



Cervantes and the Burlesque Sonnet

Adrienne Laskier Martin

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Until now the great renown of Cervantes as a prose humorist has eclipsed his skill as a humorous poet. *Cervantes and the Burlesque Sonnet* amply illustrates the comic genius of Cervantes the poet, and at the same time establishes criteria by which comic poetry can be analyzed and evaluated.

Adrienne Martín identifies Cervantes's pivotal role within the history of the European burlesque sonnet, whose unique aesthetic conventions lead her to a new definition of Renaissance literary humor as the self-conscious expression of human folly. In *Don Quixote*, and in the *Don Quixote* sonnets, Cervantes not only adopts and refines this notion of madness but also transforms the burlesque sonnet tradition inherited from Italy and from his predecessors in Spain by intermingling several different comic currents.

Cervantes uses humor to point out our complex, paradoxical, quintessentially human nature and brings renewed vigor, critical and intellectual depth, different concerns, and an original tone to the burlesque. He frees comic poetry from its traditional marginal status and facilitates the subsequent explosion of burlesque and satire seen in Spain's baroque poets. Excellent translations of more than sixty Italian and Spanish sonnets enhance Martín's fine analysis.

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