

“Truth and Christianity in *Don Quixote*: Remaking the World
With the Game of Storytelling”

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What is truth? What is the difference between fiction and history? How does one know?

The story of Don Quixote captivates the reader's mind with these questions, while the entertaining adventures of the characters draw the reader into Cervantes's world. Don Quixote of La Mancha's folly makes the reader laugh and delight in the ridiculousness of his altered perception of reality throughout his journeys, but this laughter serves a secondary purpose as well. Through this laughter and perception of Don Quixote the reader enters a new reality, the world of Cervantes's story in which the reader's perception of reality turns into a collection of questions. Is Don Quixote really mad? Who knows the truth? How can the reader trust the narrator, and trust that this book itself is a true history? How can one tell the difference between madness and sanity? Who measures that truth, and is it only a matter of perspective? In *Don Quixote*, Cervantes calls the reader to question truth and knowledge itself, particularly in relation to the unquestioned perspective of the Christian and Catholic religion. The language of Cervantes probes at the unquestioned devotion to Christian scripture regarded as true history, while Don Quixote's interactions with the other characters explore the tension between perceived madness and perceived sanity. Cervantes and his characters together remake a world in which the reader can re-evaluate their assumptions and determine what is madness and what is sanity, after all.

Cervantes proposes to communicate with the reader through the process of storytelling in the way that he addresses these questions. Stepping into this world, then, is a necessary first step into understanding how Cervantes' writing works. He invites the reader into this process of storytelling when he introduces a character to speak for him right away in his prologue. Even in the part of the novel when the author supposedly speaks directly to the reader, Cervantes chooses

to create a character, his friend who offers him advice on writing the prologue, to communicate with the reader. This friend assures Cervantes, “there is no reason for you to go begging for maxims from philosophers, counsel from Holy Scripture, fictions from poets, orations from rhetoricians, or miracles from saints” (8). While this statement refers directly to Cervantes’s expressed worry that his novel does not have adequate citations and references, the way in which his character expresses this assurance already begins Cervantes’s process of bringing the reader’s mind into his created world. He places Holy Scripture as an intellectual authority along with philosophy, poetry, and rhetoric, three well-accepted schools of thought and art. In an even bolder assertion, this friend refers to “miracles from saints”, a distinctly Catholic and religious belief, as a verification of authority and intellectual stability along with the intellectual traditions. This character operates upon the assumption that Catholic miracles are real and factual. These details in the way in which Cervantes’s character thinks are the key to understanding the experience Cervantes will offer the reader’s mind in connecting with these characters and engaging with Cervantes’s story. They will, in fact, change the way the reader thinks.

This catalyst for a shift in the reader’s thinking takes on many forms and layers throughout the novel—the way the characters think, the way in which Cervantes himself constructs the story, and the way in which the narrator communicates with the reader. In Don Quixote’s exchange with the priest in the beginning of Part II of the novel, Cervantes’s care in arranging his story, down to the sequence of moments of conversation, offers an introduction to the relation between Don Quixote’s madness and Christianity. In a conversation when the priest and the barber are probing Don Quixote about the books of chivalry, the priest states his misgivings about what Don Quixote has said: “I am not at all convinced that this crowd of

knights errant to whom your grace, Señor Don Quixote, has referred, were really and truly persons of flesh and blood who lived in the world” (466). Now, for any person familiar, as Cervantes’s readers would have been in his time, with the Catholic belief that Jesus is present in the Eucharist, bread and wine transformed into flesh and blood, those words hold deep meaning. In Christianity they hold deep resonances with a belief in the Incarnation, Jesus becoming a person of flesh and blood in the world and living among humans as both God and man. So for a reader familiar with Christianity and Catholicism, these words send a spark of recognition through the mind, accompanied by a short circuit when they are spoken in an entirely unfamiliar and contradictory context. The inconsistency of the *priest* questioning flesh and blood, carrying the weight of the Incarnation and Eucharist, sets a Christian or Catholic reader’s mind on edge. The further unspoken relation of Jesus to knights errant, as the priest directs his comments to Don Quixote and the books of chivalry, propels the reader’s mind into uncharted and rough waters.

