**DON QUIJOTE**
(by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, part I in 1605; part II in 1613)

I. **About the author**: Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547-1616) was born in Alcalá de Henares in 1547. During the famous battle of Lepanto in 1571 he was maimed in the left hand, “for the greater glory of the right”. On his way back to Spain in 1575, Cervantes was captured by pirates, and held prisoner in Algiers until freed by ransom in 1580. It was *Don Quijote*, the comical masterpiece in 1605, which established Cervantes as Spain’s leading writer of prose fiction. He was then past middle age, having lived in poverty and obscurity for many years. He had failed at two or three careers: soldering his youth and ending ingloriously in Algiers as captive of Turkish pirates; a government post as roving commissary and tax-collector, ending in bankruptcy and jail; and a literary career (as a playwright, he expected) of some promise, began with his pastoral romance *Galatea* twenty years before.

In 1605 the first part of *Don Quijote* appeared. It met with overwhelming success. *The Novelas ejemplares*, 12 charming novelettes, were published in 1613. The following year marked the publication of *Viaje del Parnaso*, a long verse work whose themis poets and poetry. Cervantes hastented to publish his own second part of *Don Quijote* in 1615.

During the same year his Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses were published. The all-verse comedias, however, cannot be compared with the plays of the outstanding Golden Age dramatists. In contrast, his entremeses (interludes), written mostly in prose, are clever, fast-moving farces which may still be staged or read with pleasure.

Cervantes did not live to see the publication of his last works, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, a dream-like novel of fantastic adventure and wandering. He wrote the prologue only a few days before his death in 1616.
II. Brief introduction of the masterpiece *Don Quijote*

*The Quixote*, the masterpiece of Cervantes, inspired countless volumes of comment and interpretation. Some critics see in it a study of all humanity (or try to define the novel in terms of a distinguished *autobiography of Cervantes*); others believed the writer’s expressed intention— that he wanted to write a *parody of the romances of chivalry*, and thus to provide entertainment for his readers. It seems most likely that Cervantes started to write a novelette-another novela ejemplar—about a mad knight, but finding that he had not exhausted his subject, expanded its scope.

This work is the story of the idealistic lunatic *Don Quixote*, who fancies himself a medieval knight, and his faithful, practical, down-to-earth squire, *Sancho Panza*. It is much more than a series of comical adventures arising from the knight’s efforts to right wrongs and do good according to the code of *chivalry* he seeks to revive and impose upon society. In the first part, Don Quijote and Sancho Panza are caricatured types, one representing *illogical idealism*—"*quijotism*"—the other, hard-headed *materialism*. Part II is superior in its organization, style, universality and character development. Don Quijote’s madness is less obvious, and Sancho becomes more idealistic. By the end of the novel, the two characters are almost entirely blended.

The novel is a masterpiece of *tragicomic* prose fiction, which explores a flowing sequence of paired and multiple *opposites*: folly vs. common sense; idealized wishes vs. limited capabilities; the individual vs. surrounding every-day reality; things and people as they ought to be vs. things as they are; the old, the received, the traditional, the hierarchic vs. the new, the emergent, the innovational, the anarchic; art vs. life. The spirit of the work likewise shifts back and forth between pathos bordering on tragedy and humor bordering on farce, but is unified in Cervantes’ amiable charity and his faith in the essential goodness of man, who seeks through his merely human power to realize his noble dreams in the obstinate world of fact. It is the
representation of characters who, in this way, create themselves out of themselves that constitutes the essence of the novel. Thus, *Don Quixote* stands as the great proto-novel, the first and the best of its kind by common consent.

III. The novel’s structure and its literary sources

First Part of Don Quixote is based upon a **circular movement**. The knight leaves home, has gone through several adventures, then comes back home; he leaves again, this time accompanied (I, 7) by Sancho Panza, his adventures unfold and multiply, and are often interrupted by secondary tales (adventures). Finally the knight goes home—we assume forever— at the end of the First Part (I, 52). The episodes of the First Part (many **digressions**) interrupt the flow of adventures and even the interesting dialogue between Don Quixote and his squire; they distract the reader’s attention. In the Second Part of the novel Cervantes has recovered complete control over the main plot, and the creative impulse has proceeded in a straight line, with great economy and precision towards its final climax. Besides, we see the author attempted to work the lives of secondary characters more closely with the life and adventures of his hero. Thus, the Second Part of the novel is believed to be better organized, superior from a literary viewpoint to the First Part.

