

The Sierra Morena Episodes in *Don Quixote*, from Prose to Visual Narrative

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The Sierra Morena episodes in Part One of *Don Quixote* have been deemed some of the most fascinating and experimental narratives in Early Modern Spanish prose due to their multiple narrators and the manner in which these narrative voices are integrated flawlessly into the main story (Mancing, 118). Frederick A. de Armas states that, with the transition into the Sierra Morena episodes, a drastic transformation takes place as Cervantes's "narrative moves from a linear tale into a labyrinth where many mysteries and narrative threads appear" (96). Unfortunately, this labyrinthine quality makes it very difficult to represent this section of *Don Quixote* in alternative media, especially in visual narratives. As we know, there have been endless attempts to render parts of the *Quixote* in film, music, poetry, theater, illustrations, cartoons, comics, graphic novels, and more.¹ While some have been more successful than others, few have captured the ingenuity and intricacy of Cervantes's prose, nor its ability to actively engage its audience. This article focuses on how the narrative intricacies of these episodes have been successfully addressed in *The Complete Don Quixote* (2013), a graphic novel illustrated by Rob Davis. I analyze how its structural and compositional elements meet the demands of the original text, which compels readers to actively follow the characters along the bumpy roads of Sierra Morena. I begin by briefly outlining what the comic and graphic novel art forms involve, and how the academic community has received Davis's work. Then I take as my case study chapter eight, which begins as Don Quixote arrives in Sierra Morena and ends when he is convinced to abandon the wilderness in order to aid princess Micomicona in recovering her kingdom. Specifically, I examine how Cardenio's and Dorotea's stories are integrated into chapter eight of the graphic novel and establish the ways this adaptation coincides with and departs from the original narrative's structure and composition. From there I am able to determine why this adaptation and its particular medium so successfully captures the spirit of the original *Don Quixote* and actively engages its readers.

A Brief Explanation of Comics and Graphic Novels

Scott McCloud defines visual narratives as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (1994, 9). Duncan and Smith assert that "[a]s an art form, a comic book is a volume in which all aspects of the narrative are represented by pictorial and linguistic images encapsulated in a sequence of juxtaposed panels and pages" (4). Far from identifying them as merely comical and as a contemporary visual and textual medium, McCloud classifies comics as being an ancient storytelling vehicle. He identifies stories illustrated in the Bayeux Tapestry, Egyptian hieroglyphics, pre-Columbian codices, and stained-glass windows displaying biblical passages, among other ancient art forms, as precursors of comics (1994, 10-20). This is because these works of art share similar compositional elements: "perceived distance, angle of view, color, arrangement of elements, [and] simulated lighting effects" (Duncan and Smith, 3). Some concrete characteristics of sequential art that should be noted are: they consist of motionless illustrations; images of diverse shapes and sizes are positioned in a specific order and place on a page; they

¹ For more details about adaptations of the novel *Don Quixote* into different literary and artistic genres, see: Mancing, 170-182; Gratchev and Mancing; and Cortijo, Ocaña and Grasset.

“present verbal thought and mind states through verbal-iconic thought balloons or other verbal-pictorial or purely pictorial devices like perspective or color;” and “represent a detailed and finished storyboard in itself” (Hescher, 113).

The graphic novel possesses all of the above characteristics, but the term is often used to describe a longer and more sophisticated art form that differentiates itself from the “commercial and periodical connotations associated with comic books” (Duncan and Smith, 4). As Duncan and Smith explain, for publishers the term *graphic novel* helps elevate the status of their product and has allowed them entrée into bookstores, libraries, and academia. In practice, graphic novels may be longer than the typical comic book and most often feature self-contained, rather than continuing stories” (4). While there are no perceivable differences between the terms comic and graphic novel, other than the aforementioned, here I use the terms graphic novel or visual narrative interchangeably, especially when referring to *The Complete Don Quixote*. This is because Davis’s adaptation does not contain the commercial undertone commonly associated with texts classified as comics. In contrast, and as this essay will demonstrate, it is an ambitious and complex self-contained narrative.

Why Reimagine *Don Quixote* as a Graphic Novel?

There are strong parallels between the artistic features of the graphic novel and those of Cervantes’s novel as they both engage readers through innovative means. Duncan and Smith assert that “comic books tell stories and involve readers in ways that no other art form – not plays, novels, or film – can duplicate” (13). Similarly, Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* utilizes a multi-modal representational approach and, as many scholars would agree, it engages the imagination in many ways that no other novel has ever achieved. The Sierra Morena episodes are the quintessential example of this multi-modal approach. When discussing these episodes, De Armas asserts that their complex and intertwined plots require an active reader in order to decipher their “twists and turns” (113). This is also true of the graphic novel genre due to the complexity of its structure and composition. Every tale depends on an intricate combination of images, different types of panels and segments, and the personalized style of individual artists. These singularities force the reader to become an active participant, one who needs to decipher clues and make inferences and connections. Readers must understand the meaning of colors and shades, movements, gestures, and sounds. As with Cervantes’s prose, when readers are confronted with visual narratives they need to engage with the various aspects of the text and follow the characters along different paths in order to understand the hidden meaning of the story. This is why analyzing these two distinctive genres side by side, a graphic novel and Cervantes’s narrative, is so fitting.² It is also the reason many artists over the last few centuries have continued recreating *Don Quixote* through juxtaposed pictorials.³

² Like Cervantes’s text, the graphic novel is considered a narrative genre that can be divided into subgenres. Hescher divides them into superhero novel, graphic memoir, graphic biography, graphic journalism, reportage or travel comics, historical novels, fantasy, steampunk, metafiction, and science comics (51).