Cervantes continues to rock any Christian reader’s attempt to mentally separate Jesus and knights errant through Don Quixote’s response to the priest. At first, all seems well, and the potential intellectual storm seems to have subsided. Don Quixote defends the truth of the existence of knights errant and insists upon his ability to determine their exact features from the histories, quite laughably. How could he possibly know exactly what all these characters looked like in person, from stories told about them, when they did not even exist? Of course the books of chivalry are just stories, not factual histories. But just as the reader begins to get a grip on laughing at this folly on its own, the barber asks Don Quixote to tell him about the particular stature of the giant Morgante if it is indeed so that Don Quixote can deduce these details from the

histories as he claims. Don Quixote responds: “In the matter of giants, . . . there are different opinions as to whether or not they ever existed in the world, but Holy Scripture, which cannot deviate an iota from the truth, shows us that they did by telling us the history of that huge Philistine Goliath” (467). Suddenly, the reader’s fragile metaphorical boat of separation capsizes. Now the very text from which Jesus is known becomes a part of Don Quixote’s ridiculous assertion about the existence of giants. The distinctions and labels come rushing together in confusion: the people in the books of chivalry, knights errant, and the characters in scripture, including Jesus; the history from which one can deduce features of knights errant, and the story from which one can learn about the nature of Jesus; the truth of Don Quixote’s devotion to the books of chivalry, and the madness of the unquestioned truth of Holy Scripture. When Don Quixote regards Holy Scripture as an absolutely true history “which cannot deviate an iota from the truth” in the midst of his treatment of the books of chivalry as the same, the questions of the priest taint the authority of Holy Scripture as well as those of the books of chivalry. And the priest’s original assertion that the books of chivalry are, if not histories of persons of flesh and blood, “all fiction, fable, falsehood—dreams told by men when they are awake, or, I should say, half-asleep” begins to resonate with more uncomfortable questions (466). How do people tell themselves (and each other) dreams when they are awake? Who tells the story? Don Quixote tells the story of the books of chivalry, but who tells the story of Holy Scripture? And how does one tell the difference between a fictional story and a true history?

Here we arrive back at the three layers of the shift in the reader’s thinking with regard to madness, sanity, and truth. The characters in this world think in a particular way and regard scripture as truth, and Cervantes uncomfortably weaves Christianity and Don Quixote’s madness

together in his dialogue. As the reader uncomfortably begins to relate Jesus with knights errant, and consequently with Don Quixote, Don Quixote's madness, as well as its consequences and his interactions with others, introduces the element of trust. As the reader questions who tells the story of this true history, Don Quixote's relationship with his squire and companion, Sancho, prepares the reader to enter into the third layer of the shift in the reader's thinking, that of the narrator's influence. Sancho, who embarks upon the adventure of chivalry with Don Quixote and faithfully follows and serves him throughout the novel, exhibits a level of trust in Don Quixote and participation in his madness that, when linked with a depiction of Christianity and Jesus in relation to knight errantry and Don Quixote, resonates with uncomfortable undertones that disturb the reader's harmony of faith and trust.

In chapter XXVIII of the Second Part, labeled *Regarding matters that Benengeli says will be known to the reader if he reads with attention*, Sancho expresses displeasure and frustration with Don Quixote after he has fled from a battle and left Sancho in danger after he had been beaten by a group of men they had offended. When one reads both Sancho's words and Don Quixote's responses to him with attention, one finds connections that strike a dissonance between Sancho's trust in Don Quixote and the reader's and characters' trust in Christianity. Sancho says that he thinks he would be better off back at home "instead of following after your grace on roads that have no destination, and byways and highways that lead nowhere" and demands a salary and better treatment (645). After the extent of the journey Sancho has been through on following Don Quixote and his madness, this initially seems like simply a reasonable response from Sancho, considering Don Quixote's wandering nature as a knight errant and its consequences for Sancho as his faithful squire. But what seems to be a simple dismissal of Don

