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Don Quixote

CERVANTES



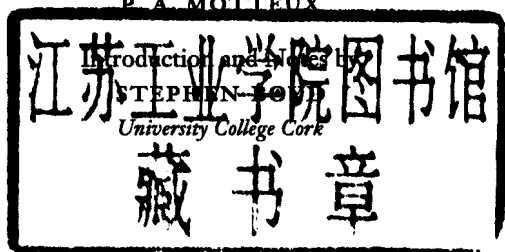
COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

DON QUIXOTE

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

Translated by

P. A. MOTTEUX



WORDSWORTH CLASSICS

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Wordsworth Classics are inexpensive editions designed to appeal to the general reader and students. We commissioned teachers and specialists to write wide ranging, jargon-free introductions and to provide notes that would assist the understanding of our readers rather than interpret the stories for them. In the same spirit, because the pleasures of reading are inseparable from the surprises, secrets and revelations that all narratives contain, we strongly advise you to enjoy this book before turning to the Introduction.

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INTRODUCTION

In order to understand and enjoy this great book more fully it helps to know something about the author and his times. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra was born in 1547 in the university town of Alcalá de Henares, close to Madrid. His father, Rodrigo de Cervantes, was a barber-surgeon (someone who combined the functions of a conventional barber with the performance of minor surgical operations). Cervantes, therefore, was born into what we might term the middle class. We know relatively little about his early years. The family seems to have moved about Spain, living at one time in Seville where Cervantes may have attended the Jesuit school, before settling in Madrid in 1566. Our first evidence for him as a writer comes in a literary compilation published in 1569 by the director of a humanist academy in Madrid, López de Hoyos. In the preface he mentions Cervantes as 'our dear and beloved pupil' and includes some poems by him dedicated to the memory of the recently deceased queen, Isabel de Valois. This is evidence that although Cervantes did not attend university (something

he seems to have been defensively sensitive about) he did receive, even for a brief period, something like a third-level education. In December of that same year we find him in Italy, a member of the household of one of the great Roman cardinals. We do not know why or how he made this move, and a 1569 warrant for the arrest of one Miguel de Cervantés, resident in Madrid, for killing a man in a sword fight may, or may not refer to the future author. In 1570 Cervantes enlisted in the Spanish army (much of Italy was then a Spanish possession) and in the following year took part in the naval Battle of Lepanto. This was a decisive defeat for the mighty navy of the expanding Ottoman Empire, but Cervantes sustained a wound which permanently paralysed his left hand. His frequent references to this event in his writings (see, for example, 'The Captive's Tale' in *Don Quixote* Part 1) clearly indicate that he was very proud of his participation in this historic battle. He spent the next four years on campaign around the Mediterranean, taking part in the Spanish expeditions to Navarino (1572) and Tunis (1573). He was returning with his brother, who was also a soldier, to Spain in 1575 when their ship, the *Sol*, was seized by Algerian corsairs, and he spent the next five years as a captive in Algiers. He was placed with the 'gentlemen' prisoners who were not forced to work, and a ransom was demanded for his return. The letters of recommendation he carried with him from Don John of Austria, illegitimate brother of the King of Spain and supreme commander of her armies, had led his captors to imagine that he was a person of some status. The ruler of Algiers was a man noted for his cruelty, but Cervantes, who was brought before him on several occasions for organising escape bids, seems to have shown the kind of courage that commanded his respect and was let off without punishment. Eventually, his family, assisted by the Trinitarian friars (whose specific apostolate this was), managed to raise enough money to pay his ransom and he returned to Spain in 1580. He managed to get some work in the diplomatic service and was sent on a mission to Oran, returning via Portugal, which had just been annexed by Spain. Thereafter, he tried unsuccessfully to establish himself as a playwright in Madrid, but had more luck with the publication in 1585 of his first piece of prose fiction, *La Galatea*, a pastoral romance of the kind much in vogue throughout Europe at that time. The previous year he had had an illegitimate daughter, Isabel, by Ana Franca de Rojas, and had married Catalina de Salazar. Unable to make a living as a writer, he eventually found employment as a commissary for the Armada which Philip II of Spain was planning to send against England. He was based in Seville, and requisitioned supplies (corn, wine and oil) from the towns and villages of Andalusia. He was excommunicated twice (for requisitioning wheat belonging to the cathedral chapter of Seville) and imprisoned at Castro del Río,

