

Introduction

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This issue of *Cervantes* features a happy convergence of meditations on clothing and identity in the works of Miguel de Cervantes. Any moderately engaged reader of *Don Quijote* can recall characters or episodes associated with some article of clothing that elides the notion of fashion and shows an intentional construction or deconstruction of identities. Consider, for example, the silly but deadly serious discussion concerning the object claimed by some as a helmet and by others a barber's basin. This debate is essentially an epistemological one, embedded in and pointing to the much larger duality of reality and illusion. Likewise, the transaction in the cave of Montesinos involving Dulcinea's skirt reveals the protagonist's subconscious feelings of inadequacy.

Clothes are the first and the most visible identity markers. In Cervantes' time, clothes bespoke more tellingly such factors as class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and profession or trade. However, clothing—and therefore identity—is often manipulated, making it unstable and unreliable. The very acts of dressing, undressing, or exchanging clothing can defy custom and ignore sumptuary laws meant to maintain a rigid social class structure, order, and stability. Among the uses and abuses of

clothing and body coverings referred to in the accompanying essays are: masquerade, deception, seduction, denial, and other mildly or seriously transgressive behaviors.

Those who have offered their valuable insights on clothing and identity for this present conversation have a shared interest and felicitous timing. The essays by Darcy Donahue, Carroll Johnson, and Encarnación Juárez, for example, are versions of their presentations at a special session, "Clothing and Costume in Cervantes: (Un)covering, Discovering, and Recovering Identity," of the Modern Language Association Convention held in New York, December, 2003. Verónica Azcue responded from Spain to that event with a selection from her ongoing research on the topic. Marcia Welles, the featured speaker at the 2002 Cervantes Symposium in Chicago, presented a version of her paper, co-written with art historian Gridley McKim-Smith. That lecture was accompanied by images, several of which are reproduced here. My own interest and research was initiated during an National Endowment for the Humanities seminar with the late Ruth El Saffar that resulted in a presentation at the 1983 meeting of the Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas.

As it happens, all of the contributors have applied their critical lens to the most frequently read and commented works, *Don Quijote* and the *Novelas ejemplares*, thus enriching the reading for the general reader and for the student in the classroom, as well as for the scholar. Coincidentally, Carmen Bernis's long-awaited *Traje y tipos sociales en el Quijote* (2001), reviewed enthusiastically in this issue by Encarnación Juárez, became available. A long-awaited culmination of her research and publications on clothing, this work should stimulate new directions and initiatives and will keep scholars anchored in historical accuracy. Bernis's book contextualizes and makes visible through illustrations, photographs, and drawings the numerous verbal descriptions and references to clothing in *Don Quijote*. It is a remarkable tour-de-force of literary, cultural, and socio-economic history, and is acknowledged here with gratitude.

Cervantes' predilection for descriptions of clothing reveals much more than a nod toward realism. In not a few instances a character has a name that is epithetical or synechdotal, that sig-

nals an identity matched to some article of clothing (and containing some humorous irony, no doubt): the Man in the Green Overcoat, the Knight of the Mirrors, Countess Trifaldi, and from the *Novelas ejemplares*, "El licenciado Vidriera." Even Don Quijote's name is derived from a word meaning 'thigh guard,' whose proximity to the genitals has provoked several scholarly references to the gentleman's sexuality. Carroll Johnson, on the other hand, will assert that the name has linguistic roots showing a more complex pattern of meaning than had been thought. Johnson revives an old debate from a brand-new position, based on an etymological deliberation that shows two culturally distinct references attached to the name *Quijote*, underscoring once again in Hispanic letters Américo Castro's claims for the multicultural roots of Spanish culture, and at the same time suggesting a conflation of gender identification.

