

El Quijote

By Santiago García

Directed by Jorge Alí Triana



Study Guide

by Alberto S. Galindo

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Ricardo Barber and Silvia Sierra in the opening scene of "El Quijote"

*The year 1605 marked the publication of *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha* (The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote of La Mancha), a text that some critics call the first modern novel in literary history.*

I. Profile: Miguel de Cervantes



*Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra
Born in Alcalá, Spain in 1547*

In 1547, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra was born in the town of Alcalá de Henares, northeast of Madrid, Spain. Twenty years later, by 1567, Cervantes published his first poem in honor of the second daughter of King Philip II. Cervantes started a career as a soldier in 1570, which took him to Italy. One year later, an alliance of Christian factions in Europe known as the Holy League fought the Ottomans on a naval battle in Lepanto, a town on the Corinthian Gulf, off present-day Greece. During this battle, Cervantes was shot in his left hand, was unable to properly use it again and became known as “El Manco de Lepanto,” the Man Maimed at Lepanto. After continued participation in the military, Cervantes decided to return to Spain, but he was captured by Muslim pirates on his way back. Both his brother and he were taken to Algiers as slaves by the Turks. He was held captive for five years until he was ransomed by a group of Trinitarian friars. After returning to Madrid, he married Catalina de Salazar y Palacios in 1584.

His literary career continued with the writing in 1581 of the plays *El trato de Argel* (The Ways of Algiers) and *El cerco de Numancia* (The Siege of Numancia). In 1585, Cervantes’s first novel, *La Galatea*, was published to minimal reaction from the literary critics and scholars. Cervantes worked for the Spanish Invincible Armada throughout this time until the fleet’s famous defeat by England in 1587. At that time, Cervantes became a tax collector and was imprisoned in 1597 for irregular transactions.

The year 1605 marked the publication of *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha* (The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote of La Mancha), a text that some critics call the first modern novel in literary history. This claim about the first modern novel is based on studies that present *Don Quixote* as a new combination and reinterpretation of past literary genres such as pastoral texts along with ones of chivalry and the picaresque. Cervantes also managed to incorporate texts with characters and plot lines involving both Christian and Muslim religions.

The immediate success of *Don Quixote* was mostly in terms of publication numbers--with sixteen editions in Cervantes’s lifetime--as excessive pirate copies did not pay royalties to Cervantes. Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda took advantage of this literary achievement and wrote a fictitious second volume that mocks Cervantes and his work. And therefore Cervantes published the second volume to *Don Quixote* in 1615. The first English translation of both volumes of *Don Quixote* was published in 1612 and 1620, respectively, with numerous translations into other languages.

His *Novelas ejemplares* (Exemplary Stories) were printed in 1613 between the two volumes of *Don Quixote*. His death coincided with the death of William Shakespeare, both in 1616.



Ricardo Barber as Don Quixote

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II. Context: Renaissance and the Baroque

The Spanish Golden Age is comprised by the late years of the 16th Century Renaissance and the Baroque of most of the 17th Century. Many historians and literary scholars go further back in history to consider 1492 as a crucial date to the beginnings of this Golden Age due to the reorganization of the Spanish Catholic Empire by retaking political power from Muslims and the expulsion of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula. 1492 was also marked by the important publication of the Gramática castellana, the first grammar of the Spanish language. This text became crucial to the establishment of Spanish--then known as Castilian--as the main language of the empire. Main literary works began to be written in this language.



During the Baroque, there was a constant questioning of the differences between appearances and what seemed to be real. Cervantes took advantage of this situation by presenting windmills believed to be giants.

The Renaissance is a historical and cultural period focused in the harmony of the senses and admiration of the classical antiquity of Greece and Rome. The Renaissance leads into the Baroque, a period characterized by intensifying the experiences of the senses, emotions and the intellect. Don Quixote was a text produced during the Renaissance, but it was already showing some of the tendencies that would later become the Baroque. During the Baroque, there was a constant questioning of the differences between appearances and what seemed to be real. Cervantes took advantage of this situation by presenting in Don Quixote, for example, men dressed as women, or windmills believed to be giants. This overwhelming and dynamic stimulation was reflected on a style that sought to focus on stark contrasts and exaggeration in style. Unlike the pessimism that characterizes the Baroque, Cervantes held onto the optimistic and utopian ideals of the Renaissance by suggest that dialogue and compromise are crucial to any culture. As part of this optimism, instead of merely reflecting the religious intolerance of Counter Reformation of the Catholic Church, Cervantes engaged with other possibilities for interaction between religions.