Quixote's 'roads with no destination' --and the laughable and dangerous adventures he has led Sancho along on-- turns into a much more complex undermining of the nature of faith and trust in Christianity as their interaction continues. When Don Quixote rebukes Sancho on the grounds that no squire has ever said such things to a knight errant in the books of chivalry, and the narrator describes Sancho's response, Cervantes' language places trust in Christianity exposed against the backdrop of the madness of Don Quixote and Sancho's trust in him. Although Don Quixote has just deserted Sancho, the moment Don Quixote rebukes him Sancho suddenly and without reason turns to complete remorse and repentance for his earlier demands. The narrator describes:

“Sancho stared at Don Quixote as he was inveighing against him and felt so much remorse that tears came to his eyes, and in a weak and mournful voice he said: Señor, I confess that for me to be a complete jackass, all that's missing is my tail; if your grace wants to put one on me, I'll consider it well-placed, and I'll serve you like a donkey for the rest of my days. Your grace should forgive me, and take pity on my lack of experience, and remember that I know very little, and if I talk too much, it comes more from weakness than from malice, and to err is human, to forgive, divine.” (646)

The narrator describes Sancho's response as weak, mournful, and full of remorse. This description partners with Sancho's language of confession, his desire for forgiveness and pity, and his expression of weakness to set up Sancho's response to Don Quixote and the following dialogue within the context of a Christian confession. Sancho's repentance shows complete submission and seems sincere and heartfelt, but this seriousness is disrupted when he calls himself a jackass. What seemed like a solemn confession is now both crude and absurdly

humorous, and Sancho's wish to "serve [Don Quixote] like a donkey" throws his confession into complete dissonance with its original Christian harmony. Why Sancho would follow Don Quixote this way, after just having been beaten and left behind, not to mention after the other numerous grievances that Sancho laid out only moments before, seems beyond the reader. His trust in Don Quixote and faithfulness to him is absurd, but the reader's trust in Christianity has now been touched with this absurdity.

This discomfort only deepens as Don Quixote responds and their conversation concludes with even stronger Christian resonances. Don Quixote tells Sancho, "Well, then, I forgive you as long as you mend your ways and from now on do not show so much interest in your own gain, but attempt to take heart, and have the courage and valor to wait for my promises to be fulfilled, for although it may take some time, it is in no way impossible" (646). Already setting uncomfortable undertones by making his forgiveness conditional, which expresses more manipulation of Sancho rather than genuine forgiveness, Don Quixote builds upon Sancho's trust to draw him deeper into the 'road with no destination' of knight errantry. Don Quixote's language commands a serious call to change and action, but these words coming from Don Quixote's mouth, rather than that of a religious figure in a Christian confession, taint them with madness and the absurdity of Sancho's trust. How does Sancho know that Don Quixote will not lead him down another 'road with no destination', into more dangers and battles? All of Don Quixote's inconsistencies and letdowns in his actions through his relationship with Sancho shed doubt on any promises he makes to him. But Sancho's response, that he would make those changes, "although it would mean finding strength in weakness," equates his trust in Don Quixote with the very words of scripture and send the reader's mind spinning with the thought

that Sancho's trust in Don Quixote could be anything like a Christian's trust in Jesus (466). The Christian concepts of weakness becoming strength, repentance, and trust in forgiveness suddenly have equal connection with the madness of Sancho's trust in Don Quixote, and the reader's mind struggles to separate the two.

Of course the reader knows that it is absurd for Sancho to turn to Don Quixote this way, but how does the reader keep this complete trust separate from the complete trust in Christianity that the characters express and a Christian reader experiences? The language of the command to "wait for my promises to be fulfilled, for although it may take some time, it is in no way impossible" crawls with repulsive madness coming from Don Quixote, who claims the impossible to be possible every time he remakes the world with his claim to knight errantry. Such madness, a completely false reality, according to the reader's perception, now linked with the promises of the impossible from Christian scripture creates chaos in the reader's mind. This interaction builds on the budding relation of Jesus to knights errant to draw not only Christianity but also *trust* of Christianity into the realm of madness that the reader has so uncomfortably been trying to resist any connection with. Just as the relation between Jesus and knights errant sends tremors and shivers down the Christian foundations of the reader's mind, a relation of Sancho's trust in Don Quixote with the thought of trust in Jesus and Christianity rocks that foundation with a substantial earthquake.