The sources of the novel, which have inspired Cervantes to create situations and characters, are literary ones. A pastoral novel can be found in the episode of Marcela and Grisótomo, the first of a series of novelettes placed at the beginning of Part I (Chaps. 12-14) and in the tale of Leandra, placed very close to the end, Chap. 51. The so-called “sentimental romance” finds expression in the tales of Cardenio, Lucinda and Dorotea, in the last of which is to be found the influence of the novel, *Diana*, by Jorge Montemayor. The psychological novel is also illustrated by Cervantes in his tale of “The Story of the One Who Was Too Curious for his Own
Good”. The “contemporary thriller” is found in Cervantes’ “The Captive’s Story”.

Many critics believe that Don Quixote is a creation of a synthesis of two different subgenres of fiction: the romances of chivalry and the picaresque novels. Don Quixote as a novel bears an ambiguous relationship to the romances of chivalry in general and Amadis de Gaula (Amadis of Gaul) in particular. As we see Cervants states specially, as an author-critic, in his preface, that the novel will attempt to destroy the influence of the romances of chivalry. Yet we face another criticism with a peculiar nature. As E. C. Riley has observed: “the critique of the novels of chivalry is made in two ways: by more or less direct judgments within the fiction, and as fiction. Criticism in fictional form is conventionally parody, and to some extent the Quixote is parody, but it is unusual in containing the object of the parody within itself, as a vital ingredient… Cervantes’ originality lies not in parodying them (novels of chivalry) himself, but making the mad Knight parody them, by means of imitation, literally to life.”

Speaking of Amadis de Gaula, it is perhaps the most famous of all Spanish romances of chivalry. Its modern version was written by Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, published in 1508, but based on an older text whose author is unknown and seems to go back to the second half of the 14th century. Its action takes place in England: therefore “Gaul” should be read as “Wales”. The hero, Amadis, is the prototype of knightly perfection, moving in a mysterious atmosphere and always protected by supernatural forces, guided by the wisdom of a white witch, Urganda. Amadis’ encounter with Oriana is a turning point in his life, their love is a love at first sight. Through Oriana’s intervention, Amadis is dubbed a knight; he goes forth in search of adventures with Oriana’s beautiful image present in his heart. We should say Amadis attributes all his physical and moral strengths to his love for Oriana, who serves as a knight’s ideal love and protection. The novel is basically and typically
medieval: love plays an important role and is a magical complete fulfillment, carrying the lovers beyond reality to realm of absolute liberty. With its conception of love and its dream of liberty and justice, Amadís reflected the high ideals of chivalry of the late medieval and early Renaissance period. In Don Quixote, our hero is always ready to model his behavior, his system of values, his emotional attitudes upon those of his favorite knight-errant, Amadís of Gaul (Amadis was hopelessly in love with the beautiful Oriana). Nevertheless, the relationship between Don Quixote and Dulcinea is a parodic/comic version of the love between Amadís and Oriana. First of all, Dulcinea is a character created by the imagination of Don Quijote as a first rate of knight-errant needs to have a lady to give his love to. Thus, the hero falls in love with music of the word, “Dulcinea”, and he imposes the platonic conception of feminine beauty rather than the vulgar farm girl of his memory (I, Chap 1). Later, he believes that his lady has been enchanted (II, Chap. 10) and her real self transformed, and faded away.

As for the picaresque novel, we find traces of it in every chapter. It is believed that Cervantes attempted to paint in his novel a microcosm of Spanish society, therefore, the underworld, the oppressed masses, or the picaresque elements in society, should not be ignored.

IV. Textual Analysis (selected chapters)

1. The Prologue to Part I as Structural Analogue to the Novel

--- The Prologue to Part I lends itself to an analysis which parallels the analysis of the whole novel at every point. It begins with a direct address to an assumed audience. It is clear that the reader or listener is the sine qua non of the presentation of the work.

--- The narrator of “I” assures that the reader has freedom of reaction with respect to the novel. He also insists on the independence of the work from the author and
asks the reader to feel free to praise or criticize it as he sees fit: “You are neither his kinsman nor friend; you have your soul in your body, and your will as free as the bravest of them all…”, “you may say of this history whatever you think fit, without fear of being calumniated for the evil, or rewarded for the good you shall say it”.

--- The relationship between distance and authorial control has been an essential point in Cervantes’ elaboration of his novel. In the beginning of the prologue, Cervantes seems to make a clear statement that the author must try (as himself tries by use of stepfatherhood) to be both inside the work and outside it at the same time. That is to say, the author must have the objectivity of a reader as well as the ability to project the involvement of his characters.