Don Quixote is therefore a combination and confrontation of the ideals of the Renaissance and the doubts and excitement of the Baroque. On one hand, the novel introduces many levels of humor and satire--by means of Don Quijote's adventures and perhaps ridiculous situations--with the objective

of dealing with the constant pessimism around the characters. Such idealism is crucial to the Renaissance. On the other hand, the novel also presents the keen interest of the Baroque in reality itself and the hardships of daily life. Thus, the novel is constantly negotiating the two periods and two ways of creating art.

The Spanish Golden Age produced many influential literary texts in a variation of genres.

Amongst the notable writers of this period is Luis de Góngora (1561-1627), who focused on the verse form and, especially the art of constructing metaphors. Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645) wrote in both verse and prose to discuss spiritual values and the goal of a spiritual life. Theater reached its pinnacle at the time in the works of Lope de Vega (1562-1635) and Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681). Lope de Vega, the most prolific Spanish writer, wrote many plays for three major audiences grouped by the Catholic Church, the monarchy, or the rest of the population. His plays dealt with issues of the historical and epic past, religion, or the honor of the people. Calderón's work presents an elaborate language rich in metaphors and concepts that reflected the creative environment of the Baroque.

At the time, Lope de Vega's theater was geared towards a more general public, while Calderón's was acclaimed in a more aristocratic setting.

The cultural production of art and literature during the late Renaissance and the Baroque fostered a creative environment that nurtured the development of these writers and their texts. Through the juxtaposition and interaction of these two historical and literary periods, Cervantes was able to combine a plethora of ideas with many literary influences of his time. Thus, with these literary innovations, Cervantes created a major text, now described as a novel, which introduced ground-breaking techniques in a new literary form.

III. Literary Studies on Don Quixote and Its Cultural Value

The context of Cervantes's literary career is framed initially by two groundbreaking texts, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, a picaresque novel from 1554, and *Historia del Abencerraje y de la Hermosa Jarifa* (Story of the Abencerraje and the Beautiful Jarifa), a Moorish text from 1561. The picaresque novel is traditionally centered on a character of limited resources that depends on others to subsist. This literary genre uses satirical humor and moralizing tales to present the unfortunate circumstances faced by the character and how these events nurture a pessimist environment. These elements are central to Cervantes as they become the medium through which Don Quixote and other characters learn and inform their points of view. Another literary form that is central to Cervantes is the chivalric romance, which traditionally narrates a story involving knights and their adventures in one of three major geographic zones--England, France, and Rome--. The plots of these romances would usually involve fights in a world of fantasy and a female character as the reward. This influence is present in *Don Quixote* in terms of the plot lines, but also in its language. Don Quixote speaks in an antiquated language that he has learned through chivalry books. On the other hand, Sancho constantly uses popular sayings, to Don Quixote's dislike.

The Russian philosopher and scholar Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) sees *Don Quixote* as a radical shift in the production of literature. Rather than presenting one particular view of the world, Cervantes is credited for managing multiple characters with a variety of perspectives. Bakhtin also observes that *Don Quixote* successfully brings together different ways of articulating knowledge, incorporating chivalry romances, theater, and questions about individuals and society, among many others.

The research of Diana de Armas Wilson in *Cervantes, the Novel, and the New World* studies the origins of the novel and hypothesizes that Cervantes's text is highly influenced by the European presence in the New World and the reactions in the Americas to these different imperialist enterprises. Wilson establishes that Cervantes was not only influenced by the historical events and traditions in Spain, but that his country was also affected by texts written in the Americas. Wilson's ideas are vital to understanding the relationship between culture and politics, not only at that particular historical moment, but also, how *Don Quixote* is understood in the modern world.

Barbara Fuchs focuses on the negotiations in *Don Quixote* between issues of gender, religion, ethnicity, and national identity. In her book, *Passing*

for Spain, Fuchs discusses the interactions between Christianity and Islam in order to present that the Cervantes's Spain was not homogenous in any political, social or religious terms. In terms of religion, the people of Spain had different systems of beliefs such as Catholicism, Judaism and Islamism. The country was in constant negotiations of these religions and *Don Quixote* clearly shows some of the debate on religion. Consider, for example, how Cervantes introduces the character of Cide Hamete Benengeli, a Moor writer, as the actual writer of the text. Therefore, *Don Quixote* is a text that deals with part of the historical complexity of its time.



Cervantes is credited for managing multiple characters with a variety of perspectives.