³ Since the mid seventeenth century, episodes of *Don Quixote* have been illustrated by expert artists and published as illustrated editions as well as self-contained juxtaposed pictorials addressed to multi-age audiences. Due to the immense amount of sequential art based on Cervantes’s novel and produced across the centuries, it is nearly impossible to give an exact number of how many have been created, especially since the early twentieth century. To read about some of the better-known comics that preceded Davis’s graphic novel, see the catalogue *Don Quixote en los tebeos*, by Núñez-Herrador, Fernández Olalde and Sánchez Sánchez. Additionally, to read about graphic illustrations based on *Don Quixote*, see: *Don Quixote Illustrated: Textual Images and Visual Readings. Iconografía del Quijote*. (Urbina and Maestro eds.); *Leer el Quijote en imágenes: Hacia una teoría de los modelos iconográficos* (Lucía Megías); and

Reception of Davis's *The Complete Don Quixote*

The story, style, and narrative of Davis's *The Complete Don Quixote* has been well appraised by academics and graphic novel experts. The English edition was published in 2013 and the Spanish in 2014. It condenses *Don Quixote* into two hundred and ninety pages, and is divided into two parts, each corresponding to one of the volumes of the original novel. The *Instituto Cervantes* hosted various presentations of the book in Europe. In order to promote Davis's novel in Berlin, the *Instituto* posted the following on their webpage:

Rob Davis se ha atrevido a trasladar la genial obra de Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quijote de la Mancha, al lenguaje de la novela gráfica. El resultado es sorprendente. Ha conseguido plasmar la complejidad de la novela sin perder el carisma y evolución de los personajes principales, además de la crudeza... (Instituto Cervantes)

As this review suggests, Davis was courageous to embark on what we all know is a nearly impossible task. Collin McKinney notes how some key aspects of the original narrative are well employed in this new adaptation, such as self-reflexive and metafictional elements (104). An example of this can be seen at the beginning of this graphic novel, which starts with two drawings of a cell window – traced on different pages – from which the voice of Cervantes speaks. This style of introduction emulates the narrative elements in the Prologue to part I of the original *Don Quixote*. In the second image of the graphic novel Davis says:

You can't believe everything you read, dear reader, these adventures are true because they are a history, not a story. And, contrary to the claims of the previous page, I am the adaptor not the author! Oh, and fear not, for when the characters in this history begin to speak for themselves, I will shut up. (Cervantes and Davis, 6-7)

This introduction cleverly draws on the fact that, as we know from the original Prologue, the ideas for Quixote supposedly came to Cervantes while he was in jail: “se engendró en una cárcel, donde toda incomodidad tiene su asiento y donde todo triste ruido hace su habitación [...]” (Cervantes, 79). The adaptor's commentary also serves to establish that different narrative voices will interject throughout the graphic novel, and recalls the metafictional elements in the original novel. Elements like these have driven critics like McKinney to evaluate Davis's creation as “accessible [and] faithful” (McKinney, 104).

Another aspect noted by reviewers is the dexterity with which Davis translates Cervantes's narrative techniques, and that he “is an insightful and accomplished” illustrator whose style is fitting for *Quixote* (Smith 2013). Jason Sacks, a reviewer for the *Comic Bulletin*, affirms that Davis's “delightful” and “empathic adaptation” makes Cervantes's work feel like a contemporary comedy. In particular, he highlights the artistry Davis employs to illustrate such an intricate narrative: “His vivid coloring, all flat earth tones and intense contrasts, adds immeasurably to the quality of his Quixote” (Sacks 2013). As we will discuss later in this essay, the colors in this

Seeing is Believing: The Rhetoric of Graphic Illustrations in the History of Don Quijote (Iffland). For an exhaustive list of images based on *Don Quixote*, see the following databases: *Quijote Banco de Imágenes* (1605-1915), which contains more than 17,600 images from 550 different editions (<http://qbi2005.windows.cervantesvirtual.com/>); and *Iconografía textual del Quijote*, which has 54,408 illustrations from 1,128 editions published in Spain, England, and France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (<http://cervantes.tamu.edu/V2/iconography/index.html>).

narrative help guide the reader through the characters' adventures and aid in solving the difficulty of illustrating the at times quite convoluted plot. Colors are also used to draw attention to clues and subtle details that enable the reader to "play detective" along with Don Quixote and Sancho (see De Armas, 98).

Along with his clever application of color, Davis uses different types of panels, panel sequences, captions, lettering, and sound effects to illustrate such important elements of the original as humor, action sequences, and interpolated narratives, among others. In one interview he suggests that the key to adapting Cervantes's text successfully is to recognize its innovative approach:

The original is full of invention. In fact it's about invention - you are looking at the invention of the modern novel as we recognize it today. Don Quixote the character and the "Don Quixote" novel deconstruct themselves and reinvent themselves before your eyes [...]. To do justice to something like that meant I had to be inventive and original in my adaptation. I had to stay faithful to the spirit of the book, to the characters and the events, but my book had to engage contemporary readers with the same sense of wonder as the original must have had to those readers 400 years ago [...]. (Burton 2013)

Davis also believes that to reproduce and abridge a text a graphic novel must include all the original characters and their backstories (Armitage 2013). But in the case of *Don Quixote*, it is hard to visualize how this can be done effectively: How can the characters' struggles be drawn? How can multiple narrative voices be incorporated through visual means? How can a visual narrative engage and affect the reader in the same ways as the original? In order to answer these questions, it is important to pay attention to the structure and composition of the visual narrative. The structure relates to the sequence of the panels and how they are displayed in relation to each other. In contrast, the composition of a visual narrative conveys "[t]he peculiar relation of individual visual elements to each other, depending on their position on the page or in the panel image. These relations form meaningful compositions, suggesting power relationships between characters, lines of movement, or points of interest in an image" (Kukkonen, 169). That is, to understand the composition of a graphic novel means to notice how distinct visual elements are displayed and arranged within the panels and to extract meaning from these arrangements.

