

[Selections from John Jay Allen's Writings on Cervantes]

Excerpts from Monarch Notes

Guide to *Don Quixote*

Cervantes' Don Quixote. New York: Monarch, 1975, long out of print and hard to find.

Cervantes' Literary Career

The evolution of Cervantes' novelistic technique has never been satisfactorily delineated by literary critics and historians. It has often perplexed critics to note that Cervantes' first work, *La Galatea* (1585), is an example of the highly artificial and imitative genre of the pastoral novel, and that he refers several times throughout the rest of his life to a "second part," in which he seems to have been interested even as he was writing *Don Quixote*. The curate finds a copy of *La Galatea* in the course of his scrutiny of Don Quixote's library, and concludes that "we must wait for the second part which he [Cervantes] promises," and in the Prologue to *Don Quixote II*, and even in the Dedication of his *Persiles*, he is still promising the reader this continuation of *La Galatea*. The problem for criticism is of course the reconciliation of this affection for the stylized and artificial pastoral in the author who created the modern realistic novel. It is in fact Cervantes himself who first points out the artificiality of the genre, in one of his exemplary novels, "The Colloquy of the Dogs," when Berganza brings up the discrepancy between the lives of real shepherds and those books "dreamed up and well written for the entertainment of idle folks, and not true at all." Two aspects of the pastoral novel may have attracted Cervantes. First, it constituted an established genre and therefore a logical vehicle for a writer's apprenticeship, and one which combined prose and verse, thus afford a place for the poetry which Cervantes very much wanted to write successfully. Second, it also afforded the opportunity for a degree of psychological penetration in the characters' introspective laments.

Cervantes' Interest in Delusion.

After publishing *La Galatea* at thirty-eight years of age, Cervantes published nothing further until 1605, when *Don Quixote* appeared. Yet, extraordinarily, this book, published when he was fifty-eight, was only the beginning of his real literary legacy. In 1613 his *Exemplary Novels* appeared, establishing Cervantes as the founder of the modern Spanish short story. Although the influence of the Italian *novellieri* can be seen in some of these stories, the best of the collection, "Rinconete and Cortadillo," "The Deceitful Marriage," "The Colloquy of the Dogs," are entirely original in content, conception, and style. "Rinconete and Cortadillo" and "The Colloquy of the Dogs" each share some characteristics with the picaresque novel, though neither falls entirely within the genre. Another of the stories in this group, "The Man of Glass," reflects the interest in madness and delusion which is so important in the creation of *Don Quixote*. There are twelve stories in all, which critics tend to divide roughly in half, one group of realistic stories contrasting with another of romantic, Italianate tales.

In 1615 both *Don Quixote II* and *Eight Comedies and Eight Interludes* appeared. The eight plays, never produced, reveal Cervantes' attempt to come to terms with the new conditions which Lope de Vega's outstanding talent and prolificness had imposed upon the theater. The plays in this volume are all of the Lopean, three-act construction, as opposed to Cervantes' earlier predilection for four or five acts. They are quite overshadowed by the interludes published with them. These are brief, farcical pieces in prose or verse which were presented between the acts of full-length Golden Age plays, and Cervantes is the acknowledged master of the genre. His interludes are often presented even today.

An Unresolved Dilemma.

Cervantes' last prose work, *The Hardships of Persiles and Sigismunda*, published posthumously in 1617, presents another enigma for the critics. Why, after creating the modern realistic novel, did Cervantes turn again to a stylized and artificial genre, this time the so-

called Byzantine novel of Heliodorus, a Greek author of the fourth century, A.D., whose work was popular in Spanish translation? Some critics, unable to accept this dramatic change or reversal of aesthetic orientation, have talked of the rapid onset of senility, or suggested that *Persiles* is a work written much earlier, and published in the wake of the fame of *Don Quixote*, but most have seen Cervantes' last work as an ambitious, through flawed, effort to write the prose epic which he had mentioned in *Don Quixote* (I, 47), in the symbolic adventures of his pair of idealized lovers. The most recent criticism has emphasized the unresolved dilemma which the book reflects between the canons of Aristotelian criticism and Cervantes' instinctive advocacy of unrestricted freedom for the creative writer, and the symbolic interpretation of the movement of the plot.