Current discussions on religious relations can look back at *Don Quijote* and its creative ways of negotiating different perspectives and beliefs. *Don Quijote* also reflects on politics and the distribution of power. Consider, for example, Sancho's effective government in the isle and the motives behind his resignation. In its scope, *Don Quixote* covers many aspects of difference between people, and thus demonstrates a high degree of relevance in contemporary culture.

The influence of Don Quixote was most recently seen in 2005, with a major celebration of the 400 years since its publication. Amongst the festive events, a new edition of the text was published and 1 million copies of the text were distributed for free in Venezuela.



"Les Aventures de Don Quichotte de la Manche," Lucien Nonguet and Ferdinand Zecca in 1903

IV. Cultural Reinterpretations of Don Quixote

There have been many film adaptations of Don Quixote. Among them, a silent film, "Les Aventures de Don Quichotte de la Manche," was made by French directors Lucien Nonguet and Ferdinand Zecca in 1903, showing the impact of Cervantes's groundbreaking text. Many other film adaptations have followed, notably including the 1947 film, "Don Quijote de la Mancha," by Spanish director Rafael Gil. In 1965, a Broadway musical based on Don Quixote was put on the stage under the title "Man of La Mancha." Director Arthur Hiller made a film version of this stage musical in 1972 with film stars Peter O'Toole and Sophia Loren.

Orson Welles started a film version of Don Quixote in 1955, and although he never finished the project, Spanish director Jesús "Jess" Franco put together some of the available footage and released it in 1992. In 2002, film directors Keith Fulton and

Louis Pepe presented the documentary "Lost in La Mancha" based on Terry Gilliam's failed attempt to film "The Man Who Killed Don Quixote" during the year 2000.

The novel has also been reinterpreted in dance by choreographer George Balanchine. A ballet with music by Ludwig Minkus was made into a well-known film (1973) starring Robert Helpmann and Rudolf Nureyev.

In literature, Cervantes's influence has been carefully studied in major texts such as Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857), amongst others. Jorge Luis Borges wrote a short text that compares Cervantes's version of Don Quixote with a new modern version by a fictional writer in his "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote" ("Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote").

V. El Quijote at Repertorio Español



Jorge Alí Triana - Director

Cervantes's Don Quixote was adapted for the stage by Santiago García and directed by Jorge Alí Triana. This stage representation focuses on twelve of Don Quijote's adventures with Sancho Panza. It is important to note that a stage adaptation can only incorporate certain aspects of a plot due to the limitations set by time

and space. The objective of the adaptation is to enhance the reading of Don Quixote by providing a visual and collective experience related to the written text. Please note that the following synopsis focuses on the theatrical representation at Repertorio Español, notably the thread of adventures of Don Quixote and Sancho on their way to achieving their goals and ideals. This theatrical representation also presents many of the characteristics that make Don Quixote a relevant text in contemporary culture.

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VI. Adaptation and Synopsis

This adaptation of Don Quixote was written by Santiago García and re-titled “El Quijote” for the production directed by Jorge Alí Triana for Repertorio Español. The English translation of the play was done by Heather L. McKay.

The novel introduces a character known as Alonso Quijano, who has lost his sanity due to the many chivalry books he has read. His reality has collapsed with the fictional world in the books and he renames himself Don Quijote de la Mancha in order to defend and protect unfortunate people. He also renames his dream woman, from Aldonza Lorenzo to Dulcinea del Toboso, and then begins his adventures as a new-born knight.

The stage adaptation begins after such transformation has taken place. Don Quixote and his squire, Sancho Panza, encounter a boat. Don Quixote explains to Sancho that he believes that someone in the boat needs his help, while Sancho points out that he does not see anyone in peril, but instead just some fishermen. They board the boat and head towards some waterwheels or flour mills that Don Quixote perceives as castles. As they approach the waterwheels on the boat, the boat gets destroyed, and the fishermen ask Don Quixote and Sancho to pay for the damages to the boat. It is immediately established that there are discrepancies between Don Quixote and Sancho’s perceptions of their surroundings. For the first time, the audience experiences the questioning of reality and the surrounding environment, a key element of the Baroque period.

Amongst their next adventures, Don Quixote tries to confront a lion in a cage, but as it turns out, the lion is very passive and does not attack him. Don Quixote then believes that he has triumphed over the lion. Immediately after, they found themselves in a place that Don Quixote recognizes as the town of Toboso, where his dream woman, Dulcinea, supposedly lives. He sees three local women and believes that one of them is Dulcinea disguised as an ugly woman. In response, the women attack Sancho and Don Quixote, and leave. The introduction of Dulcinea at this moment highlights the influence of chivalry romances in Cervantes’s work, presenting a female character that will be the reward of the knight’s hard work.