accused of having exceeded his authority. In 1590 he applied unsuccessfully for a government post in the New World. Between 1594 and 1597 he was a tax collector in Granada, and in the latter year was imprisoned for seven months in Seville for mismanagement of his accounts. He wrote some poems during this period which commented sardonically on contemporary events such as the Earl of Essex's sack of Cadiz in 1596 and the death in 1598 of Philip II. In 1604 he moved to Valladolid, then the seat of the royal court, where he was responsible for maintaining a large household consisting of his wife, his illegitimate daughter, two of his sisters and a niece. *Don Quixote*, Part I appeared in January 1605, and two years later, following the court, he moved to Madrid where he was to spend the rest of his life. These were years of intense literary activity, bearing fruit in the publication in 1613 of the *Exemplary Novels* (a collection of twelve moral tales) and, in the following year, of the long poem reviewing the state of poetry, the *Journey to Parnassus*. Part II of *Don Quixote* and a collection of *Eight Plays and Eight Interludes* (some of them based on his experiences as a captive in Algiers) appeared in 1615. Throughout this period Cervantes frequented the literary 'academies' (rather like writers' clubs) of the capital and became a member of the fashionable religious confraternity, the Slaves of the Most Blessed Sacrament, and of the Third Order of St Francis. He had become nationally and internationally respected (particularly because of the translations into English and French of *Don Quixote*), but never reaped the financial rewards that such success might have been expected to bring with it. He died on the 22 April 1616 (within days of Shakespeare) and was buried in the habit of a Franciscan tertiary. His last major work, a Christian romance entitled *The Labours of Persiles and Sigismunda* was published posthumously in 1617.

Don Quixote

Cervantes' extraordinarily varied life made him uniquely qualified to write a book like *Don Quixote*. He had been a member of the household of a great Roman cardinal, a soldier, a captive, a diplomat, a petty government official, a prisoner and a struggling writer. He was a devout Catholic, but was not unaware of clerical shortcomings, and had experienced excommunication; he was a genuine patriot, but contemptuous of nationalistic rhetoric. He was familiar with the roads of rural Andalusia, and with the worlds of the court and Madrid's literary élite. The complexities of inter-cultural and sub-cultural difference, and the mysteries of personal identity must have been familiar territory for him. It is not surprising, therefore, that his masterpiece is a 'big' book – in every sense. It runs to at least seven or eight hundred pages in most editions. A great array of characters of all classes and conditions crowds this generous canvas and many stories,

and many stories within stories are told. More importantly, perhaps, it is 'big' in the sense of intellectual and imaginative richness. This is why it has survived, and why succeeding generations of readers and commentators have been able to find evidence within it for a whole variety of conflicting interpretations. If we take the figure of Don Quixote himself, it seems that seventeenth-century readers found him simply laughable, a self-deluded fool; in the eighteenth century this perception shifts and he comes to be seen in a softer light, still as mad, but likeably so. For many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century readers, influenced by the Romantic Movement and its aftermath, he becomes a heroic figure, an incarnation of Poetic Imagination in its struggle with uncomprehending, prosaic ordinariness – of the eternal conflict between the Ideal and the Real. In the later twentieth century his madness has been interpreted in sociological and psychoanalytic terms (among others): thus, for example, it represents the crisis of his social class in the early years of the seventeenth century; or, a quest for authentic personal identity, through a movement away from the conditioned self, via madness, to a recovery of his 'true' or 'deeper' self. Cervantes has been seen as an upholder of counter-Reformation orthodoxy, a follower of Erasmus, a covert atheist and a proto-Marxist. Today's readers are the inheritors (even if unconsciously) of all these interpretative accretions.

The existence of such an extraordinary number of divergent readings is probably due to something more than the tendency of each age to interpret the artistic productions of earlier periods in the light of its own preoccupations and is, in fact, much more likely to be rooted in the very special nature of the book itself. In what follows, it is hoped to show that contradiction and paradox are the very stuff out of which it is made, and that Cervantes was a writer who was particularly fascinated by the contradictory, many-sided nature of reality.