The reason it is so vital that we focus on the structure and composition of Davis's work is that, within a graphic narrative, the visual and written elements of the text are distinct from each other (Hescher, 114). Graphic narratives are conveyed through their own "visual language of sequential images" (Cohn, 2), and these images are considered independent from the script. While the artist remains as faithful as he can to the original story, he makes a few structural decisions that differ from the Cervantine novel. The first notable divergence is that the chapter numbers don't correspond to those in the original. For example, in Cervantes's text the series of events that surround the Sierra Morena episodes begin in chapter twenty-three when Don Quixote and Sancho arrive at the mountain range. They end in chapter thirty-one when the priest and the barber manage to extract Don Quixote from the Sierra. However, in Davis's adaptation, these eight chapters are combined into a single chapter of twenty-six pages. Two main voices stand out in this chapter – Cardenio's and Dorotea's. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to the first segment or part of this chapter as Cardenio's story and the second one as Dorotea's. Each part comprises sequences of multiple panels. Cardenio's part has sixteen sequences and Dorotea's has nine. Each sequence has an average of six to nine panels. Dividing the chapter in this manner helps us better analyze how

Cardenio's and Dorotea's tales are visually incorporated into the main narrative and how they influence the way in which the reader perceives and comprehends the graphic novel's broader plot.

Cardenio's Story

The first sequence in Cardenio's story emphasizes the enigmatic and adventurous quality of the original text. This is accomplished using a "zoom-in and zoom-out" technique as Don Quixote and Sancho enter and explore the Sierra Morena. This constant, dynamic change in perspective heightens the sense of journeying and excitement for the unknown ahead. The first page contains three long parallel panels that progressively zoom in (figure 1). The images portray Don Quixote and Sancho as what De Armas calls a "detective pair," meaning a pair who "lose some of their personalities as knight and squire who follow adventures" and instead confront a truly enigmatic story (98). In the first panel, both figures ride side by side, Sancho on the left looking down as the road unfolds in front of them. Don Quixote rides at his right. Both figures are drawn loosely in a stick-figure style. The knight's left arm is raised as if he is happily admiring and praising the landscape. This gesture emulates Don Quixote's emotions in the original text: "entró por aquellas montañas, se le alegró el corazón, pareciéndole aquellos lugares acomodados para las aventuras que buscaba" (Cervantes, 283). Both characters and the landscape are shown in the middle of the panel, which gives the sensation of movement as they advance on their journey. The characters' features and the items they are about to encounter on the road – a suitcase, money, clothes, love letters and poems – are better defined. Zooming in on these objects creates a sense of curiosity about them and increases the sensation that the reader is part of the detective pair. On the third and last panel, the scale of the images is enlarged even more to show their proximity to the foreground and to focus on how both characters examine the encountered objects. As the knight approaches the items, he first believes that robbers had attacked someone, but in the third panel Sancho replies: "What kind of robbers leave money behind?" (Cervantes and Davis, 96). Here Sancho's wit and quasi-detective skills are highlighted (see De Armas, 104). In response, the knight immediately changes his hypothesis and concludes that there is a deeper mystery: "This journal contains poems and love letters! This man was a gentle soul whoever he was, and by the tone of his verse he was a man scorned by love. There is a mystery here for sure" (Cervantes and Davis, 96). This sequence marks the duo's arrival to Sierra Morena and the beginning of their new quest, which also becomes the reader's adventure.



Figure 1. Don Quixote and Sancho arrive at Sierra Morena (Cervantes and Davis. *The Complete Don Quixote*, 96). Reproduced by kind permission of SelfMadeHero. (c) SelfMadeHero / Rob Davis

As I mentioned earlier, an important aspect of Davis's composition that should be highlighted is the shift in color scheme to emphasize the change in scenery, time of day, character mood, etc. As Davis explains:

A lot of my outside scenes are really silhouettes with that dark ground colour and others close to it filling the characters and landscape. This allows me to add the sky as a hot colour

rather than a brightness colour and choose a complimentary colour for contrast. You'll often see hot greens, yellows, oranges and pinks for the sky in Quixote. Because it's supposed [to] be Spain I think it looks real. Equally there are brown nights and purple nights as well as more traditional blue nights. To my eye this creates a greater sense of place and of light than a more literal 'sky is blue' approach. (2013)

For example, as the reader moves along the narrative, side by side with the “detective” duo, one of the first things they notice is a change of scenery marked by the color variations between panel sequences. The sequence discussed above is traced in different shades of brown. To understand the dramatic effect this color shift has on the story, we must examine the color scheme of the previous chapter, chapter seven,⁴ in which Don Quixote frees the galley slaves. The dominant colors in chapter seven are mint-green and beige, which are used mainly to highlight the landscape, the time of the day, and the weather of a hot afternoon in La Mancha (Davis 2013). In the scenes of the galley slaves, the bright shades and the detailed drawings of the characters help the reader pay close attention to the action. The plot in this section is driven by Don Quixote's desire to free the prisoners, whom he believed to have been unfairly detained. As he frees them, the plot shifts and he is attacked by the detainees and ends up severely beaten. The last panel sequence of this chapter portrays a defeated Don Quixote and Sancho lying down in the middle of an open field, surrounded by rocks, blood and other beaten men. The mint-green has disappeared, and everything is now tinted in beige and primarily monochromatic, except for the red used to highlight the blood around Don Quixote's and Sancho's heads. The result of the red and beige combination is that Don Quixote and Sancho resemble two corpses.