Cervantes would appear to be a talented costume designer, who understood the power of theater to manipulate, deceive, and delight through dress and appearance. This dressing as costume is crucial to the role-playing aspect of Don Quijote's performance as knight-errant. We might overlook the fact that his first act is to find the trappings that will give the *impression* of knight-errantry even if they will not stand the test of accuracy or endurance. This willingness to accept the slapdash *appearance* of correct armature seems to contradict his utter despair in the chambers of the Duke and Duchess at not having green thread to repair his green stockings. At the moment of his greatest triumph of deception, then, he is painfully aware of reality: his own poverty and impotence, symbolized by a torn stocking and his inability to mend it properly (and certainly a knight would not be expected to mend his own clothes). An article of clothing thus becomes a sign of the hero's diminishing imaginative faculties; it marks a major difference between Books I and II and anticipates the attention to mundane detail that closes the novel.

Similarly, other characters in the novel appropriate identities by changing or exchanging clothes. Encarnación Juárez deploys a psychoanalytical approach (particularly the theories of Jacques Lacan and C. G. Jung) to the clothing jumble and identity crises in *Don Quijote* that occur in the Sierra Morena. In this dystopia

the characters dress, undress, abandon, and exchange vestments in a carnivalesque clothing orgy. All realign themselves to normality when they resume their original attire. My own analysis applies Jungian psychoanalytical notions to "El licenciado Vidriera." I contend that the protagonist's struggle is between the tensions of public success and personal psychosexual repression, or between the rational (logos) and the sentient (Eros). The protagonist's over-identification with clothing as uniform and status indicator leaves little space for human deliberation and emotions. Ultimately, this imbalance is corrected in the conclusion when the protagonist seeks the company of the soldier-in-uniform, Valdivia, and makes the choice for homo-social bonding within the very masculinist context of war. For a *novela* plot this conclusion is a non-traditional one, and does not conform to the more normative option of male/female marriage.

One of the more colorful and dramatic introductions of a character is that of the star-crossed and heavily-armed would-be bandit, Claudia Jerónima. In addition, the much discussed and "stagy" uncovering of Dorotea as a young man rivets the gaze of Cardenio, the priest, and the barber. Marcia Welles and Gridley McKim-Smith speak of the "freeze frame" that occurs when a character is meant to silence the onlooker by sheer spectacle. In their two-part study, the economics of clothing in Cervantes' time precedes an examination of selected episodes in which opulent clothing becomes the focus of attention and is intentionally charged with meaning (class, national identity, power, or persuasion). Taking examples from *Don Quijote* as well as from the *Novelas ejemplares*, the narrative portraits are reinforced by parallel paintings that also reference the real world outside the novel. The notions of *representation* or *performance* that characterize the Welles-McKim-Smith paper are given a different treatment in the work of Verónica Azcue, who sees the narrative function of clothes as similar to that of the dramatic one, especially in its relation to farce and the notion of decorum. Reviewing the multiple types and possible shifts in sex, class, and race, she determines that *Don Quijote* can be considered a kind of review of seventeenth-century attire. Darcy Donohue, referencing contemporary treatises and sumptuary laws, discusses the official policy with regard to

dress and social class. She then shows ways in which clothing is manipulated to subvert that correspondence in several of the *Novelas ejemplares* whose action takes place in Spain. Clothing can conceal and mislead or reinforce social standing, and these options and the ensuing confusion complicate the *novelas'* plots.

This issue is another contribution to the growing bibliography on clothing within the larger fields of cultural studies and identity theories.¹ Clothing and costume normally communicate visible and reliable identities. However, Cervantes' characters demonstrate great prowess at subverting the conventions and undermining the norms. Dressing or undressing becomes a space for the exercise of individuality, change, and choice—if only temporarily. Who one is is really a fluid notion, capable of being altered, manipulated, or mistaken. It does, however, require imagination and courage—a creative talent to bedazzle, persuade, mislead, or amuse. Evidently, Cervantes as well as his fictional creations possess a abundant capacity for both.

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¹ Barbara Fuch's *Passing for Spain: Cervantes and the Fictions of Identity* (Urbana: U Illinois P, 2003) is an important recent addition to this ongoing research.