A good starting point is to consider Cervantes' declared intention in writing *Don Quixote*. He opens and closes the book with clear statements to the effect that its purpose is 'to ridicule the pretended adventures of knights-errant, those fabulous nonsensical stories' and make them 'the object of public aversion' (p. 760). So he invents a character who attempts to turn the purely literary world of the most popular escapist fiction of the time, the so-called 'Books of Chivalry', into real-life experience. This is a world full of handsome knights in glittering armour and beautiful ladies in whose service they engage in all kinds of wondrous quests: doing battle with giants, freeing captive damsels-in-distress from the hands of evil wizards and enchanters. It is a world of impenetrable forests, secret glades and mysterious palaces, painted in jewel-rich, heraldic colours. We inherit it more-or-less directly in films such as *Excalibur*, certain kinds of 'medieval' fantasy literature, and as part of the eclectic mix of the

popular television series *Xena, Warrior Princess*. Indeed, it would seem that its appeal is scarcely less strong now than in Cervantes' time. This rarefied world is obviously quite remote from that of everyday reality, and to underline the fact (the principal ground of Cervantes' criticism of the genre) he makes his pseudo-knight an elderly, provincial nobody – absurdly tall, dry-skinned and sunken-cheeked. Obsessive reading of chivalric literature and lack of sleep have undermined his reason to the point where he can no longer distinguish between fantasy and reality. It is his vocation, he decides, to restore the lost profession of knight-errantry to its former glory, so he improvises a suit of armour from pieces of cardboard reinforced with iron bars, lays hold of a few rusty weapons hanging in his hallway and sneaks off early one morning on his decrepit nag (now given the high-sounding, and ridiculous, name of Rocinante) to right wrongs, succour the needy and win eternal renown for himself. A local peasant girl, whom he has ogled a few times but never spoken to, becomes (unknown to herself) the peerless 'lady of his thoughts', to whom he will dedicate all his exploits – Dulcinea del Toboso. A neighbour, the fat peasant Sancho Pança, is bamboozled into becoming his squire with the promise of one day becoming the governor of an island or, at the very least, a duke. And so, Don Quixote, the personage and the book, come into being. His first adventure is, in a sense, typical of those throughout the book. He approaches prostitutes lounging at the door of an inn and addresses them in ceremonious, archaic Spanish, as if they were ladies of the court. They merely laugh at the clanking phantasm who stands before them. He keeps a 'vigil of arms' by the cistern in the inn-yard and attacks a carrier who removes what he sees as some rusty junk (Don Quixote's sword and shield) from the rim in order to draw water for his mules. Eventually, the innkeeper (or lord of the castle in Don Quixote's eyes) decides to humour his strange guest by knighting him in the stables, all the while intoning 'Latin' prayers from his Book of Investiture (in reality, his account book).

The collision of these opposite worlds is obviously funny, and it might appear that Cervantes, having found a 'winning formula', simply rings the changes on it throughout his story. If that were so, to read (or even to have heard of) the famous 'tilting at windmills' episode would be to 'know' the essence of *Don Quixote*. But it is unlikely that even the most ingenious variations on this 'formula' would have sufficed to hold the attention of readers over so many pages, or generate so much interest over so many centuries. In fact, even in this first adventure at the inn there are indications that Cervantes had other things in mind besides simple parody. There is more involved than the pretensions of chivalresque fantasy being punctured by the stubborn ordinariness of 'reality'. In this case, the 'reality' (a filthy inn owned by a money-grabbing ex-thug and frequented by prostitutes) is as sordid and debased

as Don Quixote's imaginary world (mediated through his madness) is precious and over-refined. It is as if the two extremes are allowed to interrogate each other, and both are found wanting. The prostitutes are right to laugh at Don Quixote in one sense, but in another, their laughter is ugly and offensive. Even so (and this is typical of the constantly shifting perspectives of this text), the innkeeper and the prostitutes show themselves capable of understanding the world of chivalresque romance, even if only by deciding to act out some of its conventions in order to humour the strange guest and so get rid of him more quickly. Furthermore, we are informed that the innkeeper, in his youth, had frequented all the places in the country associated with 'organised crime'. The fact that he has been in *all* these places suggests that he may not have been a 'serious' criminal, but the kind of young man seeking freedom and adventure on the margins of society who is to be found elsewhere in Cervantes' fiction (see, for example, 'The Illustrious Kitchen-Maid', one of the *Exemplary Novels* where two such young men feature prominently). It should be remembered that Spain had pioneered a kind of 'anti-chivalresque' fiction in the form of the picaresque novel that dealt with the lives of delinquents. Although intended to be morally improving (examples of how not to live), readers (including, perhaps, the innkeeper as a young man) may well have found a kind of 'romance' in the glimpses of a normally forbidden world that this fiction afforded. The current vogue for criminal autobiography suggests that little has changed in this respect.

