

Hercules and the Statue Garden:  
Mocking Collections in *Don Quijote* II.14  
(abstract)

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While scenes and images in Part One of *Don Quijote* may recall paintings and frescoes from the Italian Renaissance, the second part of the novel transforms many of these images into quirky and grotesque flights of fancy. Cervantes' grotesque, deriving from the term *grotto*, was a type of antique art rediscovered in the Renaissance through grotto entrances that led to the submerged golden palace of Nero or other such antiquities. Here, the images are disordered, as body parts turn into plants and paintings without rule show the impossible. While many of these works were used to decorate spaces between harmonious frescoes, the grotesque was also used in the grotto, in gardens, the most famous example being the Sacro Bosco, an "enchanted forest" created in the sixteenth century by Vicino Orsini close to the village of Bomarzo. In this paper I would like to concentrate on the moment in which Sansón Carrasco, in just such a forest of the imagination, decides to steal from Don Quijote any aspirations to be Hercules; the moment in which Sansón, using his malicious wit, decides to disguise himself as a knight who has been ordered by his imperious lady, Casildea de Vandalia, to accomplish a series of feats akin to the twelve labors of Hercules. These labors turn out to be grotesque and sculpted re-creations of the myth, a statue garden where Sansón's imaginings seek to surpass those of Don Quijote. By succeeding in his labors the disguised Sansón Carrasco, in this invented tale, hopes to conquer the lady; but Sansón's real hope is to vanquish Don Quijote. The mock-labors of Hercules, then, becomes a site for contention, one where the grotesque challenges the harmonies of the Renaissance; where the verbal assaults the visual; where the garden replaces the palace as a site for collecting; where sculpture seems to surpass painting; and where a trickster and a madman battle for control of the narrative.