Brief History of Criticism of *Don Quixote*

The problem of the reader's attitude toward *Don Quixote* is perhaps unparalleled in the history of literature, both in duration and in extent. Cervantes' first public saw in *Don Quixote* only a book of entertainment, a parody of the novel of chivalry. The second stage seems to have been one of identification with *Don Quixote* in his folly. Motteux could say, in 1700, that "every man has something of *Don Quixote* in his *Humour*, some darling *Dulcinea* of his thoughts, that sets him very often upon mad adventures." Dr. Johnson remarked, in 1750, that "very few readers, amidst their mirth or pity can deny that they have admitted visions of the same kind... When we pity him, we reflect on our own disappointments; and when we laugh, our hearts inform us that he is not more ridiculous than ourselves, except that he tells what we have only thought." At about the same time, other commentary in England indicates that the shift to the idealization of *Don Quixote* had already begun. In 1739, a friend of Pope's seemed to him "so very a child in true Simplicity of Heart, that I love him; as he loves *Don Quixote*, for the most Moral and Reasoning

Madman in the world." In 1754, finally, Sarah Fielding could say: "To travel through a whole work only to laugh at the chief companion allotted us, is an unsupportable burthen. And we should imagine that the reading of that incomparable piece of humor left us by Cervantes, can give but little pleasure to those persons who can extract no other entertainment or emolument from it than laughing at Don Quixote's reveries, and sympathizing in the malicious joy of his tormentors... That strong and beautiful representation of human nature, exhibited in Don Quixote's madness in one point, and extraordinary good sense in every other, is indeed very much thrown away on such readers as consider him only as the object of their mirth."

These notes of pity and admiration constitute the seeds of the Romantic interpretation of *Don Quixote* which was to dominate 19th-century criticism. Don Quixote is increasingly seen as the "knight of the faith" who embodies the spiritual force of human aspirations, being "superior in moral fibre to the people who flout him." This is perhaps still the popular view of the book, though 20th-century criticism has tended increasingly to return to earlier points of view which see the knight, in spite of his nobility, as the butt of Cervantes' satire.

The range of viewpoints has indeed been broad in this century. Cervantes has been seen as a reactionary (Cesare de Lollis), a non-conformist (Américo Castro), a relativist (Jean Cassou), a revolutionary (Pavel Novitsky, A. Gerchunoff), an Erasmian (Ludwig Pfandl), man of the middle Ages (Mario Casella), Baroque man (Marcel Bataillon), counter-reformationist (Helmut Hatzfeld), and iconoclast (Arthur Efron). This enormous diversity of opinion testifies to the extreme complexity of *Don Quixote*, and to its propensity to suggest much more than it actually says. This situation obviously argues persuasively against attempting a judgment of the novel based upon anything less than a full and careful reading of the complete text.

Another aspect of twentieth-century criticism has been its increasing tendency to examine the structure, narrative technique, and style of the novel as new methods of the analysis of fiction

have been developed. These kinds of investigation have been aided by the publication of excellent critical editions by Francisco Rodriguez Marín and Rudolph Schevill.

Finally, it can be said as Helmut Hatzfeld has pointed out, that the most recent criticism tends to emphasize the pitfalls of the Romantic identification of Cervantes with his protagonist, and to take seriously the implications of Cervantes' statement that he is the "stepfather" of Don Quixote, and not the father (I, Prologue).

Areas for Research and Criticism

1. Cervantes' portrayal of contemporary Spanish society.
2. An appraisal of English translations of *Don Quixote*.
3. The incorporation of contemporary historical, cultural, and political events into *Don Quixote*.
4. Autobiographical elements in *Don Quixote*.
5. Literary theory in *Don Quixote* and its relation to Cervantes' practice.
6. Time in *Don Quixote*.
7. Authorial commentary in *Don Quixote*.
8. Description in *Don Quixote*.
9. The interpolated stories in Part I.
10. *Man of La Mancha* and *Don Quixote*: comparison and contrast.

