

# Literature Through Film

Realism, Magic, and  
the Art of Adaptation

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## Chapter 1

# A Cervantic Prelude: From *Don Quixote* to Postmodernism

Literary critics have spoken, in connection with *Don Quixote*, of a “self-conscious” genre in the novel, a tradition which has historically often been slighted or condemned. In his *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-conscious Genre*, Robert Alter defines the self-conscious novel as:

one in which from beginning to end, through the style, the handling of narrative viewpoint, the names and words imposed on the characters, the patterning of the narration, the nature of the characters and what befalls them, there is a consistent effort to convey to us a sense of the fictional world as an authorial construct set up against a background of literary tradition and convention.<sup>1</sup>

Alter disengages an ongoing tradition of self-consciousness going back to Cervantes, continuing with Fielding and Sterne in England and Diderot in France, and undergoing a veritable Renaissance in the twentieth century with writers such as Gide, Queneau, Borges, Nabokov, Pynchon, and Fowles. The works of all these novelists form “the other great tradition,” where novels systematically flaunt their own condition of artifice, reflexively engaging their own procedures and techniques.

Self-conscious fictions à la Cervantes defiantly call attention to their own artifice and operations, refusing a transparent, self-effacing language that opens quietly onto the world. When Cervantes interrupts the story of Don Quixote’s battle with the Biscayan, in what is perhaps the most famous freeze-frame of literary history,

leaving them both with swords upraised, on the grounds that his source went no farther, only to resume his account upon discovering a parchment depicting the very same battle, he is consciously destroying the illusion created by his story. When Fielding in *Tom Jones* halts the flow of his narrative to expatiate on the novelist's craft, he reminds us of the artifice involved in writing a novel. By seeing themselves not as nature's slaves but as fiction's masters, self-conscious artists cast doubt on the central assumption of mimetic art: the notion of an antecedent reality on which the artistic text is supposedly modeled. Unlike the self-effacing artist of Stephen Dedalus, who, "like the God or creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible," the self-conscious artist, with a differing sense of supernatural decorum, is fond of making comic epiphanies in the created universe. The god of anti-illusionist art is not an immanent pantheistic deity but an Olympian, making noisy intrusion into fictive events. We are torn away from the events and the characters and made aware of the pen, or brush, or camera that has created the fictive figures.

Since the stuff of self-conscious art is the tradition itself – to be alluded to, played with, outdone, or exorcized – parody has often been of crucial importance. The very idea of parody implies some self-evident truths about the artistic process. The first is that the artist does not imitate nature but rather other texts. One paints, or writes, or makes films because one has seen paintings, read novels, or attended films. Art, in this sense, is not a window on the world but rather an intertextual dialogue between artists. The intertextual references may be explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious, direct and local or broad and diffuse. These truths apply with equal self-evidence to the cinema. Directors make films in a certain genre, or "in the manner of" a certain director, or according to a set of generic conventions. Whether artists call attention to these intertextual influences or obscure them, the intertext is always present.

Cervantes' *Don Quixote* constitutes a generative matrix and *locus classicus* of reflexive parody. As is well known, *Don Quixote* concerns the adventures of a mad geriatric *hidalgo*, a lover of chivalric literature, who sets forth to realize the literary ideal of the wandering knight or *caballero andante*. The plot needs no summarizing here, since even people who have never read the novel are familiar with the character, whether through pop productions like *Man of La Mancha* or simply through adjectives like "Quixotic" or expressions like "tilting at windmills." Indeed, *Don Quixote* is one of those texts that have been universally disseminated without, in most cases, actually having been read.