Don Quixote's first adventure, then, is based on an apparently clear delineation between the real world and the world of literary fantasy, but at another less obvious and more interesting level, it reveals Cervantes' acute awareness that the world of the imagination and the 'real' world interpenetrate each other in such a subtle way that it is actually extremely difficult to distinguish between them. He seems to have been fascinated by the way in which not only different people, but even the same person, can inhabit a variety of sometimes antithetical inner and outer worlds. *Don Quixote* is populated with many characters besides the protagonist who, to different degrees, and with more or less self-awareness, imitate literary (and other) models of living. Thus, the university graduate, Chrysostom (Part I, Book II, Chapters 4-6), takes to leading the life of the enamoured shepherds of pastoral romance, as do the group of young aristocrats whom Don Quixote encounters towards the end of his career (Part II, Chapter 58). The condemned criminal Gines de Passamonte (Part I, Book III, Chapter 8) is in the process of writing his autobiography which he is confident will outshine the famous fictional autobiography of *Lazarillo de Tormes* (the first picaresque novel, published in 1554) because it is 'true every word, and no invented stories can compare with it for variety of tricks and accidents' (p. 136). When

asked by Don Quixote if it is finished yet, his indignant reply: 'How the devil can it be finished and I yet living?' is yet another humorous pointer in the direction of the 'great theme' of the whole book: the endlessly-various, multi-layered interaction of literature and life, of writing, reading and behaving; the fact that everyone not only lives his or her life, but also invents it. It can be said, then, that every character in the book is in some degree 'quixotic'; and not only the characters in the book but also, implicitly, the reader and the author himself. Cervantes sets up a sophisticated 'game of mirrors' whose effect and purpose may be compared to those of Zen Buddhist *koans*, the riddles designed to simultaneously disorientate and enlighten the seeker after wisdom. This process begins with the first words of the Prologue (not directly translated here by Motteux): '*Desocupado lector . . .*' ('Idle reader...'). This is, at first glance, an innocuous, conventional formula, but read retrospectively in the context of the whole book, it is laden with irony. After all, it is ultimately because Don Quixote is idle and bored with the humdrum routine of his life that he becomes an over zealous reader of fiction. The implied question is: 'Why spend time out of *your* life reading this stuff . . . ?' 'Isn't this a kind of madness . . . ?' The preface itself, in which Cervantes depicts himself in the act of thinking about writing the preface that the reader is *now* reading, is an excellent example of the dynamic way in which he plunges the reader into an *experience* of the strangeness of these activities that we take so much for granted. His mysterious claim, also in the preface, that he is not the 'father', but the 'stepfather' (p. 3) of *Don Quixote* prepares the way for the elaborate, consciously 'see-through' fiction, maintained from Part I, Book II, Chapter I onwards, that he is merely the editor of a translation of a 'true history' of the life of Don Quixote written in Arabic by the Moorish author Cid Hamet Benengeli. In fact, the device of the surrogate author allows Cervantes to 'watch' himself writing, as it were, and play semi-serious games with the then much-debated Aristotelian distinction between historical and poetic (i.e. 'fictional') truth. Typically, he both affirms this distinction (history deals with particular truths; fiction with universal truth) and blurs it, and the fact that in this period the Spanish word *historia* meant both 'history' and 'story' is of considerable help.