The relation between Christianity, madness, and trust causes even deeper damage to the reader's foundation of Christianity and the characters' expressed perception of Christianity as true and unquestionable when Don Quixote's promises to Sancho are actively renounced and the priest criticizes Sancho's relationship with Don Quixote. As the priest and the barber are

discussing Don Quixote's madness, the barber says, "I'm not as astounded by the madness of the knight as I am by the simplicity of the servant, who has so much faith in the story of the insula that I don't believe all the disappointments imaginable will ever get it out of his head," and the priest comments, "May God help them, and let us be on the alert: we'll see where all the foolishness in this knight and squire will lead, because it seems as if both were made from the same mold, and that the madness of the master, without the simplicity of the servant, would not be worth anything" (470). Both the priest and the barber criticize Sancho's belief, simplicity, and faith, which the narrator and Cervantes have already uncomfortably interwoven with Christian belief. The priest being the one to comment on this madness further accents the interweaving of Christian belief, and its unquestioned authority in the characters' language and even in the narrator's language, with Sancho's trust in Don Quixote. This active criticism strikes the reader's understanding of trust and faith with doubt, madness, and absurdity, as these characters highlight Sancho's madness in trusting Don Quixote. And the result of this trust, apart from the multiple dangers for Sancho of following a madman through an imagined reality, is ultimately disappointment for Sancho.

When Don Quixote makes his parting comments to Sancho at his deathbed, although he apologizes for what Sancho has suffered through their adventures, he also strikes a deeper blow when he renounces chivalry and knight errantry. He tells Sancho, "Forgive me, my friend, for the opportunity I gave you to seem as mad as I, making you fall into the error into which I fell, thinking that there were and are knights errant in the world" (937). When Don Quixote himself, the one to lead Sancho down this path of madness, says he no longer believes in knight errantry and the books of chivalry, this is devastating for Sancho's faith and all that his trust in Don

Quixote has stood for. He tries to cheer Don Quixote up by encouraging him to let go of his sorrow, insisting, “If you’re dying of sorrow over being defeated, blame me for that and say you were toppled because I didn’t tighten Rocinante’s cinches; besides, your grace must have seen in your books of chivalry that it’s a very common thing for one knight to topple another, and for the one who’s vanquished today to be the victor tomorrow” (937). Here, Sancho begins an intricate dance of language. After being the one who follows Don Quixote’s lead for so long, playing along with the game of his pursuit of chivalry and knight errantry, Sancho has usually been the one drawn into Don Quixote’s language of madness. Usually, Don Quixote is the one who will make a reference to the books of chivalry as though they are true, like when he rebukes Sancho on the basis of what the squires do in the books, and Sancho is the one who responds absurdly by playing along with it. But now, this role is reversed, and Sancho is the one trying to draw Don Quixote into the language of chivalry and madness, even if it is also in an attempt to keep him alive. His reference to one knight toppling another in the books of chivalry as a true fact represents a choice on Sancho’s part to willingly enter into this game of chivalry with the language of madness, for the sake of Don Quixote.

How, then, does Don Quixote repay him, and respond, after so many adventures and conversations in which Sancho follows his lead? He rejects this offer, which is completely devastating. The fact that Sancho has to reverse this role and introduce the language of madness and chivalry to Don Quixote to begin with, because Don Quixote has renounced it, is already tragic for their relationship of trust. For Don Quixote to leave Sancho extending himself in this way for him and to refuse to play along with this game of chivalry shuts down this world for Sancho. There is no longer any knight errantry for Sancho without Don Quixote, no squire

without the knight. This breaks their relationship of trust, and destabilizes Sancho's trust in Don Quixote as his leader. If even Don Quixote, the very source of this madness and these adventures for the two of them, questions his own faith in chivalry and this madness, who can Sancho trust? How does Sancho, or anyone, know who to trust? And what does the reader do when Christianity, and Jesus, are associated with this destabilizing of trust?