*Don Quixote* has left a long trail of prestigious commentary. Polyperspectival in its own terms, the novel has itself been read perspectively, in that its protagonist has been made to incarnate everything from the nobility of defending

lost causes to the blind folly of pursuing an *idée fixe*. Critics have argued for centuries about whether Don Quixote was crazy or lucid, just as they have argued about whether Hamlet, who appeared on stage just four years before *Don Quixote* was published, was mad or just putting on an “antic disposition.” The entire history of modern literature can be seen as a footnote to *Don Quixote*. Its influence extends over such diverse writers as Dickens, Melville, Goethe, Flaubert, Twain, Turgenev, Borges, Machado de Assis and Alejo Carpentier. Over the centuries, the novel itself seems to have metamorphosed in genre, from being read as a burlesque travesty to being admired as a respected classic. For Hegel, Quixote encapsulated the dilemmas of metaphysics, while for Marx he incarnated false consciousness. For Dostoevsky, this “saddest of all books” provided the human model for his own “Idiot.” For Miguel de Unamuno, this “saddest story ever written” inspired his own “tragic sense of life.” In his novel *The Wheel*, Jensen portrays Quixote as representing the energy and adventure of America, now out of place in tired, enervated Europe. For Ernst Bloch, Quixote was Christ-like in his noble, derided purity.<sup>2</sup>

But for Vladimir Nabokov, who has unceremoniously dismissed many of history’s greatest writers, Cervantes’ novel forms an “encyclopedia of cruelty,” one of the “most bitter and barbarous books ever penned.” In this “symphony of mental and physical pain,” the physical cruelty of the first part competes with the mental cruelty of the second part, where the novelist takes pleasure in humiliating his character with ritual beatings and ingenious tortures.<sup>3</sup> For the romantics, in contrast, Quixote represented the transmogrifying power of the imagination, the alchemical capacity to turn quotidian dross into artistic gold. But for René Girard, the romantics are themselves Quixotic; they idealize Quixote’s egomania, prettifying a personage who in real life would be experienced as an obnoxious fool.<sup>4</sup>

For Girard, “all the ideas of the Western novel are present in germ in *Don Quixote*.”<sup>5</sup> The nineteenth-century French realist novelists, as we shall see in chapter 2, both created Quixotic characters and deployed Cervantic techniques. They took as their own what Harry Levin calls the “literary technique of systematic disillusionment,”<sup>6</sup> the theme pithily evoked in Balzac’s infinitely suggestive title: *Lost Illusions*. According to this scenario, a book-inspired protagonist undergoes excruciating adventures only to end up, like Quixote on his deathbed, renouncing romance (in all the senses of that word). As a paradigm of “triangular desire,” Don Quixote himself had “surrendered to Amadis the individual’s fundamental prerogative: he no longer chooses the objects of his own desire.”<sup>7</sup> Much as contemporary adolescents model themselves on pop stars, Don Quixote models himself on his literary heroes. In the world of *Don Quixote*, characters

draw swords over hermeneutics, rather like present-day movie fans who fight over the value and meaning of movies, sometimes experiencing emotional rupture over their sharply differing responses.

As a cultural artifact, *Don Quixote* emerges from a complex, multicultural and multilingual Mediterranean world, and from a Spain shaped for centuries by three religious civilizations: Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish. It is often forgotten that the Jews and Muslims of Iberia lived in symbiotic closeness, while the Catholics were the enemies of both groups. The *reconquista*, the expulsion of the Muslims, and the Inquisition against both Muslims and Jews did not instantly erase the Muslim and Jewish presence in Spain. In *Don Quixote*, the narrator has a Castilian-speaking “Morisco” (i.e. a Muslim forced to convert to Christianity) translate a parchment book in Arabic, and he mentions that a translator for “a more ancient language” (i.e. Hebrew) also would not be hard to find. Cervantes thus suggests that his own art comes out of various “oriental” sources – from the Bible, from Arabic stories – from which the Spanish learned the art of novelizing. (Cervantes also wrote many plays on Turkish and Islamic and Arab themes: *The Dungeons of Algiers*, *The Grand Sultana*, *Life in Istanbul*, and *The Death of Selim*.)