The initiation of chapter eight once again shifts the color scheme. The darker shades used in the first four sequences of Cardenio's story immediately transport the reader to a new landscape surrounded by mountains, hills, bumpy roads, and ravines. These tones trace a different scenario from the empty and open landscape where the duo was beaten up by Ginés de Pasamonte and other prisoners. As De Armas affirms of Cervantes's novel:

The entrance into Sierra Morena with all its twists and turns is an entrance into a new kind of labyrinthine narrative, a hybrid form that is in itself monstrous. The cluster of clues in the labyrinth allows us to move from the repetitive and episodic chivalric adventures of the knight to something quite different. (108)

The colors used to define the different scenarios become the “clues” that let the reader move into the new atmosphere of the “labyrinthine narrative.” The change of hues between chapters seven and eight also intensifies the enigmatic feel of the scenes, and helps the reader become an active participant in the quest.

Another compositional element that aids the reader's active participation is the use of specific images that are highlighted by their color, size, depth, or their position within the panel. The best example of this composition choice is the first time we “see” Cardenio. As the journey through the mountains continues and we move on to the next page, we encounter a horizontal panel illustrating a close-up of a pair of fierce and menacing eyes (figure 2). This panel crowns a set that includes four more. The ferocious gaze emerges as a warning to readers and lets them know someone is about to dominate the narrative. The eyes are drawn indistinctly, making it difficult to define whom they belong to or where they come from. They pique the readers' curiosity: Is this a

⁴ This refers to chapter seven of Davis's adaptation and twenty-two of the original narrative.

man or a beast? Where did he come from? What is he looking at? The singular gaze stands out on the page and places the reader in the uncomfortable position of being the observed, rather than the observer. It seems to be intended to force the readers' eyes to "linger" and move away slowly and carefully across the panel as if to avoid being devoured by the threatening stare. As Scott McCloud asserts: "when the *content* of a silent panel offers no clues as to its *duration*, it can also produce a sense of *timelessness* [...] because of its *unresolved nature*, such a panel may linger in the reader's mind [...] and its presence may be felt in the panels which follow it" (1994, 102). The gaze and the uncomfortable feelings it elicits force readers to become part of the search that Don Quixote and Sancho are conducting, to carefully observe all the lines, shadows, figures, and movements illustrated in the subsequent panels and sequences. Readers find themselves searching alongside the two newcomers to discover who is the unknown entity in the mountains. By highlighting such a specific and striking image of Cardenio before we even meet the "character," Davis increases the feeling of intrigue and suspense, and the reader's experience of the subsequent pages is altered.



Figure 2. Cardenio looks at Quixote and Sancho (Cervantes and Davis. *The Complete Don Quixote*, 97).
Reproduced by kind permission of SelfMadeHero. (c) SelfMadeHero / Rob Davis

An important aspect of Cardenio's story within Cervantes's novel is the strong parallel drawn between him and Don Quixote, a parallel that stems both from their physical wildness and their emotional suffering. Davis creates this parallel through visual mirroring. As in Cervantes's novel, the mysterious man is illustrated with "pies descalzos y las piernas sin cosa alguna; los muslos cubrían unos calzones...más tan hechos pedazos, que por muchas partes descubrían las carnes" and jumping "de risco en risco y de mata en mata, con estraña ligereza" (Cervantes, 287). A zoom-in and zoom-out technique is used throughout six panels to show how Don Quixote and Sancho chase the man up and down the hills of Sierra Morena once they discover they are being watched. The third and sixth perpendicular panels of this chase scene show the man and Don Quixote drawn in similar poses, foreshadowing the similarities in their stories that the dialogue is about to reveal. This visual mirroring continues as they finally address each other in the next sequence. In Cervantes's novel, their first encounter is described as follows:

En llegando el mancebo a ellos, les saludó con una voz desentonada y bronca, pero con mucha cortesía. Don Quijote le volvió las saludes con no menos comedimiento, y... le fue a abrazar, y le tuvo un buen espacio estrechamente entre sus brazos, como si de luengos tiempos le hubiera conocido. El otro, a quien podemos llamar el *Roto de la Mala Figura* (como a don Quijote *el de la Triste*) [...] le estuvo mirando, como que quería ver si le conocía... (291)

Similarly, the visual narrative places *el roto* and *el de la triste figura* side by side, a position that helps the reader recognize their similarities: they are both disturbed, mad lovers, and thus reflections of each other.⁵ It should be noted, however, that Don Quixote's frustrated love, like many of his other challenges, is a figment of his imagination. Through the consecutive panels it is revealed that Cardenio believes his beloved Luscinda deceived him, while Don Quixote in response expresses a wish to emulate two of his literary heroes, Amadis and Orlando, in their reactions to unfulfilled quests for love. In the end Don Quixote chooses to follow the former, who withdrew from civilization in order to do penance for his beloved Oriana: "I intend to perform a deed that will bring eternal fame. I will imitate Amadis in penance! Like Amadis I shall play the madman. The man desperate with grief. I shall weep and wail for the pain of a broken heart" (Cervantes and Davis, 103). The composition of these scenes highlights the theme of the heartbroken knight who seeks solitude in order to do penance for his beloved.