The 'game-of-mirrors' reaches its climax in Part II. In the second chapter Don Quixote becomes aware of the (historically 'real') existence of *Don Quixote* Part I. He and Sancho discuss the 'truth' of Cid Hamet Benengeli's account of their adventures (' . . . he [Don Quixote] relapsed into melancholic doubts and anxieties, when he considered that the author must be a Moor, a nation from whom no truth could be expected'). The account they are given of the public reaction to their adventures, probably reflects the historical reality quite accurately ('no sooner has one laid it down, but another takes it up' [p. 383]). In fact, the

existence of Part I systematically conditions Part II, since almost all the people Don Quixote encounters from then on have read Part I. Don Quixote no longer imposes his fantasy world on others; rather, since he is a familiar 'literary' figure, they create 'quixotic' adventures for him. The lengthy episode of Don Quixote's stay at the palace of the Duke and Duchess (both avid readers of *Don Quixote* I) at the heart of Part II is the most sustained incidence of this. Disgusted by what he sees as their callous irresponsibility in humouring a madman, their private chaplain accuses them of being 'as mad as these sinful wretches'. But Part II is also partly conditioned by another book, whose publication posed a threat to Cervantes, a threat that, in the end, he was able to turn to his advantage in virtuoso fashion. In 1614, before Cervantes had finished writing his own Part II, a spurious sequel to *Don Quixote* I by one Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda (very probably a pseudonym) was published in Tarragona. The only clue he gave to his identity (which has never been conclusively established) is that he was born in the town of Tordesillas. This is the person who is the object of Cervantes' politely vitriolic irony in the 'The Author's Preface' to his authentic Part II. The critical consensus is that Avellaneda's version is very obviously the work of a much inferior writer who does precisely what Cervantes does not: he takes the 'quixotic formula' and works it to death. It is clear that Cervantes knew that he had nothing to fear from such a second-rate 'rival'. Nevertheless, he was angered by Avellaneda's effrontery in stealing his idea, and stung by some of the personal insults flung at him by this 'mighty man' (p. 365). He took his revenge, and discredited the apocryphal sequel in a typically ingenious, 'Cervantine' way. Taking a hint from the mention at the end of Part I of a 'tradition' that after his third sally (p. 358) Don Quixote participated in 'certain famous tilts and tournaments made in the city of Saragossa', Avellaneda has his character spend some considerable time there. Throughout most of the authentic Part II, Don Quixote does indeed make his way to Saragossa, but when Cervantes found out about the rival publication, he decided to undermine its credibility by quite deliberately making his Don Quixote *not* go there, but head for Barcelona instead. In Chapter 59 Don Quixote meets a gentleman who has just been reading Avellaneda's *Don Quixote*. Don Jeronimo informs him that he found this Part II so inferior to the original Part I that he was already certain that it was spurious. Now, on meeting Don Quixote and Sancho personally, he is utterly convinced; they are nothing like the crude caricatures he has just been reading about. On hearing that the episode of the tournament at Saragossa is particularly badly written ('low in style and expression, and miserably poor in devices' [p. 687]), Don Quixote declares that, "For that reason . . . I will not set a foot in Saragossa and so the world shall see what a notorious lie this new historian is guilty of, and all mankind shall perceive I am not the Don

Quixote he speaks of" (p. 687). It would be hard to imagine a more discreetly intelligent way of turning the tables on a rival.

But *Don Quixote* is neither 'just' a book about books, nor is it 'just' a funny book. It is a book which takes a serious look at life through the medium of humour. It explores some fascinating moral territory, and implicates the reader in so doing. One way of approaching this is to consider Don Quixote's 'madness'. Mention has been made of the fact that the original readers of the book appear to have found him a purely ludicrous figure, whereas several centuries later, under the influence of Romanticism, the opposite view prevailed, and his madness was seen as noble and even tragic. Are these contradictory responses conditioned by 'history', or might there be a basis for both in the text itself? Obviously this question is much more relevant in the case of the 'Romantic interpretation' since one would imagine that the reactions of Cervantes' contemporaries might be more naturally attuned to his 'intentions'. If we look at the text itself we see a variety of 'internal' responses to Don Quixote. These range from the initial derision of the prostitutes in Part I, Chapters 2-3, through mildly benevolent interest, to pity (as in the case of the canon of Toledo [Part I, Chapter 22, p. 339]). In fact, in keeping with the kind of fidelity to life's ambiguities typical of the whole work, many individual characters exhibit a range of reactions. However, certain overall patterns are clearly discernable. One is amazement that someone who otherwise displays 'an excellent judgement only raved when the discourse fell upon knight-errantry' (p. 340). In other words: puzzlement at Don Quixote's strange blend of intelligence and foolishness. Another is the fact that this kind of reaction is much more common in Part II than in Part I. One of the reasons is that in Part II Don Quixote's character is developed in a more rounded, three-dimensional way. He is much less confident now of his 'mission', more inclined to melancholy introspection and more defensively aware of being thought mad. He is less of a caricature, and more of a distressed human being. Curiously, this gain in 'seriousness' makes him more susceptible to moral judgement, both by the reader and the author. At the end of the 'Adventure of the Enchanted Park' (Chapter 29) we read the surprisingly condemnatory words: 'Don Quixote and Sancho returned to their beasts like a couple of senseless animals . . .' (p. 521). Actually, this represents a climactic point in the development of an important thematic strand running throughout Part II: the folly of human beings set against the wisdom of animals. Yet, a careful reading of Part I reveals that, here too, Don Quixote is not just the helpless victim of mental derangement, but someone who to some extent *chooses* to be 'mad' and is therefore morally responsible for his actions. The subtle indications of this in the initial chapters might easily be passed over, but they are surely there. Firstly, it is remarkable that having subjected his first improvised helmet to an unsuccessful trial with a blow