--- In the second paragraph, the idea of the externalization of self-implicit in the will to objectivity of the author is well expressed.

--- Another important factor in the comparison of the prologue to the novel as a whole is the way in which the matter presented duplicates the form in which it is presented. Just as Don Quixote can to some extent be considered a novel about the writing of novels, the prologue is a prologue about writing prologues. Not only does the author exteriorize himself, making himself a character in his own work, but he also exteriorized his problems as author, making them the subject of his work.

--- The major spokesman in the dialogue which appears in the prologue is not Cervantes/ the narrator in first person, but his interlocutor. It is the “friend” who resolves the author’s problem serving as “counselor”. In fact, the friend’s answer to Cervantes’ problem is that he should imitate and plagiarize from bad prologues so that he will appear to be learned. The friend’s discussion is nothing more than a criticism of the typical inflated, pompous and irrelevant prologue. Thus, the prologue deals no only with how to write a prologue, but is an ironic treatment of previous prologues.

--- The prologue to Don Quixote Part I traces the process through which Cervantes
translates his thoughts into fiction and the way in which he transforms himself into
"narrator" and "character".

2. Chapter 1, Part I

--- It describes Alonso Quijano, the “lean-bodied, thin-faced” hidalgo, and his passion of the romances of chivalry.

--- He loses his wits and decides to become a knight-errant like Amadís of Gaul.

--- He patches up as best as he can a rusting suit of armor that belonged to his great-grandfather. He gives name (christens) himself Don Quijote, his nag Rocinante, and the “lady of his fancies” Dulcinea del Toboso.

--- Explain the book title “La historia del ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha”, its ironic sense with the word “ingenious” (clever)

3. Chap. 2, Part I

--- Don Quixote set for the in search of his first adventure. He arrives at night at modest lodging for mule drivers. Instead of an inn, he sees a castle with turrets, moat, drawbridge, and pinnacles of silver; the two prostitutes loitering in the doorway are for him two high-born ladies (he will address them in an ornate, sophisticated and old-fashioned language); a swineherd who blows a sort of whistle to gather his hogs are for him the herald (messenger) announcing his arrival to the lord of the manor.

--- When our hero tries to eat and drink, he finds that he can not unfasten his visor nor take off his helmet. He is trapped inside his armor.

4. Chap. 3, Part I

--- As the people at the inn perceive the knight’s madness, they decide to humor him: the innkeeper pretends to be the lord of the castle, and when Don Quixote asks to be dubbed a knight by him, he grants his request with exaggerated pomp and mock dignity; one of the prostitutes girds the knight’s sword while the other buckles his spurs.
5. Chap. 7, Part I

--- As the knight lies unconscious on the road a fellow villager takes him home.

--- Don Quijote is stubborn, he decides to go out again (the 2 end sally). This time he convinces a peasant neighbor, Sancho Panza, to accompany him as squire. Our hero promises him riches, fame and the governorship of an Island, and Sancho comes along mounted on his donkey.

--- The Curate (El Canon) and the Barber go over Don Quijote’s library and burn most of his books (romances of chivalry).

6. Chap. 8, Part I

--- It deals with the adventure of the windmill (molino de viento). It is Don Quijote’s imagination that tampers with reality. He imagines the windmills to be giants, charges one of them, he is caught in the sail and lifted and tossed down by it.

--- Sancho reveals the reality, but the knight insists on that it is the magician Frestón has turned the giants into windmills in order to frustrate him.

--- At the end of the chapter, the relationship between narrator (in the first person) and characters breaks down and the so-called Second Author is introduced. It is the character who tried to search the manuscripts of the battle between Don Quijote and viscaino (Biscainer) and recovered the telling of the story.

7. Chap. 9, Part I

--- It deals with the fight with the Biscainer, related by the Second Author.

--- The other author, the one who disappeared at the end of Chap. 8, is rediscovered and named here as a result of the Second Author’s efforts.

--- The reader is introduced to Cide Hamete Benegeli, a Moorish historian and author of the story of Don Quijote. Since the historian is a Moor, the reader can be aware of the potential conflict between character and author: Cide’s word can be cast of dubious veracity based on the commonly held opinion among Spaniards that Moors
were liars. The Second Author, identifies with Don Quijote and represents that facet of the author’s literary interest; Cide Hamete, on the other hand, represents the distance and over-all control which is the other side of the author’s role.

REFERENCES