what he is saying and he demands to be believed as he has accepted Sancho's explanations at other times. This episode is a milestone that shows the beginning of the end, that the knight has accepted his defeat. Don Quixote will reply to Sancho's incredulous words about the events in the cave of Montesinos (II, 23), when the squire reports the wonderful lies in the trip of Clavileño

Sancho, you want me to believe in what you say you have seen in heaven. Also, I want you to believe me in what I saw in the cave of Montesinos. And I do not want to pronounce a word more.

The evolution of Don Quixote is, as Riley has commented, a passage towards disillusion that will culminate in recovering his sense and finally in the death of our hero. In other words, Don Quixote's insanity is not a craziness of unique dimension and it is not possible to explain it as a complete malfunction of his brain. It is something much more complex that we should examine.

Different features of Don Quixote's insanity

Don Quixote's insanity makes him a comic character and this was precisely the general interpretation in his time. But as we advance in our reading of this book, we can appreciate that the fundamental parody reaches wider dimensions. It is important to remember that both interpretations can coexist (and this multiplicity is one of the greatest achievements of this novel). The grotesque aspects do not hide, as we have commented, his essential honesty. And it is not the smallest irony in Cervantes to join insanity with truth and justice, nor to invert systematically the results achieved by Don Quixote, whose deeds usually end in the biggest damage to those helped by his strong arm or in the beating of his person, his squire and his horse.

His insanity is not a simple dementia. As Jean Canavaggio¹⁰ has clearly explained, his insanity is really the:

monotony of a soul too sharp; and witty spirit who is victim of a perturbed imagination. It is the story of a stubborn man also who does not want to use other code

¹⁰ Canavaggio, 2003, p. 294.

to understand the world than that found in the books he has read.

So, "Don Quixote's truth is not that of a disjointed dummy that a wind of a windmill throws him to the ground". He is, in words of the poet student, son of the knight of the green coat, "a half insane, full of lucid intervals". Don Quixote only gets crazy when other characters provoke his chivalry obsession. Throughout the novel, we hear him talking about different topics: some of them are about the letters and weapons, the ways of good ruling, the requirements of poetry and theatre, the values and difficulties of translations, the prudence that must be used between people and countries. His advice is sensible when he is not alienated by his mania. Sancho shows it very well, when he says that (II, 22):

This master of mine, when I speak things pithy and substantial, used to say, I might take a pulpit in my hand and go about the world preaching fine things. And I say of him that, when he begins stringing of sentences, and giving advice, he may not only take a pulpit in his hand, but two upon each finger and stroll about your market places, crying out: Mouth, what would you have? The devil takes you for a knight-errant that knows everything! I believed in my heart that he only knew what belonged to his chivalries: but he pecks at everything and thrusts his spoon into his master.

The piece of advice addressed to Sancho, when the squire is about to set off for the Barataria isle to rule as a governor, is also very wise, as we can appreciate following the comments of the narrator:

Who that had heard the foregoing discourse of Don Quixote's, but would have taken him for a prudent and intelligent person? But as it has been often said in the progress of this grand history, he talked foolishly only when chivalry was the subject, and in the rest of his conversation showed himself master of a clear and agreeable understanding; insomuch that his actions perpetually betrayed his judgement, and his judgement his actions. But in these second instructions given to Sancho, he showed a great deal of pleasantry and pushed his discretion and his madness to a high pitch (II, 43)¹¹.

Don Quixote is an obsessed maniac, because his insanity is something more than a foolish craziness. There is a meticulous coherence and a vital purpose towards which all his actions are directed. He strengthens his personality and his vision of the world with total determination, because he does not suffer from an extravagant delirium. He announces "I know who I am" when he is back in his village after the first expedition. These words constitutes a testimony of his will and a persistence in his personality, that can be understood with better evidence if this character is compared with the Quixote created by Avellaneda, the apocryphal Don Quixote, the bad one. The main difference between these two characters is the incoherence of the figure created by Avellaneda in comparison with the model designed by Cervantes. The insane character of Cervantes has, as I have already explained, a coherent insanity, a complex vision of the world, in many cases wise and wide, alive and controlled by his obsession

¹¹ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. Ch. Jervas, vol. 2, p. 336.