of his sword, he makes an improved model, but this time 'without any experiment, he *resolved* it should pass to all intents and purposes for a full and sufficient helmet' (Chapter 1, p. 11). The parody of legal terminology only serves to underline the determinedly *willed* nature of this piece of self-deception. Secondly, his suppressed awareness of the improbability of his whole enterprise is allowed to transpire in the beautifully handled description of his first sally as a 'knight-errant':

So, one morning before day, in the greatest heat of July, *without acquainting anyone with his design, with all the secrecy imaginable*, he armed himself *cap-à-pie*, laced on his ill-contrived helmet, braced on his target, grasped his lance, mounted Rozinante, and *at the private door* of his back-yard sallied out into the fields, *wonderfully pleased to see with how much ease he had succeeded in the beginning of his enterprise.*

[Chapter 2, p. 13 (italics mine)]

Don Quixote's first adventure (at the inn where he is 'knighted') is a highly amusing *jeu d'esprit*. Moral judgements seem out-of-place here. Yet, very quickly, the mood changes, and in his next adventure we get the first, momentary, glimpse of an uglier side to his 'madness'. Here, he intervenes to 'rescue' a young shepherd-boy from a beating at the hands of his master. But as soon as he leaves, elated by this first success, we learn that the farmer 'caught the youngster by the arm and tied him again to the tree; where he handled him so unmercifully, that scarce any signs of life were left in him . . . in short, he crept off sobbing and weeping while his master stayed behind laughing'. The moral judgement implicit in the sentence which immediately follows is clear enough: 'And in this manner was the wrong redressed by the valorous Don Quixote de la Mancha' (Chapter 4, p. 25).

Don Quixote's madness, then, is neither a static, nor a purely humorous phenomenon, but something which changes in the course of the story, and is viewed from a variety of perspectives. In Part II, he is shown slowly and almost imperceptibly emerging into sanity, as the reality he has denied and suppressed begins to reinvade his mind. The episode of his descent into the Cave of Montesinos (Part II, Chapters 22-3), where he 'sees' some of the ideally young and beautiful protagonists of Carolingian romance now unaccountably subject to the ravages of time ('[Belerma] was somewhat beetle-browed, her nose was flattish, her mouth wide, but her lips red; her teeth, which she sometimes discovered, seemed to be thin and snaggy, but indeed as white as blanched almonds' [p. 486]) and where Dulcinea sends to him for a loan of 'six *reals*' to pay for a 'new fustian petticoat' (p. 489) provides an intriguing insight into the ongoing process of recuperation taking place in his unconscious mind. Interestingly, his final, total recovery in the last chapter comes when he emerges from a six-hour sleep 'which the maid and niece were