For the reader, then, deciding who to trust as one navigates the novel is also a significant decision. Who tells this story? And why are they to be trusted? After experiencing this destabilization of trust for Sancho, the disruption of the harmony of trust and faith in relation to Christianity, and the relation of Christianity with madness, we can now consider Cervantes' third form of influence: the narrator's voice. Cervantes has seeped the reader's mind in the characters' perception of Christianity as sanity and truth, and has related Christianity uncomfortably with Don Quixote's madness. Now, Cervantes yet again uses a character, the voice of the narrator, to communicate with the reader in this third form of influence as the reader's mind is turned around and upside down, and the question of the truth of this history resurfaces. The narrator insists often upon the book of Don Quixote of La Mancha as an "absolutely true history," again pushing the reader's mind to question how this book itself could be a dream, like the priest suggests of the books of chivalry (23). Who tells the story, and why are they to be trusted? What is the result of the narrator's subtle influence over the perspective of Don Quixote's story, especially with respect to the truth of this history? What does the narrator propose to the reader as a way to interpret this world?

In his description of Don Quixote's death at the end of the novel, the culmination of the story's momentum, when Don Quixote regains his sanity, the narrator remarks,

One of the signs that led [Don Quixote's friends] to think he really was dying was how easily he had moved from madness to sanity, because to the words already cited he added many others that were so well-spoken, so Christian, and so reasonable that their doubts were completely dispelled and they believed he was sane. (936)

There are two layers to the narrator's role here. First, and more simply, he reinforces the world that Cervantes's friend began creating in the prologue by speaking of Christianity in complete acceptance of its authority. When the narrator speaks of "how easily he had moved from madness to sanity" he subtly reinforces the perspective that being Christian is the completely sane state of being. He cites Christian words as the reasoning for the characters' belief in this change, along with other authority-carrying adjectives, "well-spoken" and "reasonable," which leads the reader to operate under the assumption of Christian words as sane words in this world. This language sets up sanity as clearly depicted in relation to Christianity, but the narrator also offers a new perspective on Don Quixote's madness and a new influence upon the reader's attempt at a separation between Don Quixote's madness and an unquestioned Christian perspective. So far, Christianity has been set in relation to sanity by the narrator and the characters, set in relation to chivalry through Don Quixote's language and Cervantes' construction of the story, and set in relation to madness with regard to Sancho's trust in Don Quixote and in the madness of chivalry. And now this destabilizing of trust destabilizes the reader's notion of truth, particularly with regard to the narrator's influences. In this second and more radical influence, then, the narrator begins the final step in Cervantes' destabilizing and unwinding of the reader's mind with regard to truth and Christianity. The previously unquestioned equation of "Christianity equals sanity, and sanity equals truth, therefore

Christianity equals truth,” begins to break down. Christianity has now been set in relation to both madness and sanity, which destabilizes the first part of the equation. Then the narrator clues the reader in to a new way of looking at the truth in Don Quixote's "move from madness to sanity”, in which the reader’s newly reinforced conceptions of madness and sanity as set in this world begin to wobble, and the link of “sanity equals truth” in this equation becomes unstable as well under the growing weight of these influences.

The narrator introduces a shift in perspective about Don Quixote’s madness, which primes the reader to begin to shift the previously unquestioned perspective on madness, sanity, and Christianity in relation to truth. When Don Quixote claims conversion and sanity at the end of the novel, the narrator offers a new influence and perspective on the truth. Although the narrator says that Don Quixote's friends believed he was sane, the narrator does not actually require that the reader subscribe to this internal change, and leaves space for different interpretations of Don Quixote’s change from madness to sanity with his language, giving the reader a choice. The priest announces that "Alonso Quixano the Good is truly dying, and he has truly recovered his reason," not the narrator (936). The narrator, on the other, hand, refers to Don Quixote as “Don Quixote”, and continues to do this down to the moment of his death. When the narrator describes Don Quixote’s death, he says, "This was the end of the Ingenious Gentleman of La Mancha, whose village Cide Hamete did not wish to name precisely" (938). He names Don Quixote as a knight errant, which reinforces the alternate perspective that Don Quixote may not necessarily have become Alonso Quixano the Good as he insists and the characters believe that he has. Besides Don Quixote himself, the priest is the only character who refers to Don Quixote

as "Alonso Quixano the Good" after Don Quixote's claim of change. It is the priest who spearheads the perceived validity of this change.