Next, a duke and duchess see Don Quixote along with Sancho and ask them if they are the literary characters in two novels that they have been reading with the same title of The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha. The duchess discusses the two versions of the same novel, one written by Cervantes and the other one by someone named Avellaneda. Don Quixote explains that the real novel was written by Cide Hamete Benengeli, a Moor writer, adding to confusion between a work of

literature and characters that have come to life. At this moment, the text subtly makes reference to the religious climate of the time in Spain, during major efforts by the Catholic Church to establish its power and presence in the country and its frequent interaction with different religions. The characters are then confronted by a cleric that warns the duke and duchess of Don Quixote’s insanity. In a turn of events, the duke begins to take part in Don Quixote’s world and grants Sancho the power to govern an isle of his own.



Don Quixote & Sancho with the Duke & Duchess.

Afterwards, Don Quixote and Sancho meet Merlin, the Prince of Magic, claiming that he has met Dulcinea, Don Quixote’s love. Dulcinea is under a magic spell that changed her physical appearance. Merlin explains that the spell can be undone only by Sancho giving himself 3,300 whiplashes, a difficult task that he begins, but does not finish. Once again, the question of how to distinguish between reality and appearance is presented to the audience.

Don Quixote then advises Sancho on how to be a proper governor of the isle, discussing personal grooming and the appropriate language that a governor should use. Sancho begins to doubt whether he is suitable for this position and Don Quixote ends up supporting Sancho’s new position. This dialogue is crucial to the text because Don Quixote is able to present many ideas on the foundation of a good, honest and trustworthy government. Sancho begins to govern the isle successfully, solving many of the problems encountered by its inhabitants. Suddenly, the isle is attacked by enemies, but the local townspeople are able to defend the isle. Sancho explains that he does not want to be a governor anymore for two main reasons, because it involves too many responsibilities and also--with a touch of humor--because he has not eaten.

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Sancho and Don Quixote meet again and continue onto their adventures. They run into a group of actors that perform the play “Las cortes de la muerte” [“The Parliament of Death”]. The actors are quite furious because they are owed money by their director, and they take it out by spooking Rocinante, Don Quixote’s horse, and by taking Sancho’s donkey. They are able to rescue the donkey by talking to the actors before they leave.

Sancho brings up the question of his salary to Don Quixote. After discussing the various amounts that Sancho claims he is owed, Don Quixote tells him to take all the money that is left. Sancho apologizes and explains that he only wants to work with his master. Don Quixote suggests that Sancho should give himself some more whiplashes as part of his apology. Sancho uses the whip on a tree instead of his own body and tells Don Quixote that he has completed the 3,300 lashes required to break the spell that has been cast unto Dulcinea.

Don Quixote and Sancho are encountered by the Princess Micomicona, whose power in the kingdom of Micomicon in Ethiopia has been usurped. The Princess and her companions present a play to Don Quixote and Sancho in order to explain the history of her kingdom. Her father, the king, has been threatened by a giant by the name of Pandofilando of the Glare and has asked to marry the Princess. According to the king, Don Quixote is the only one that can beat the giant and save the Princess from this marriage. Don Quixote suddenly believes that the puppet used onstage to play the giant is the real giant and proceeds to attack it. The Princess tries to calm down Don Quixote by giving him a potion. He drinks it and quickly falls asleep.

The Princess and her accompanying players give Don Quixote to the Curate and the Barber, who will cage him in order to take him back to La Mancha. On the road, they meet with a procession that carries a statue of Our Lady of Sorrows. Don Quixote sees a real woman instead of the statue, decides to save her, and then he is confronted by one of the penitents. This is the last episode in which Don Quixote will see reality in a different way. Don Quixote has indeed failed in his adventures, but continues to face life with optimism and idealism, main elements of the Renaissance. After being hit on the shoulder by the penitent, Don Quixote decides that it is better to sit in the cage and be protected from other injuries. He is approached by some of the women in the procession and he believes that they mourn his life. At the end, they proceed on their way to La Mancha, not surrendering to pessimism, but hoping for a better life.



Sancho’s Government of the Island.