that is justified. Once he has chosen his identity, he tries to be loyal to it, assuming his role. On the other hand, the character created by Avellaneda is simply a mad person, without a clear idea of his role in the world, without being aware of his mission. He can not change his attitude, nor adapt himself in his disputes with the environment. The behaviour of the apocryphal Quixote does not integrate with the world around him. He lives away, in an incoherent atmosphere of coarse insanity. So, he can believe sometimes to be Don Fernando el Católico, Aquiles, el Cid, Fernán González... Even he does not know who he really is. The character designed by Cervantes only shows a similar confusion in his first leaving. When Don Quixote is found by his neighbour Pedro Alonso, injured after being beaten by a groom, Don Quixote believes to be Valdovinos or the Moorish Abencerraje. In this episode, we can see a fluctuation of personalities and this situation is not going. It is possible that this detail could confirm Menéndez Pidal¹² and other critics' suggestion that the *Quixote* could be a kind of short exemplary novel at its very beginning. This original plan of creating an exemplary novel could be inspired by the interlude entitled the *Entremés de los romances*. The protagonist of this interlude, the peasant Bartolo, maddened by the romances, goes away from his home trying to imitate the deeds of his romacero's heroes, until a shepherd boy beats him and he comes back injured to his house, believing that he is helped by the Marquis of Mantua. The situation described in this interlude is very similar to what we can read in the first expedition of Don Quixote. But Cervantes improves this first stage and will create a protagonist of a wonderful dense effect.

¹² Menéndez Pidal, 1958 [1920].

We are all insane

A famous saying written in the *Vocabulario de refranes* (proverbs, sayings) by Gonzalo de Correas says: "We are all crazy, ones due to the others". I consider this to be an important aspect in Don Quixote's insanity that would clear up something about Cervantes' thought about this issue. I refer to the attitudes of the other characters when they find the insane hidalgo. There are two essential reactions. On the one hand, we observe those characters that try to make fun of the errant knight, seeing only a buffoon in him to enjoy them. We could remember the attitude of the Dukes who are criticised by the narrator himself declaring that they seem to be even more foolish than the knight is, because they are continuously provoking the poor hidalgo with their jokes. On the other hand, we find many other characters that show a wise appearance and want Don Quixote to come back to the good way. Some of them are his neighbours: the priest, the barber and the bachelor Sansón Carrasco. But we find that those characters so wise and prudent do not know what they are talking about. The clearest example is the priest of the dukes that so bitterly reproaches Don Quixote in public.

And you, stupid wretch, who has thrust it into your brain that you are a knight-errant, and that you conquer giants and seize caitiffs? Be gone in good hour and in such this is said to you; return to your own house, and breed up your children, if you have any; mind your affairs and cease to ramble up and down the world, sucking the wind and making all people laugh that you know or know you not. Where, with a mischief, have you ever found that there have been or are knights-errant? Where are there any giants in Spain

or caitiffs in La Mancha or Dulcineas enchanted or all the rabble rout of follies that are told of you? (II, 31)¹³.

But Don Quixote replies to him wisely:

Pious and well-meant reproof demands another kind of behaviour and language; at least the reproving me in public and so rudely has passed all the bounds of decent reprehension. For it is better to begin with mildness than asperity and it is not right without knowledge of the fault, without more ado to call the offender madman and idiot. Tell me, I beseech your reverence, for which of the follies you have seen in me do you condemn and revile me, bidding me get me home and take care of my house and of my wife and children without knowing whether I have either? What? Is there no more to do but to enter boldly in other men's houses to govern the masters. And shall a poor pedagogue who never saw more of the world than what is contained within a district of twenty or thirty leagues, set himself at random to prescribe laws to chivalry and to judge of knights-errant? Is it then an idle scheme and time to throw away, to range the world not seeking its delights but its austerities, whereby good men aspire to the seat of immortality?¹⁴

As we can see, the reply of Don Quixote is so appropriate that it is not needed to say anything more. Don Quixote's insanity seems to be sometimes a kind of mirror that denounces all the hidden neurosis of other characters. In this conflict of perspectives,

¹³ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. Ch. Jervas, vol. 2, p. 253.

¹⁴ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. Ch. Jervas, vol. 2, pp. 254-55.

the foolishness of Don Quixote could be revealed as a deeper truth, more just and better than the superficial wisdom of other characters who believe they have the right to make fun or criticise the tough knight of the lions.

Sancho's wisdom and insanity

It has been revealed as a common place to confront the fantastic and insane idealism of Don Quixote with the realistic and down-to-earth vision of Sancho Panza. Sancho sees windmills and they really are windmills. Sancho perceives sheep and they happen to be sheep. And Sancho discovers country inns and they really are country inns. He does not forget his material profit and demands his Donkeys and the salary promised by his master. He shows good care with his saddlebags provided with a piece of cheese and his leather flask of wine. He proves to be a very wise peasant with a down-to-earth attitude very different from his insane master. But his wisdom is not only measured by the care of his belly. He shows an admirable prudence in the verdicts he pronounces during his administration of Barataria isle. But the reader has to recognise his natural talent, when Sancho decides to abandon his ruling experience, recognising he is not prepared for this responsibility. If Don Quixote affirmed that he knew who he was, Sancho knows very well who he is, a definitive proof of his wisdom:

Give way, gentlemen, and suffer me to return to my ancient liberty. Suffer me to seek my past life that I may rise again from this present death. I was not born to be a governor, nor to defend islands, or cities from enemies that assault them. I better understand how to plough and dig, how to prune and dress vines than how to give laws and defend provinces and kingdoms. St.