Selective Annotated Bibliography in English

Allen, John J. *Don Quixote: Hero or Fool?* Gainesville, FL: U Florida P, 1969. A study in narrative technique, attempting to indicate the bases for conflicting interpretations of the work and to elucidate Cervantes' ethical orientation of the reader.

Auden, W. H. See under Nelson.

Auerbach, Erich. See under Barbera.

Barbera, Raymond E., ed. *Cervantes: A Critical Trajectory*. Boston: Mirage, 1971. A collection of translations of critical articles,

including the following:

"Hamlet and Don Quixote," by Ivan Turgenev. One of the classic essays in *Quixote* criticism. Turgenev sees the contrasting figures of Hamlet and Don Quixote as exemplars of two fundamental aspects of human nature: the rational skeptical, haughty, indecisive, aesthetically oriented and ultimately egocentric Hamlet, as opposed to the man of faith, commitment, altruism, and perseverance embodied in Don Quixote.

"The Enchanted Dulcinea," by Erich Auerbach. An interpretation of the novel as "a comedy in which well-founded reality holds madness up to ridicule," based upon a detailed examination of Chapter 10, Part II, the "enchantment" of Dulcinea by Sancho.

The collection includes articles by Coleridge, Heine, Unamuno (q.v.), Ortega y Gasset (q.v.), Pirandello, Madariaga (q.v.), W. P. Ker, Mario Casella, Américo Castro (q.v.), Pedro Salinas, and Wyndham Lewis.

Benardete, M. J., and Ángel Flores, eds. *The Anatomy of Don Quixote. A Symposium*. 1932. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1969. A collection of translations of critical articles including the following:

"The Genesis," by Ramón Menéndez Pidal. The exposition of the thesis that Don Quixote's first sally, and thus the initial intent of the novel, is based upon an obscure anonymous dramatic interlude: "The Interlude of the Ballads," written about 1597, and an examination of the direction and significance of Cervantes' subsequent change in intention.

"The Style," by Helmut Hatzfeld. Stressing the rich stylistic variety of Don Quixote, Hatzfeld identifies central motifs and examines their embodiment in a series of dominant stylistic devices such as antithesis, contrary-to-fact conditional constructions, puns and word-play, and hyperbole. The article sketches the central points of the author's book *Don Quixote als Wortkunstwerk*.

The collection also includes articles by A. Morel-Fatio and Turgenev (q.v.).

———. *Cervantes Across the Centuries*. New York: Dryden, 1947. A collection of translations of critical articles, including the following:

“The Composition of *Don Quixote*,” by Joaquín Casalduero. A detailed exposition of Casalduero’s thesis of the Baroque circular structure of *Don Quixote*, identifying leitmotifs and themes around which the book is organized, the article presents the central points of the author’s book: *Sentido y forma del Quijote*.

“Incarnation in *Don Quixote*,” by Américo Castro. Through Castro’s profoundly provocative *El pensamiento de Cervantes* has not been translated into English, this combination of translations of two of his subsequent articles offers a sample of the thought of this very influential critic. Castro delineates the development of the principal characters in Cervantes’ masterpiece as embodying individualizing responses to outside “incitements” which change both their goals and their conduct. He also stresses the “elusive” technique of Cervantes, with his many conscious omissions, and an “extremist” style which focuses on heights and depths, rather than a middle ground. Finally, he explores in detail the significance of the written word for Cervantes (the novels of chivalry, for *Don Quixote*), and affirms that, for Cervantes, “reality is always an aspect of the experience of the person who is living it.”

“*Don Quixote* and *Moby Dick*,” by Harry Levin. After tracing the influence of *Don Quixote* in America, Mr. Levin explores the relationship of Melville’s thought to that of Cervantes.

The collection also includes sixteen other articles, among them a series on Cervantes’ influence in England, France, Germany, and Russia.

Blanco Aguinaga, Carlos. See under Nelson.