The narrator's influence on this deathbed scene highlights the contrast between how the characters perceive truth and how Cervantes pushes for the reader to understand truth. The reader gets a more removed perspective with choices about whether Don Quixote is Don Quixote or Alonso Quixano the Good, which highlights that there are more perspectives than the characters' view that Christianity equals sanity and that Don Quixote's Christian conversion therefore is sane. The characters present at Don Quixote's conversion, particularly the priest and the barber, have a distinct perception of Christianity as sanity. The narrator even reinforces and highlights this perception with his other words. However, the narrator also introduces an alternate perception in which the characters' view of sanity may not be the only option after all. The narrator says, "the truth is, as has already been said, that whether Don Quixote was simply Alonso Quixano the Good, or whether he was Don Quixote of La Mancha, he always had a gentle disposition and was kind in his treatment of others" (936). In this statement the narrator points out the truth as something other than either one of Don Quixote's names, and either of his corresponding states of madness or sanity. This statement equates the truth with neither madness nor sanity, but connects it with Don Quixote's character—his gentle disposition and kindness. Even this statement is questionable as a universal truth, for Don Quixote has not had a gentle and kind disposition towards those whom he attacked as enemies of chivalry in his adventures. The truth, then, becomes doubly more difficult for the reader to place a finger on in light of the narrator's statements. The truth is even more muddled as the reader is not sure whether to trust the narrator, either, in this account of a "true history". What are the consequences for the reader?

What traps does the reader's mind need to beware of, as the reader is led along? How does the reader find and decide what one can trust as truth in Cervantes' world?

The truth is something fragile, like a thread. Now not only do the reader's previously assumed equations about truth crumble; the reader does not even get a replacement equation. The narrator does not push for the truth as either madness or sanity, but leaves the reader questioning whether truth can be set in relation to anything at all, and whether one can place a finger on it or pin it down at all. The reader's perception of truth and Christianity has been undermined, and now the reader is left with pieces to pick up and a blank space to rebuild a new foundation of truth. Where does one start, and how does one rebuild anything when the truth will not stand up straight in any equation or structure, but wavers delicately like a thread, impossible to catch within Cervantes' world of upside-down notions and uncomfortable, disarming relations? What does Cervantes expect the reader to do with this story and with this newly disarmed mind? Here, the reader must choose whether to jump into Cervantes' game of his story, and choose how to play and use their choices, if they do choose to play. And what story is Cervantes telling the reader? What does Cervantes want the reader to do with this playground? Touching back on the way Sancho chose to play with Don Quixote's game of chivalry, the reader now has a choice of how they respond to Cervantes' story.

The reader hears more directly the voice of Cervantes in the beginning of the second part of this true history. Here Cervantes again communicates with the reader in the second prologue, this time introducing the reader to a new form of communication through stories within the story. Cervantes begins with the acknowledgement that the reader must expect him to criticize the writer who wrote a sequel to *Don Quixote*, and playfully refuses to but simultaneously continues

to insult that writer: “You would like me to call him an ass, a fool, an insolent dolt, but the thought has not even entered my mind: let his sin be his punishment, let him eat it with his bread, and let that be an end to it” (455). Already even while he is saying that he will not criticize or insult this writer, Cervantes throws in the insults within his very description of his own self-restraint. This theme continues when he tells the reader that instead of reporting direct criticism, the reader can tell that writer two stories. Both stories feature a madman abusing a dog, one in which the madman cruelly, absurdly, and crudely tries to blow up a dog with a tube, and another in which a madman goes around dumping large stones upon the heads of dogs in the streets and another man beats the madman for dropping a stone upon his hound. He concludes, “In fact, all the dogs he encountered, even if they were mastiffs or little lapdogs, he called hounds, and so he never dropped a stone on one again. Perhaps something similar may happen to this storyteller, who will not dare ever again to set his great talent loose among books, which, when they are bad, are harder than boulders” (457). Both stories have the strong point that the writer should not have dared to have touched Cervantes’ book, and that he was a madman to assume that he could do something of worth with them, and that he had abused the book like a dog and will be treated as the madman dropping the stone on the hound if he touches the book again. Cervantes’ mode of communication in this particular instance models the way he proposes to communicate with the reader, through story and indirect influence rather than with outright clarity. This mode of communication provides the reader with the tools to understand the way the characters themselves react to stories within the story. When the barber tells Don Quixote a story about a madman, the reader can use this model to understand its point as well as to analyze the ways that the characters respond. This model helps the reader understand their options for