Both Jews and Muslims were victimized by the Inquisition. Anti-semitism as well as anti-Muslimism played an important role in European literature. The French *chansons de geste* which fed into the chivalric tradition, for example, revolved around the defense of the Christian empire against the Moors. (Cervantes himself lost the use of his left hand at the Battle of Lepanto, and was imprisoned for five years in Algiers.) Yet some scholars have suggested that Cervantes himself was from a *marrano* or *cristiano nuevo* background, i.e. from a Jewish family forced to convert by the Spanish Inquisition. When Sancho proclaims himself the “mortal enemy of the Jews,” Don Quixote, *marrano*-like, says nothing. Cervantes’ status as a descendant of *marranos* would help explain Cervantes’ quietly skeptical view of the events he recounts.

Cervantes’ novel is also indirectly related to the other key event of 1492: Columbus’s voyages to the “New World.” Spain in Cervantes’ time was haunted by diverse internal and external “others:” Jews, Muslims, Africans, and the indigenous people then being colonized by their conquistadores. Repeatedly, *Don Quixote* echoes with the rumors of such world-historical events as the Crusades, the *reconquista*, the Inquisition, and the conquest of the Americas. It is the execrable behavior of Moorish puppets, significantly, that triggers Don Quixote’s intervention in Master Pedro’s puppet show. When Quixote transforms windmills into pernicious giants, similarly, his language recalls the *reconquista* and the Inquisition: “I intend to do battle with them and slay them. With their spoils

we shall begin to be rich, for this is a righteous war and the removal of so foul a brood from off the face of the earth is a service God will bless" (VIII, 98). The innumerable references in *Don Quixote* to the "accursed religion of Mohammed" make us forget that pre-Inquisition Spain was characterized by the relatively peaceful coexistence of the three "religions of the book," and especially between Islam and Judaism. Cervantes gives vivid expression, in sum, to the Spain that was at once the master of empire, the oppressor of Muslims and Jews (although Cervantes does not speak in the language of "oppression"), and at the same time a culturally miscegenated country still marked by the traces of its expelled ethnicities.

Although critics have usually emphasized the comicity of Quixote's alchemical imaginings, that comicity is sometimes spoken in an exterminationist language redolent of the *reconquista* (and the Inquisition) in Spain, and of the *conquista* in the Americas. The European conquest of the Americas was, on one level, a bookish enterprise, a clash of intertexts, shaped not only by Roman imperial law and literature of the Christian crusade, but also by Marco Polo's *Travels*, by romances of chivalry and Renaissance epic poems. Alejo Carpentier points out that Hernan Cortes and his colleagues, on arriving in Mexico, repeatedly cited the same chivalric romances mocked by Cervantes to evoke the wonders of the (misnamed) "New World." "God gave us good luck in war," writes Cortes, "as he did to the knight Roldan."<sup>8</sup> Just two years after the appearance of the First Part of *Don Quixote*, Quixote, Sancho, and even Rocinante, were appearing as processional figures within Spanish festivals in the Americas.<sup>9</sup> The Conquest itself, furthermore, can be seen as Quixotic, not only in the sense of idealizing violence through what Joseph Conrad, centuries later, would call a "redeeming idea," but also in the sense of being thoroughly imbued by a "bookish" imaginary. The "New" World was seen through the lenses and prisms and legends provided by the Old: Atlantis, Eldorado, the Amazons, the Fountain of Youth, and The Seven Cities of Cibola. "America" was both a real place on a map and a fantasy "mapped" on to a tabula rasa through an intertextual imaginary. European intruders, formed by readings from the Scriptures, Herodotus, Marco Polo and about King Arthur and chivalric romances, encountered indigenous peoples who also tried to account for the invaders through their own pre-existing myths and intertexts, invoking the long-prophesied return of a divinity or hero (Quetzalcoatl in Mexico, Wiraqoch in the Andes) or the emergence of a great shaman (in the Tupi-Guarani cultural region). While the Europeans tried to force the native peoples into a pre-set Biblical schema – for example, as the "lost tribe" of Israel – the native peoples counterposed their own texts and beliefs to those professed in the Christian Scriptures.