However, as mentioned before, Don Quixote, unlike Cardenio, is not actually broken-hearted and therefore does not have a real reason to do penance. Therefore, the most distinctive element of these particular scenes is their humor. Davis draws on the graphic novel and comic tropes to make the humor inherent in the situation very clear to modern audiences. Don Quixote's penance is illustrated in a series of nine panels that show the progression of his acts: he takes off most of his clothes except his chemise, performs karate-like moves, does a handstand flip showing his derriere, slaps his face, scratches a rock and meows like a cat, and bangs his head on the ground. All these actions are accompanied by movement lines to emphasize their vigor and speed, as well as by sound effects like: "SLAP, SLAP, SLAP!" "MEEOW!" "SKRITCH, SKRITCH" and

⁵ For a comparative analysis of these two characters, see Quint, 32-37.

“BANG! BANG! BANG!” (Cervantes and Davis, 105). In the background, Sancho can be seen shaking his head and exclaiming that he can’t stand seeing his master beating himself up. Some of the target audience might be unfamiliar with the unique personality of Don Quixote, but they will likely be familiar with the artistic conventions of comics and graphic novels because of their prevalence in pop-culture.⁶ The adaptor uses visual codes familiar to contemporary audiences, such as karate, handstands, and a cat’s meow in a very unexpected setting. Presenting these details in five consecutive panels, the reader’s expectations of what a knight’s penance might involve are undermined. What’s more, his actions bluntly deviate from acceptable human behavior. This gives the audience a frame of reference to understand the episode as a parody of Amadis’s penance, and situates the readers within the defamiliarizing space created by Don Quixote’s actions, prompting them to laughter.⁷ The integration of these comic-humor techniques enables the reader who lacks cultural background on early modern Spain and the traditions of knightly epics to grasp the ludicrousness of Don Quixote’s behavior.

Turning back to the discussion of the visual comparison of *el roto* and *el de la triste figura*, it should be noted that Cardenio becomes a mirror through which Don Quixote identifies himself (figure 3).⁸ This sequence consists of three rows of two panels each. The third panel shows both characters facing off against each other, almost as if they were a before-and-after version of the same person. In the fourth one they appear closer to the viewer as the knight-errant expresses his empathy for Cardenio. At that point there is no doubt that a game of mirrors is taking place. As Quixote looks at Cardenio, he understands Cardenio’s pain and believes the feeling is mutual: “Ah, señor! I come to embrace you, not harm you!... I can tell thou hast felt love’s great pain just by the look of thee... And thou canst no doubt tell the same by looking at me...” (Cervantes and Davis, 99). Throughout this sequence, both characters direct their gaze towards the reader, positioning the reader within an imagined interstice between one character and the other. This unique perspective adds a new layer of meaning to the narrative. From our view from within the interstice comes the most compelling and revealing image of both men in this chapter. Don Quixote’s wide, round eyes and thin, bony face convey an exaggerated expression of madness. On the other hand, Cardenio’s slitted eyes surrounded by dark circles show pain, deceit, and heartache. This juxtaposition highlights the similarities in their respective circumstances but also outlines their differences: Don Quixote’s eyes suggest insanity, while Cardenio’s reveal anguish.

⁶ I would like to thank German E. Vargas Ramos for the following observation: In addition to being a convention in comic books, this technique was famously used in the 1960’s Batman TV series which was of course based on *Detective Comics*, a series which exhibits a “Quixotic” inclination to a certain degree. The TV series used graphics in conjunction with actual sound effects, not only to enhance those effects but also to reference the original comic book for stylistic and arguably nostalgic reasons.

⁷ I follow Shklovsky’s notion of defamiliarization. Gorman explains it as follows: “Our perceptions are prone to become dulled by habit: if you perceive something often enough, it will no longer make a dent in your consciousness. The task of art is to compensate for this shortcoming, by refreshing our ability to experience things, and ultimately to help us rediscover the world” (44).

⁸ De Armas asserts that at the beginning of the Sierra Morena episodes, Quixote “...become[s] a detective, even surpassing Sancho in his search for clues. But once he discovers that the ‘person of interest’ is Cardenio, who, like Don Quixote, acts like a madman, the knight has a role model, a mirror in which he can see himself. The Knight of the Sorrowful Figure embraces the Knight of the Woods. They are as one” (113-114).



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Figure 3. Don Quixote and Cardenio (Cervantes and Davis. *The Complete Don Quixote*, 99). Reproduced by kind permission of SelfMadeHero. (c) SelfMadeHero / Rob Davis

As previously stated, one of the great challenges of the Sierra Morena episodes is to successfully weave together the labyrinthine, multiple-narrative plot. As in the original, Cardenio's tale is split into two interpolated parts that are embedded within the episodes that take place in Sierra Morena. In Davis's rendition, Cardenio's interpolated account is differentiated from the main story by a distinctive type of sequence (figure 4). This sequence includes a shift in the color palette, a change in color application and layering, and unique banners and captions to differentiate