responding to Cervantes' storytelling world and the game of his story, just as Sancho had choices about how he responded to Don Quixote and Don Quixote has choices about how he responds to the barber's story.

The barber tells this story to Don Quixote when the priest and the barber are questioning him, testing whether he really is recovered and sane again, and Don Quixote has just begun to talk about knight errantry again. The way the barber tells his story to make a point to Don Quixote mimics the way Cervantes, using the stories about the dog, tells the writer who wrote a sequel to *Don Quixote* that he should not have abused Cervantes' book. Don Quixote has a choice about how he responds to this story, just as the reader has a choice about how to respond to Cervantes' story as a whole. In the barber's story, a madman appeals to an archbishop and chaplain to release him from the madhouse where his relatives have sent him, and blames his relatives in his description of his situation. He claims sanity, and that his relatives merely want the financial benefits of keeping him imprisoned in the madhouse, when he writes to the archbishop and describes his situation to the chaplain who comes to visit him. The madman almost convinces the chaplain to let him go free, but they have an encounter with another madman before they leave, which is where the game of storytelling and pretend begins within the story.

This other madman tells the madman who is trying to leave, "You, cured? Well, well, time will tell; go with God, but I vow by Jupiter, whose majesty I represent on earth, that on account of the sin Sevilla commits today by taking you out of the madhouse and calling you sane, I must inflict on her a punishment . . . you free, and healthy and sane, while I am mad, and sick, and confined . . . ? I would just as soon rain as hang myself" (464). Here, within the story,

this other madman introduces another level of insanity and pretense with his language, especially his claim that he is Jupiter the Thunderer and has the power to punish the whole city of Sevilla. His threat not to rain on the whole city for three years is absurd, for he is not actually a god, and it is especially absurd because he is confined in the madhouse and powerless to even leave the madhouse to affect anyone else, let alone a whole city. The way the characters in the barber's story respond to this madness adds another layer to this game of storytelling, in which everyone pretends, spars back and forth, and says what they mean through exaggerated and hidden words--the very game that Cervantes is playing with the reader.

Within the story, both the madman trying to be set free and the chaplain respond with the same language as the other madman, and jump into his game, but the characters outside of the story respond differently. The original madman responds to the threat of "Jupiter the Thunderer" by grasping the chaplain's hands and addressing him: "Your grace should not be concerned by or pay attention to what this madman has said, for if he is Jupiter and does not wish to rain, I, who am Neptune, father and god of waters, shall rain whenever I please and whenever it is necessary" (464). The madman's response is to make a similar claim to absurdity, by pretending to be another god, but in this sense, he is also using veiled language to make his point, or to play along with the game. He says "*if* he is Jupiter," the conditional language resembling the beginning of a game, and responds that he will then be Neptune within the rules of this game. He is using the language that corresponds to the game of pretend to respond, with dire circumstances for him, but similar in form to two friends who play off of one another's joking or pretend language, while both know their actual meaning. The thought, "If he is Jupiter, I will be Neptune," mimics the language used in a game and points to an underlying meaning that both understand: that the

madman says he will oppose any resistance that this other madman sets before him. Cervantes does this with humor in his own communication with the reader, and the language of the joke is the medium of conversation in his game of storytelling.