afraid had been his last' (p. 755). It is as though he must descend into the very depths of himself in order to resurface in possession of his true identity. In fact, these incidents form part of a whole pattern of ascents and descents running throughout Part II. For example, just after the 'Adventure of the Enchanted Park' (Chapter 29) which ends with the words (quoted earlier): 'Don Quixote and Sancho returned to their beasts like a couple of senseless animals' (p. 521), the first paragraph of the next chapter describes Don Quixote as '*buried* in his amorous thoughts, and Sancho in those of his preferment' (p. 521), and reveals that '[Sancho] plainly perceived that all, or most, of his master's actions tended only to folly: therefore he but waited an opportunity to give him the slip and go home, without coming to any further reckoning, or taking a formal leave' (p. 522). This moment marks a particularly low point in their career and in their relationship with each other. But it is precisely at this point, as the text explicitly says, that a complete reversal of fortune comes: 'But fortune provided for him [Sancho] much better than he expected' (p. 522). It is then that they meet the Duke and Duchess and for the first time stay in a real palace. For the first time, as it is made to seem to him, Don Quixote is completely accepted as a real knight-errant, and Sancho, at last, achieves his ambition to become the governor of an island. Even so, one becomes increasingly melancholy and the other, overwhelmed by the responsibilities of the office, abandons his governorship, and on the way back to the ducal palace, falls into a very deep hole in the ground where he has time to reflect on the vanity of his ambitions before eventually being rescued. Educated readers of Cervantes' time would have been very conscious of the complementary classical and scriptural archetypes underpinning these incidents: the *katabasis*, or descent into the Underworld, which is a feature of classical epic; and the Christian tradition of the 'Harrowing of Hell' (Christ's descent into hell, before his Resurrection). Obviously, Cervantes intended these references to be recognised and taken into account. But these moral and spiritual levels of meaning are not left 'undisturbed' by the constant play of irony which persists to the end. Sancho's realisation of the folly of ambition, for example, may well be perfectly 'real' for him, but it is couched in such a torrent of sententious clichés that it sounds very like a parody of what an over-earnest, 'moral' reader might like to find:

'Woe's me,' cried Sancho, 'what sudden and unthought-of mischances every foot befall us poor wretches that live in this miserable world! Who would have thought that he, who but yesterday found himself seated in the throne of an island governor, and had servants and vassals at his back, should today find himself buried in a pit.'

[p. 660]

Similarly, Don Quixote's recovery of his true identity as Alonso Quixano may indeed be experienced by him as a mysterious act of divine grace, but those around his death-bed seem to be unaware of this. For their own reasons (they cannot face the fact that he is dying; they cannot cope with this 'new' self) they now want him to go on being Don Quixote. They are stricken with grief, yet 'after all, the niece continued to eat, the housekeeper drank, and washed down sorrow; and Sancho Pança made much of himself: for there is a strange charm in the thoughts of a good legacy, or the hopes of an estate, which wondrously removes, or at least alleviates, the sorrow that men would otherwise feel for the death of friends' (p. 758).

In conclusion, although 'Romantic' critics did indeed overreact to certain aspects of *Don Quixote* and, in the interests of recreating its protagonist in their own image, wilfully ignore dimensions that are absolutely central (especially its humour), it nevertheless seems clear that it would be equally erroneous to see it as only a 'funny' book. It is surely symptomatic, and in that sense 'right', that this text should have generated so many conflicting interpretations. After all, this is exactly what its author allows for in the advice given to himself in the opening 'Preface to the Reader': '... let your diverting stories be expressed in diverting terms, to kindle mirth in the melancholic, and heighten it in the gay: let mirth and humour be your superficial design, though laid on solid foundation, to challenge attention from the ignorant, and admiration from the judicious; to secure your work from the contempt of the graver sort, and deserve the praises of men of sense' (p. 7). *Don Quixote* is a 'seriously funny' book, extremely ambitious in its attempt to circumnavigate all three hundred and sixty degrees of reality, and humble in its inbuilt recognition that this is impossible. It was written in a period of immense cultural upheaval and uncertainty, and to read it as it asks to be read is to come into contact with a mind whose negotiation of diversity and contradiction, of the 'lifestyle supermarket', is exemplary in its humour and wisdom.

The Translation

The present translation is that by Peter Motteux. It was originally published in 1700 and 1712, and is the third produced in English after those of T. Shelton (1612-20) and J. Philips (1687). It is noted for its liveliness and its fidelity to the spirit (not always the letter) of Cervantes' Spanish. Its relative proximity in time to the original may be partially accountable for its possession of a 'savour' that most later versions lack.

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