Cardenio's tale from Don Quixote's. As Cardenio begins to tell his story we immediately see various shifts in the composition. The sequence is crowned with a banner-like, horizontal panel that reads: "Cardenio's Tale." Below it are nine panels, each headed with captions. These captions indicate a voice-over technique that is used to deliver a first-person account of Cardenio's narrative. The colors suddenly change from earth tones to flat orange and blue-gray hues, indicating that what we see is happening within a different space, time, and narrative framework. To further differentiate the interpolated tale, the artist avoids the use of multiple layers of color. This eliminates the sense of depth in the scenes and leaves the characters without volume or complex features and expressions. Instead of the previous, fleshed-out representations that reflected intricate emotions and movements, the characters take on a static appearance. The second part of Cardenio's tale has more visual elements than the first one, such as speech balloons for dialogue between characters and motion lines that indicate dramatic movements. These same elements are used throughout the graphic novel to highlight other narratives embedded within the main story, such as: *The Goat Herder's Tale*, *The Novel of the Curious Impertinent*, *The Story of the Braying Aldermen*, and *Dorotea's Tale*.

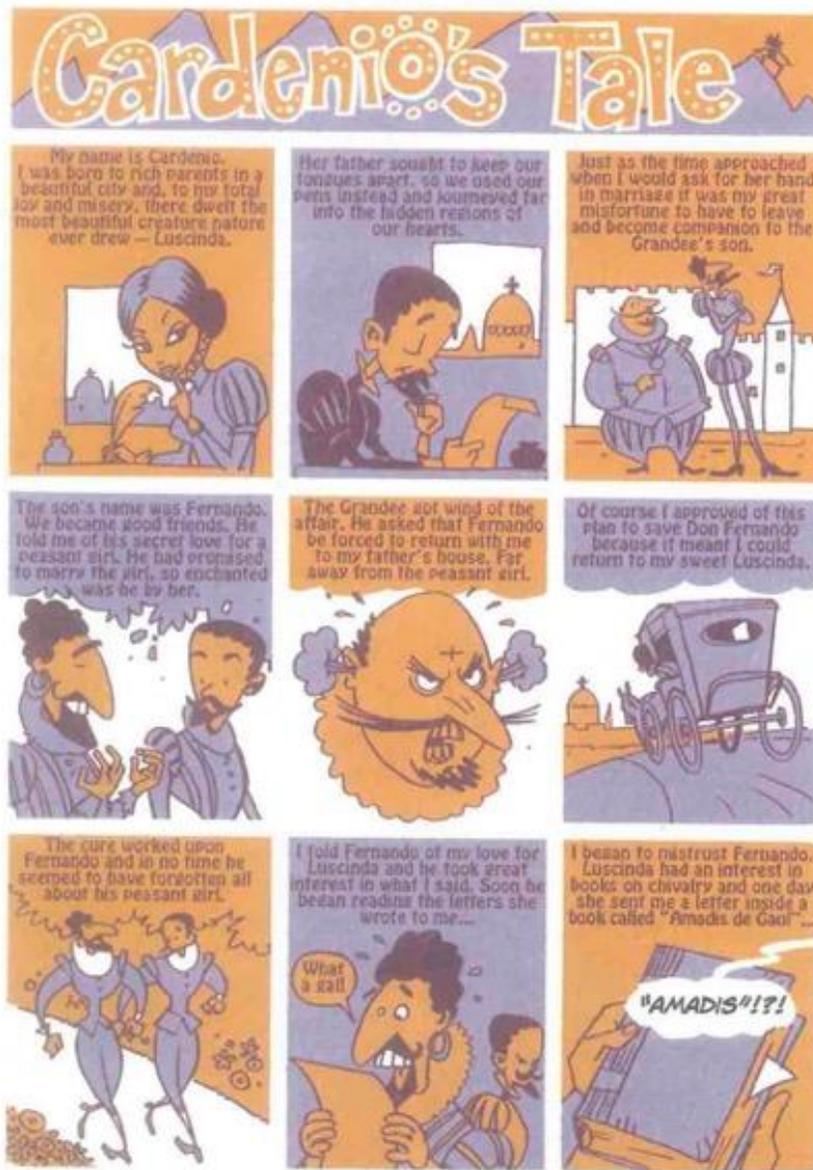


Figure 4. Cardenio's tale (Cervantes and Davis. *The Complete Don Quixote*, 100). Reproduced by kind permission of SelfMadeHero. (c) SelfMadeHero / Rob Davis

Davis's rendition of *The Novel of the Curious Impertinent* is another excellent example of how the illustrator uses the compositional and structural elements of color play, banners, sound effects, and unique panel arrangements to deftly incorporate an interpolated tale while engaging the reader. It is worth discussing in detail before moving on to Dorotea's tale. As in the original tale, the priest reads a novel aloud to Cardenio and Dorotea. The story revolves around how a married man (Anselmo) asks his unmarried friend (Lotario) to try and seduce his wife (Camila)

in order to test her fidelity. The plot thickens when Lotario and Camila fall in love. Camila then runs away from her home, is taken to a convent, and commits suicide after she finds out that Lotario died in battle. The colors in these sequences are reduced to two tones of coral-red and black. The dark coral-red is the primary color in all the panels and serves to foreshadow the fatal ending. This interpolated novel is included in chapter nine⁹ of Davis's adaptation and is divided into four different sequences that are briefly interrupted by a segment that narrates how Don Quixote defeats a wineskin that he believes to be a giant. As in Cardenio's tale, it is introduced by a title banner and contains an average of nine panels per sequence. The third sequence is interrupted by a mid-elongated panel that fuses the interpolated novel and the main *Quixote* narrative. It does this with the image of a sharp knife cutting through skin and splashing blood that spills over the gutters of the adjacent panels with an overlapping sound effect ("SSCHWIPP!") that adds suspense. As the flow of the interpolated novel is suddenly interrupted, the characters return to their reality, producing anticipation and curiosity. This is another instance in Davis's adaptation in which readers accompany the characters in order to discover the reason for the interruption. Together with the characters, readers remain anxious to learn how the *The Novel of the Curious Impertinent* will end.

