



Don Quixote. Broadcast April 9, 2000 on the TNT network. TNT presents a Hallmark Entertainment Production. Robert Halmi and John Lithgow, Executive Producers; Dyson Lovell, Producer; Peter Yates, Director; John Mortimer, writer of teleplay; Joyce Gallie (Casting). Based on the novel by Miguel de Cervantes. Runtime 120 minutes. Cast: John Lithgow (DON QUIXOTE), Bob Hoskins (SANCHO PANZA), Vanessa Williams (DULCINEA DEL TOBOSO), Isabella Rossellini (DUCHESS), Lambert Wilson (DUKE), Peter Eyre (PRIEST), Tony Haygarth (BARBER), Amelia Warner (ANTONIA), Linda Bassett (HOUSEKEEPER). Emmy nominations: COSTUMES for a Miniseries, Movie or Special; MUSICAL COMPOSITION for a Miniseries, Movie or Special; MAKEUP for a Miniseries, Movie or Special. Won no awards.

David O. Selznick's three-hour fifty-five minute 1939 production of *Gone with the Wind* is a wonderful screen adaptation of Margaret Mitchell's 1936

novel. People who read the novel can look at the motion picture and see most of what they know about Scarlett O'Hara, Rhett Butler, and Ashley Wilkes come to life. And movie viewers who read to the book will be delighted with how things are fleshed out. The decision the screenwriter Sidney Howard had to make was essentially what to leave out or condense from the book. It is a long book, so not everything could be included in the motion picture.

Don Quijote is a long book, too. It is too long to try to retell in 120 minutes (even though G. W. Pabst's 1935 version starring the Russian bass Feodor Chaliapin lasted only 73 minutes). Taking the cue from Selznick's four-hour epic motion picture, made when typical movies ran 108 minutes, TNT maybe should have allowed four hours for their version as well (the version done for Spanish TV in 1991 used four hours just for Part I).

John Mortimer's teleplay was different from Sidney Howard's screenplay, because, not only was material excised, but other action was falsified, events were relocated, and some new ones were even added, names were made up, and both Aldonza and Dulcinea appeared, just to mention a few items. What I object to the most in the teleplay is that changes are made which serve no artistic purpose and thus contaminate the original. The enchanter who took away Don Quijote's books is Malfatto in the TNT version. Why not Frestón? What purpose does Malfatto serve that Frestón doesn't? Early on, Don Quijote says "I am no longer Alonso Quijada!" Why not Alonso Quijano, just like the book says? Is the art of the teleplay enhanced by this new name? Why does Sancho have five small children, ages 3–10? Why not *two* teenagers, as in the book? What is gained, especially since none of these children says anything? Why are the two maidens/prostitutes outside the first inn old and haggard instead of young (*mozas*), as in the book. In the TNT version, when Sancho tries to make don Quijote believe that the three country girls (*mozas aldeanas*) are Dulcinea and her two friends, why are they sixty-year-old women in the TNT version? Is that somehow artistically better? What artistic purpose does it serve to have don Quijote *washing* his armor in the trough at the first inn instead of just hanging it nearby? Washing his armor? And why does don Quijote fight with seven muleteers instead of just two? How is the art of the story enhanced by having the first galley slave steal a pair of candlesticks (*à la* Jean Valjean) instead of a basket of freshly-washed clothing? Isn't the purpose of the violations to show that relatively minor thefts result in years of galley service? Why is Ginés de Pasamonte 50 years old and ugly when he's supposed to be 30 years old—he is the *only* character assigned an exact age in the book—and handsome? And why is he called Ginesillo de Pasamonte? The old pimp—what artistic purpose does it serve not to give him white hair and a long beard? Regarding Mambrino's helmet, on a perfectly sunny day, the barber travels with the basin on his head, as if it was a normal thing to do. Isn't the point that the rain makes him cover his new hat by putting it on his head, something he'd never do under ordinary circumstances. When the library is being scrutinized, the niece says

"Here's the *Mirror of Knighthood*, uncle's favorite!" Does that increase the art of the work more so than "Here's *Amadís of Gaula*, uncle's favorite!" would, especially since English speakers don't know either work? Why do don Quijote and Sancho go to El Toboso in the middle of the day? Isn't the point that Sancho can't find Dulcinea's palace because it's so dark? Why does Sancho shout "Yes!" when don Quijote defeats the Knight of the Mirrors? Isn't that a little bit too modern an expression? When we meet the Duchess, she is playing croquet with the Duke, who is dressed as an eighteenth-century dandy. The game is certainly old enough (thirteenth century), but what artistic purpose does it serve here? Why does the duke have a string quartet playing Mozartean music at dinner? Why is Sancho's island called Esperanza? What artistic purpose does it serve to make that change?

I can understand why Dulcinea might appear in a dream sequence in a motion picture, but why should Aldonza appear at all, as she does in the TNT version? And living in don Quijote's own village (following the 1957 Russian version)?

Joyce Gallie, in her casting, used what appeared to be a young British boy to play the young Alonso, but the full-grown Don Quixote had an American accent. In fact, John Lithgow was the only American accent in the motion picture. I think it would have been better to homogenize everyone's speech, most easily by having Lithgow speak British English. Then again, it *was* made for an American audience, so maybe the British actors could have spoken American English.

Regarding names, it would not have made any artistic difference to pronounce them Spanish style, in fact, it is likely that this would have enhanced the production. And when I say "Spanish style" I don't mean using exact Spanish sounds (pure vowels, flapped *r*), but just a reasonable facsimile using English sounds. Thus, for their [alónzo], why not [alónso]? For their [təbozo], why not "el Toboso"? For their [ældónzə], why not [aldónθa]? For their *Ámadis*, why not *Amadís*? Virtually no name is pronounced as it should be.

The entire production was made in Spain, and was done with care and artistry. The technical people always do a wonderful job, no matter what the script is like. Background music was good and effective.

Withal, I was quite disappointed by this production, which has now been released on commercial video. (I got a non-commercial copy that says "For Your Emmy Consideration" from the www.eBay.com auction for about \$15.00). It would doubtless be dangerous to have your students see this version as some sort of ancillary to class.

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