Brenan, Gerald. “Cervantes,” in *The Literature of the Spanish People*. New York: Meridian, 1957. A central element in this essay is the examination and interpretation of the episode of the Cave of Montesinos (II, 23). Brenan also offers original insight into the nature of the relationship between *Don Quixote* and San-

cho.

Casaldüero, Joaquín. See under Benardete.

Castro, Américo. See under Benardete.

Efron, Arthur. *Don Quixote and the Dulcinea World*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1971. Probably the most radical interpretation of *Don Quixote* ever, this book attempts to show that Cervantes not only "laughed Spain's chivalry away," as Byron claimed, but that he mounted an attack on marriage, chastity, and other ideals of this time. "Dulcineism means the living of life in accord with the prescribed ideals of the received culture." The hardest of the "hard" critics.

Girard, René. *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 1965. Girard's concept of "triangular" or "mediated" desire is proposed as central to understanding the fiction of Cervantes, Stendhal, Flaubert, and Dostoyevsky. The seeds of the study by Efron (q.v.) are here, since desire mediated artificially through some model (Amadis of Gaul, for Don Quixote) is shown by all these novelists, in Girard's view, to have replaced the direct, spontaneous desire which should rightly animate human activity.

Haley, George. "The Narrator in *Don Quixote*." *MLN* 80 (1965): 145-65. An illuminating exposition of the fundamental relationships between the author, his intermediaries Cid Hamete and the Moorish translator, and the characters, through an analysis of the analogous relationships in Master Pedro's puppet show (II, 22).

Hatzfeld, Helmut. See under Benardete.

Levin, Harry. See under Nelson.

Madariaga, Salvador de. *Don Quixote. An Introductory Essay in Psychology*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1935. A small but important book which has suggested much that later critics have elaborated upon, especially the Sanchification of Don Quixote, and the Quixotization of Sancho.

Mandel, Oscar. "The Function of the Norm in *Don Quixote*." *Modern Philology* 55 (1958): 154-63. The "Gentleman in the Green Overcoat" (II, 16) is proposed as an ethical norm for the novel,

against which Don Quixote's deviations are to be measured and judged.

Mann, Thomas. See under Nelson.

Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. See under Benardete.

Nelson, Lowry, Jr., ed. *Cervantes*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1969. A collection of critical articles, including the following:

"The Example of Cervantes," by Harry Levin. Professor Levin identifies the critical achievement of Cervantes in *Don Quixote* as the presentation of "the pattern of art embarrassed by confrontation with nature." "Parody, explicitly criticizing a mode of literature [the chivalric novels], developed into satire, implicitly criticizing a way of life."

"Voyage with Don Quixote," by Thomas Mann. The novelist's random comments on re-reading *Don Quixote* during a sea voyage. He deals in some detail with the adventure of the Lions ("the climax of the novel"), Camacho's wedding, the adventure of the Braying Aldermen, and the ending, which he finds unsatisfying. He sees the novel as a marvelous reflection of Cervantes' time, and an anticipation of the Romantic's fruitful thoughts about "the weird depths, the trick mirrors and false bottoms of artistic illusion."

"The Ironic Hero: Some Reflections on *Don Quixote*," by W. H. Auden. In an essay in outline form, Auden characterizes Don Quixote as a Christian Saint, as distinguished from the Epic Hero and the Comic Hero.

"Cervantes and the Picaresque Mode: Notes on Two Kinds of Realism," by Carlos Blanco Aguinaga. A convincing differentiation between the "objective" realism of Cervantes, open and prismatic, and the "dogmatic or disillusionist realism" of the picaresque, with its single, limited point of view which issues in a closed, didactic novel.