Dorotea's Story

Dorotea's character is vital to the narrative because she interrupts the all-male voices and adds a female perspective. Dorotea's tale follows a similar structure and composition as the abovementioned interpolated stories. The lettering, captions and speech balloons are similar. However, to differentiate her tale from Cardenio's, Davis uses a different color scheme: yellow-green and black (figure 5). Dorotea's tale offers readers the opportunity to explore how sound effects promote an immersive experience of the narrative. Sound effects are used widely throughout this adaptation. As in many visual narratives, certain storytelling aspects can be difficult to grasp without the help of sound effects. When explaining how to create graphic narratives Scott McCloud asserts that:

Thanks to film and television, we've gotten used to stories that continuously use *sight* and *sound* and offer rich, immersive experiences [...] To *reproduce* that kind of experience, we need to do it using only *one* sense. Words play an important role in comics by *bridging* the gap. They give *voice* to our characters, allow us to describe all *five* senses and in the case of *sound effects*, they graphically *become* what they describe and give readers a rare chance to *listen* with their *eyes*. (McCloud 2006, 146)

By "become what they describe," McCloud means that the manner in which the sound effect is drawn communicates the oral characteristics or emotional undertone of the sound. The written sound effect becomes more than just the representation of something purely auditory. The most significant sound effect from Dorotea's tale is one that highlights her pain as she was dishonored, abandoned, and left brokenhearted by Fernando. In the seventh panel of that sequence, she narrates: "Rumour of our affair had spread. I was afraid that this had caused him to stay away. I was painted as a harlot and he was painted as a fool. That was before I heard the news that would crush me beneath it..." (Cervantes and Davis, 114). This voice-over sits above the silhouette of a broken heart surrounded by an echoing zigzagged white border and the sound effect "KRACK!" This sound effect echoes Dorotea's crying voice as it appears in the original prose. As sound effects

⁹ Chapters thirty-three to thirty-five in the original novel.

are meant to drive readers to “listen with their eyes,” (McCloud 2006, 146) this example is significant because it helps us understand Dorotea’s personal circumstances and lets us “hear” the pain caused by her broken heart and prompts us to empathize with her.



Figure 5. Dorotea’s tale (Cervantes and Davis. *The Complete Don Quixote*, 114). Reproduced by kind permission of SelfMadeHero. (c) SelfMadeHero / Rob Davis

There are other instances where Davis deftly uses sound effects to heighten the action and give the narrative dynamism that a still image would be incapable of providing. Davis often uses them in action scenes when Don Quixote is smacking someone or is being beaten. When analyzing

the impact of a sound effect, it is important to note its placement on the page as well as its size and color. All these characteristics are significant and meant to influence the reader. For example, in chapter two¹⁰ of Davis's novel, Don Quixote encounters several merchants from Toledo and stops them from continuing their journey until they acknowledge Dulcinea's beauty. Although they oblige, they do not do it in the way the knight-errant desires, and he attacks them. In return, Don Quixote is badly beaten. The corresponding sound effects are illustrated with a "WACK! WACK! WACK!" First, this effect is used over small panels that show a man beating Don Quixote. It continues on to the next page where there is a segment of one-panel sound effects showing over twenty-five "WACKS!" distributed across the page in three different fonts and colors – mustard-yellow, gray-blue, and maroon – highlighted over a black background. Their "size, boldness, tilt and exclamation points" suggest the loudness of the beating (McCloud 2006, 147). The placement, font, and color of these particular sound effects bring humor to the scene, give the reader the sensation of being present in the action, and communicate the magnitude of the beating. In all cases, the sound effects incorporated in this adaptation are used to immerse the reader in the action and to elicit an effective response.

Another important aspect of Dorotea's sequence is how her narrative visually uplifts and invigorates the graphic novel's atmosphere. This is done through another shift in color and a strong emphasis on Dorotea's physical beauty. As I mentioned before, the first sequences of the Sierra Morena episodes were characterized by earth tones. No vivid colors are introduced in the chapter until the barber and the priest arrive, intending to bring Don Quixote back home. At this point a change to carmine-red and hunter green is used to highlight the costumes worn by both characters in order to play the part of a lady in distress and her squire. The color shift serves to gradually introduce different tones into the narrative as we transition into the sequences dedicated to Dorotea. Dorotea's beauty is an important aspect of her character in both the original and in the visual narrative. The graphic novel highlights her slender figure, long brown hair, big round eyes, and her perfectly symmetrical features – physical traits that accentuate her "hermosura incomparable," as described in the original novel (Cervantes, 344). This gradual shift in color (the introduction of carmine-red and hunter green), which takes place before she even appears on the scene, serves to foreshadow the visual effect she will have on the story.