Peter is well at Rome. I mean that nothing becomes a man so well as the employment he was born for (II, 53)¹⁵.

Perhaps Sancho is another hero, much more heroic as he does not show off his deeds. Unamuno says that Sancho proves to be even greater Quixote because, being sane, he follows a crazy master, while Don Quixote only follows his own insanity instead. He is loyal to his master and he goes after him looking for dangerous adventures, without leaving his master however frightened he sometimes feels. He defends Don Quixote against enemies and slanders. Sancho does not betray his master, although he sometimes doubts him. Could you imagine more heroism and idealistic insanity than a poor peasant converted into a squire of an insane master who thinks he will be able to change the world of human beings?

Two heroic insanes

The biggest heroism of Don Quixote and Sancho is not shown in their marvellous adventures of giants and windmills, nor in the armies or flocks of sheep, nor in the enchanted ships or in flying Clavileños. Their heroism is proved in their suffering from those politically correct who want them to be restored to the good way, to get them out of their pilgrimages and reduce their dreams to the boring life of the anonymous mass: the housekeeper, the niece, Sansón Carrasco, priests and barbers.

Blessed me, uncle! [...] and yet should give in to so blind vagary and so exploded a piece of folly as to think to persuade the world that you are valiant now you are old; that you are strong, when you are infirm;

¹⁵ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. Ch. Jervas, vol. 2, p. 426.

and that you are able to make crooked things straights, though stooping yourself under the weight of years. Above all that you are a knight, when you are really none (II, 6)¹⁶.

Don Quixote has to suffer that a little girl, ignorant of almost everything in life, dares to criticise and censor the stories of the knights-errant and she could advise prudence to the lover of Dulcinea. Don Quixote could be insane, but he is also very jealous of his freedom and gets angry:

By the God in whom I live, said Don Quixote, were you not my niece directly, as being my own sister's daughter, I would make such an example of you for the blasphemy you have uttered, that the whole world should ring of it (II, 6)¹⁷.

And Sancho is sane. Sancho does not want to see Don Quixote retired and defeated, because there are a lot of deeds to achieve, and the first duty is to fulfil his fate of men, a fate of freedom. They could be beaten and hit, but they do not want to see the iniquities of the world, or what is even worse, to close their eyes not to see that injustice. They want to ride to live their adventures again.

Sansón Carrasco thought that he had defeated Don Quixote and the knight himself believed it, dying on his bed, healed of his insanity:

¹⁶ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. Ch. Jervas, vol. 1, p. 49.

¹⁷ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. Ch. Jervas, vol. 1, pp. 48-49.

Gentlemen, —said Don Quixote— let us proceed fairly and softly. Look not for this year's birds in last year's nests. I was mad. I am now sober. I was Don Quixote de la Mancha. I am now, as I have said, the good Alonso Quixano (II, 74)¹⁸.

But both of them were wrong. Because the heroes are created with a different condition, which makes them be immortal. Don Quixote's insanity is truly —as Unamuno used to say— an impulse to live. It is meaningful that our hero dies when he recovers his sense, although Sancho invites him to come back again, because he considers the death as the worse of all insanities.

Eternal Don Quixote

And Don Quixote does not die. Neither does Sancho Panza. We can imagine them trotting around the world more alive than ever, and with no intention of retiring to an asylum instead of the advises of muleteers and galley slaves, silly dukes and housekeepers, priests and barbers and nieces and bachelors of the world. Rubén Darío expressed it very well in his poem *Letanía de nuestro señor Don Quijote*:

Noble pilgrim of all pilgrims,
 you sanctified all paths
 with the footprints of your heroism,
 against all certainties, against all consciences,
 and against all the laws and against all sciences,
 against truth, against lie...
 Pray for us, Lord of the sad people,
 you that live from strength and wear dreams,
 crowned with the golden helmet of illusion;

¹⁸ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. Ch. Jervas, vol. 2, p. 580.

that nobody has been able to defeat yet,
with the shield in your arm, all fantasy,
and the spear ready, all heart...

Noble peregrino de los peregrinos,
que santificaste todos los caminos
con el paso augusto de tu heroicidad,
contra las certezas, contra las conciencias,
y contra las leyes y contra las ciencias,
contra la mentira, contra la verdad...
Ora por nosotros, señor de los tristes,
que de fuerza alientas y de ensueños vistes,
coronado de áureo yelmo de ilusión;
que nadie ha podido vencer todavía,
con la adarga al brazo, toda fantasía,
y la lanza en ristre, toda corazón...

So be it!

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