Ortega y Gasset, José. *Meditations on Quixote*, trans. Evelyn Rugg and Diego Marín. New York: W. W. Norton, 1961. The Spanish philosopher wrote only the "Preliminary" and "First" of his projected "meditations." He discusses the fundamental differ-

- ences between *Don Quixote* and the epic, the question of the nature of reality as posed by Cervantes, and other basic issues.
- Predmore, Richard L. *The World of Don Quixote*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1967. Contains chapters on the interplay between literature and life in *Don Quixote* and on the question of appearance versus reality. Predmore seeks to establish that Cervantes shows that although reality is often deceptive, the phenomenal world in which the characters live and move is rational and consistent.
- . *Cervantes*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1973. A readable, magnificently illustrated biography which incorporates the essential contributions of all recent work on the life of Cervantes.
- Riley, Edward C. *Cervantes's Theory of the Novel*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1962. A major attempt to establish Cervantes' ideas on the novel through an examination of the critical comments of characters in his novels, of contemporary theorists such as the Aristotelian López Pinciano, and of Cervantes' own practice.
- . "Three Versions of Don Quixote." *Modern Language Review* 68 (1973): 807–19. Professor Riley's latest contribution to the study of Cervantes' novelistic technique is an examination of the interrelationships among Cid Hamete Benengeli's version of Don Quixote's activities ("historical"), the apocryphal Part II, by Avellaneda (spurious), and the flattering, romanticized account which Don Quixote believes is being written about him ("poetic"). These three "versions" are related to what other critics have called Cervantes' "perspectivism," that is, to his fictional exemplification of the fact that, in the words of Jorge Luis Borges, "historical truth... is not what happened; it is what we judge has happened."
- Russell, P. E. "Don Quixote as a Funny Book." *Modern Language Review* 64 (1969): 312–26. A review of pre-romantic European reactions to Don Quixote and of the attitudes of Cervantes' contemporaries toward insanity, on the one hand, and toward humor and the comic in literature, on the other. Russell concludes that given the almost unanimous reception of the novel as a *comic* masterpiece in its first 200 years of existence, and the

- prevailing attitudes toward and characterizations of the madman, it is difficult not to accept at face value Cervantes' indications that Don Quixote is indeed the butt of his humor.
- Schevill, Rodolfo. *Cervantes*. 1919. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1966. A sound, readable biography.
- Serrano Plaja, Arturo. *"Magic" Realism in Cervantes: Don Quixote as Seen Through Tom Sawyer and The Idiot*, trans. Robert S. Rudder, Berkeley: U of California P, 1970. An exploration of the commonality between Myshkin, Dostoevsky's "Idiot," who "takes everything seriously," Tom Sawyer, who lives a game, and Don Quixote, who shares something of both Myshkin's "pure soul" and Tom's role and game playing, and is, in a sense, the father of both.
- Spitzer, Leo. "Linguistic Perspectivism in the [sic] *Don Quixote*." In *Linguistics and Literary History*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1948. 41–85. Spitzer examines the great variety and instability of names in *Don Quixote*, and related phenomena, to substantiate what he sees as Cervantes' desire to highlight the different aspects under which a character may appear to others. Allied to this "perspectivism" of the novel is Cervantes' glorification of the author as a kind of God-like fixed point which comprehends of the partial perspectives of the participants in the fictional world.
- Turgenev, Ivan. See under Barbera.
- Unamuno, Miguel de. *Life of Don Quijote and Sancho according to Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra expounded with comment by Miguel de Unamuno*. Trans. Homer P. Earle. New York: Knopf, 1927. A chapter by chapter commentary in which Unamuno develops his concept of Don Quixote as the Knight of the Faith, whose stance toward the world must be emulated by those who would lead Spain to a renewal of its former greatness, coupled with a disdain for Cervantes, whom the author presents as inferior to his creation.
- Van Doren, Mark. *Don Quixote's Profession*. New York: Columbia UP, 1957. Van Doren's thesis in this series of lectures is that Don Quixote's real profession is that of actor, not knight-

errant. The author stresses, as does Serrano-Plaja (q.v.), the indications of Don Quixote's consciousness of his falsification of reality, and sees the question of what reality really is as central to the novel.

Willis, Raymond S., Jr. *The Phantom Chapters of the Quixote*. New York: Hispanic Institute, 1953. A study of the chapter divisions of *Don Quixote* which proposes that Cervantes' technique is to deliberately overflow and obliterate his own arbitrary division into chapters to highlight the flow of life which he sees as violated by any serious attempt to force it into divisible chronological segments.