An important structural change to Dorotea's tale is the manner in which the reader is introduced to her. In Cervantes's text we first encounter her in chapter twenty-eight when the priest, the barber, and Cardenio *hear* her crying from a distance:

¡Ay Dios! ¡Si será posible que he ya hallado lugar que pueda servir de escondida sepultura a la carga pesada deste cuerpo, que tan contra mi voluntad sostengo! Sí será, si la soledad que prometen estas sierras no me miente. ¡Ay, desdichada, y cuán más agradable compañía harán estos riscos y malezas a mi intención, pues me darán lugar para que con quejas comunique mi desgracia al cielo, que no la de ningún hombre humano, pues no hay ninguno en la tierra de quien se pueda esperar consejo en las dudas, alivio en las quejas, ni remedio en los males! (Cervantes, 343)

This scene is eliminated from the graphic narrative. What first draws the attention of the three men is not the sound of Dorotea's sorrow, but the beauty of her feet. Her feet are also highlighted in the original and are described as follows:

¹⁰ This refers to chapter four of *Don Quixote*'s first part.

[...] eran tales, que no parecían sino dos pedazos de blanco cristal que entre las otras piedras del arroyo se habían nacido. Suspendióles la blancura y belleza de los pies, pareciéndoles que no estaban hechos a pisar terrones, ni a andar tras el arado y los bueyes, como mostraba el hábito de su dueño. (Cervantes, 344)

In a similar way, Dorotea's feet are highlighted in the graphic narrative. It is done by a close-up, showing one foot in the forefront of a panel. In the background, the priest, Cardenio, and the barber can be seen admiring her delicate feet while they hide behind green bushes. The previous color scheme of the sequence abruptly changes in this panel. It introduces a forest green background that appears in all sequences dedicated to her story. She seems to burst upon the scene in all her greenery, bringing a freshness and life to the chapter that was previously lacking. The color change not only contributes to the mood and our overall impression of Dorotea, but also serves to highlight that a new voice is emerging and will temporarily lead the narrative.

Dorotea's powerful influence not only manifests itself visually in the narrative, but her intervention in the plot guides the story in a new direction and brings the chapter to a close. She is key to convincing Don Quixote to leave Sierra Morena to undergo a new adventure (fabricated by his friends and improved upon by her storytelling skills). After she reveals her true identity and tells her story, she decides to use her knowledge of chivalric novels to portray a convincing princess in distress (in comparison to the priest and barber's unconvincing depiction). In the graphic novel, this part of the plot continues until the end of the chapter and is marked once again by a changing color scheme. The forest-green and carmine red in Dorotea's princess dress remain the highlight of her character, but the background is imbued with a misty rose tone, and elements in the foreground are stressed by brown tones. These are the colors used in the first sequences of the chapter when Don Quixote and Sancho reach the heart of Sierra Morena and encounter Cardenio. By returning to the same colors used in the beginning of the chapter, Davis brings the reader out of the narrative labyrinth and refocuses on our original duo. This final color shift (a balance between the sierra browns and Dorotea's vibrant accents) signals the end of the Sierra Morena episodes. Don Quixote and Sancho abandon Sierra Morena accompanied by new friends and in pursuit of a new imaginary quest.

Final Reflections

As I have shown above, the choices Davis made while adapting *Don Quixote* closely match many of the narrative demands of Cervantes's novel. The Sierra Morena episodes in particular preserve the experimental profile of the original chapters through a combination of color scheme change, banners, unique arrangement of panels, illustrated sound effects, and visually striking portrayals of the characters and landscapes. Davis clearly understands how Cervantes engages the "interpretative authority of the reader" (Mancing, 108), and uses the innovative techniques of the graphic novel to draw the reader into a role of active participation (Mancing, 108). This heightened participation is made possible by the "additive" nature of the graphic novel genre, which prompts the "receivers to add their own experience or imagination to the encapsulated moment in order to construct the story" (Duncan and Smith, 10). The end result is that the different panel compositions and ingenious structure of Davis's *The Complete Don Quixote* invite readers to travel, wonder, question, fear, and investigate along with the characters. This is an especially impressive achievement considering how difficult it is to accomplish with a reduced textual narrative.

The subtle and intelligent use of color in this narrative has an especially strong influence on the reader's experience of the story. Different colors elicit an increased awareness and appreciation of the various landscapes surrounding the characters, and color shifts mark the

transitions from one adventure to the next. Color play helps the reader grasp the characters' intentions and mood that – literally and figuratively – color their episodes. Additionally, the intensity and depth of color, or lack thereof, help to differentiate the interpolated stories from the main plot. Color play is what enables Cardenio and Dorotea to seamlessly emerge as leading characters, each with their own separate stories and highlighted by their own visual styles. Both characters contribute just as much to the graphic novel's overarching story as they do in Cervantes's original tale, despite the challenges presented by the labyrinthine narrative. Cardenio's story is given greater visibility, but this is proportional to the number of pages dedicated to his tale in the original. And as already explained, Dorotea's presence adds a vital and lingering freshness to the Sierra Morena episodes both through her vibrant greens and her much-needed female perspective.

By combining these techniques of color scheme change, banners, unique arrangement of panels, sound effects, and visually stimulating perspectives, Davis's illustrations achieve, as critics observe, astonishing results. Davis is clearly cognizant of the novel's wit, humor, structure and complex, intertwined narrative elements, and uses these elements to successfully recount the story. Certainly, his work is the result of a careful reading and thorough analysis of Don Quixote's characters, conflicts, dynamic action sequences, and environments. Therefore, it is not surprising that this work of art has caught the attention of academics, educators, and critics specialized in visual narratives. Davis's graphic novel not only brings out the true spirit of the knight errant and his adventures, but also adds its own distinctive flavor to this monumental work in a way few visual narratives have been able to achieve.

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