The barber's story ends abruptly, with the chaplain's response: "Even so, Señor Neptune, it would not be a good idea to anger Señor Jupiter; your grace should stay in your house, and another day, when it is more convenient and there is more time we shall come back for your grace" (464). All those around laugh, the chaplain is mortified, and the madman remains in the madhouse. When the chaplain also uses this language of Jupiter and Neptune, he is mortified by the laughter of others. But the characters apart from the story respond differently. The barber's point of the story towards Don Quixote, that he should remain in his house, and not try to trick anyone into believing that he is sane by blaming others, offends Don Quixote. He says,

Well, Señor Barber, this is the story, so much to the point that you had to tell it? Ah, Señor Shaver, Señor Shaver, how blind must one be not to see through a sieve? Is it possible your grace does not know that comparisons of intelligence, or valor, or beauty, or lineage are always hateful and badly received? I, Señor Barber, am not Neptune, god of waters, nor do I attempt to persuade anyone I am clever when I am not. I only devote myself to making the world understand its error in not restoring that happiest of times when the order of knight errantry was in flower. (464)

Rather than responding to the barber's story with the same language and playing along with the game of pretend, Don Quixote distinguishes himself from the barber and refuses to participate. He makes it clear to the barber that he understands, and sees through the story, but instead refuses the invitation for him to play along. This is a bold move for Don Quixote, as someone

who plays along with his own game of pursuing knight errantry, and who draws others into this game of chivalry, especially Sancho. Don Quixote is willing to pretend and to believe that he is a knight errant, and holds onto this belief stubbornly, but does not pretend he is Neptune or clever when he is not. This statement disrupts the reader's perception of him as always playing along with fantasy and fiction, and stands out as a deliberate move to make a point towards the barber. It is a defiant move for Don Quixote then to follow this response with another claim about chivalry, since he claims his goal is to make the world understand its error in not restoring the order of knight errantry. He says to the barber that he will play games, and continue to play his own game with chivalry, but will not play the barber's game, even in his rejection of this story. He responds on his own terms. Don Quixote models one option for the reader, then, while Sancho models another in his relationship with Don Quixote. Don Quixote refuses to play the game, understands, but responds on his own terms instead, with his own language, while Sancho continues to play the game of chivalry with Don Quixote even after Don Quixote has renounced chivalry and knight errantry. Which does the reader choose? How can the reader make use of both of these responses in the playground of Cervantes' world?

So what game is Cervantes playing with the reader, and how does the reader respond? Cervantes has dismantled and shaken up all of the reader's previous set equations about truth. He has placed Christianity in relation to sanity, chivalry, and madness. He has undermined the relationship of trust in Christianity by relating it to Sancho's trust in Don Quixote. He has undermined the reader's perception of truth in connection to sanity. Now not only is Christianity no longer directly and exclusively in relation to sanity, sanity itself is no longer directly and exclusively in relation to truth. Truth, in Cervantes' world, is not directly related by equation to

anything, only by fragile threads. This fragility sets the reader's mind free to play with the options and the characters that Cervantes provides. Will the reader respond to Cervantes's story as Don Quixote does, and say, "No, I do not pretend to be clever when I am not," and refuse to play the game altogether? If the reader does choose this path, the reader is confronted with why and how they propose to differentiate themselves from the characters in the story. If they choose Christianity, how is their Christianity different from the Christianity depicted by the characters? If they choose certainty in Christianity, how is their certainty different from the unquestioned trust of the characters? If they choose faith, how is their faith different from Sancho's trust in Don Quixote? And if the reader chooses to respond as Sancho does, jumping in on the game, the reader must decide how they will interact with the game within Cervantes' world. Will the reader hold on to Cervantes' world even when Cervantes does not? What does the reader choose to claim as their own within this story? Sancho becomes Don Quixote's squire when he follows Don Quixote's madness, but when Don Quixote renounces chivalry, Sancho is left with a choice of how he pursues this madness, if he continues to. If the reader becomes someone different as a result of Cervantes' story, just as Sancho becomes a squire, who will the reader become when Cervantes leaves the reader to choose for themselves what the truth is, and how to hold it when it is fragile as a thread? These questions are only the beginning of the opportunity that Cervantes offers the reader through his process of dismantling the reader's perspectives and reworking truth, all for the reader to explore in the playground of *Don Quixote*.

Works Cited

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