VII. Study Questions

- 1- How does Don Quijote behave? How do other characters react to his behavior?
- 2- What other versions of Don Quixote are mentioned? What problems can arise from the confusion of multiple versions of the novel?
- 3- What advice does Don Quixote give to Sancho about governing the isle? How would you rate Sancho's government? Explain why.
- 4- Why does Sancho decide to keep working for Don Quixote after all the inconveniences he has endured? What does these actions tells us about Sancho?
- 5- How does Don Quixote react to the theatrical staging of the story of the Princess?
- 6- What are the differences between reality and imagination for Don Quixote?
- 7- What is Sancho trying to say when he uses the following sayings?
 - a. "He who sees a mote in another's eye, can't see a beam in his own."
 - b. "When I go, let it be on a full belly."
 - c. "He who errs and amends, himself to heaven commends."
- 8- Why are the Barber and the Curate looking for Don Quixote? What do these two characters seek to accomplish?
- 9- How does the play end? Why does Don Quixote get back in the cage?
- 10- What is your favorite of Don Quixote's adventures? Explain why.



Don Quixote advises Sancho on how to govern his island.



Don Quixote fighting against the “demons”.

VIII. Discussion and Possible Research

Topics in Don Quixote

- 1- Don Quixote as a literary text in transition between the Renaissance and the Baroque.
- 2-The processes in which Don Quijote becomes more like Sancho while the squire begins to behave more like his master.
- 3-The representation of female characters.
- 4-The interactions between history and literature--life and fiction--.
- 5-The different possibilities of authorship of the text.
- 6-The presence of several literary genres in Don Quixote: chivalry novels, the picaresque, pastoral texts.

IX. Activities with Other Literary Texts

1. Read the story “*Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote*” by Jorge Luis Borges. Discuss the irony in Menard’s translation of Don Quixote and the importance placed on the reader as crucial to a contemporary understanding of a literary text.
2. Compare Don Quijote or Sancho to a Shakespearean character of the same period such as Hamlet or Falstaff.

Don Quixote on Film

1972. *Man of La Mancha*. Dir. Arthur Hiller.
In English, with Peter O’Toole and Sophia Loren.

1973. *Nureyev’s Don Quixote* (Ballet version).
With Robert Helpmann and Rudolf Nureyev.

1992. *Don Quijote de Orson Welles*. Dir. Orson Welles.
With new writing and editing by Jesús “Jess” Franco.

1999. *Don Quixote* (Animated version).

2000. *Don Quixote*. Dir. Peter Yates.
In English, with John Lithgow and Bob Hoskins.

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X. Further Reading

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REVIEWS - El Quijote

REPERTORIO ESPAÑOL

“Cheerful... quiet dialogues of Don Quixote, played with requisite delusion and dignity by Ricardo Barber, and his sidekick, Sancho Panza. Francisco Reyes, Raúl Durán and Ófelia Marín are standouts in an ensemble cast that takes on multiple roles with aplomb, and Silvia Sierra and Yanko Bakulic’s choreography at its best reaches a height of frenetic grace.”

“The cast takes on multiple roles with aplomb!”

- The New York Times

“The play surprises and entertains from the start... Emyliano Santa Cruz, as Sancho, brings life and joy to his character... the play is a perfect opportunity for students to go to the theatre and learn more about one of history’s most important masterpieces in the world’s literature.”

- Su Guía, New Jersey

“Company members never falter, never miss a step...creativity is unbounded... wonderfully outlandish costumes...an all-round gifted cast.”

“Everything – staging, costumes, lighting, music, performances, direction, text – come together to make this a memorable piece.”

- Backstage

“The real thing, much closer to the Cervantes’ original satirical intent...Company members never falter, never miss a step...the director’s creativity is unbounded...wonderfully outlandish costumes...an all around gifted cast...everything –staging, costumes, lighting, music, performances, direction, text—come together to make this a memorable piece... not a stodgy classic, but a lusty, delicious version – a veritable three ring circus.”

-Backstage

“Como todas las obras que ha dirigido anteriormente en dicho teatro, Ali Triana proporciona un magnífico espectáculo digno de verse.”

“La actuación de Ricardo Barber en su personaje del Quijote marca nuevamente sus dotes de extraordinario actor, con una labor en escena magistralmente actuada. También debemos destacar a Emyliano Santa Cruz que nos presentó a un Sancho Panza en forma excelente. En general todo el elenco supo sacar partido de cada personaje que le tocó interpretar destacándose en cada uno de ellos y debemos mencionar muy especialmente la actuación de Puy Navarro y Ofelia Marín, ambas en roles muy notorios. Una obra que merece ser vista por todos”

-La Voz Hispana