One wonders, then, and here I am being admittedly speculative, if Cervantes was not on some level mocking the Quixotic aspects of conquest discourse, which transformed grisly massacres into heroic exploits. Anti-semites and racists and conquistadores, Don Quixote-like, also transformed what they saw; their imaginations turned ordinary Jewish human beings into “devils” and “enchanters,” turned the pacific indigenous peoples of the Americas into “cannibals.” Columbus encountered an already-named, Taino-populated island, but misrecognized it as “Asia” and renamed it “San Salvador.” (We will return to these transatlantic exchanges from a different angle when we discuss the “marvelous American real” in chapter 7.)

My point is not that Cervantes was a multiculturalist *avant la lettre*, but rather that a multicultural approach can illuminate *Don Quixote*. In chapter 29 of *Don Quixote*, for example, Sancho Panza fantasizes about inheriting a kingdom in “the land of the blacks.” Instantly, his imagination runs to taking a boatload of them and selling them for hard cash in Spain. Here Sancho Panza, like Robinson Crusoe a century later, becomes, if only in his imagination, the *petit blanc*, the poor white who prospers thanks to colonial exploitation. Cervantes’ cameo surrogate in the book, similarly, a soldier named like Cervantes himself “Saavedra,” remarks that, during his imprisonment in Algiers, the Moors never flogged him or subjected him to a harsh word, an indirect criticism perhaps of the widespread image of a cruel and “accursed” race. Even the ironic tribute to his “source,” Cid Hamete Benengeli, can be seen as a homage not only to Arab storytelling traditions, but also to a tradition of “courtly love” which, according to Denis de Rougemont, was very much indebted to Arabic love poetry.<sup>10</sup> Don Quixote’s love for Dulcinea, we recall, was also courtly and Platonic; in the many years that he loved her he saw her only three or four times, and then without speaking to her.

The presence of parodic reflexivity in *Don Quixote* does not imply an absence of social realism. Spain in the seventeenth century was the scene of intense ideological battles over class and culture, and Cervantes, *pícaro*-like, was himself familiar with all the class positions, from jail to the royal palace. In chapter 6, Cervantes becomes a sociologist *avant la lettre*: he has Quixote describe the social world of Spain as consisting of four classes: (1) the humble who become great; (2) the great who remain great; (3) the great who become humble; and (4) the humble who remain humble. Later, he describes two superimposed pyramids: “those that trace their descent from princes and monarchs, whom time has gradually reduced to a point, like a pyramid upside down; others that derive their origin from common folk and ascend step by step until they arrive at being great lords” (XXI, 207). Don Quixote implicitly describes himself as among “those

who were and are no longer” and Sancho as among those “who are but once were not.” We could not have a more apt description of the destabilized social world typical of the novel, conjugating social movement downward (Quixote’s) with social movement upward (Sancho’s).

Parodies like *Don Quixote* construct themselves on the destruction of literary or cinematic codes. The historical function of novels like *Don Quixote*, for Fredric Jameson, is to perform the secular “decoding” of “preexisting inherited traditional or sacred narrative paradigms.”<sup>11</sup> Cervantes’ comic epic shows a contemporary world refractory to epic/chivalric values, where such values can **only be** comic. Indeed, Cervantes was completely explicit about his destructive project: he wrote in order to destroy the chivalric romance, then the most popular genre of his time. Indeed, he names his satiric targets in the novel itself. The scene where Quixote’s niece burns his romances becomes an excuse to name the objects of parody in the book: *Amadis de Gaula*, *Lisuarte de Grecia*, *Cirongilio de Tracia*, *Felixmarte de Hircania*. Cervantes mocks the chivalric romances for their sexual exploitativeness, their predictability, and their ludicrous irreality. He mocks not only their themes, but also their techniques – the pretense of being “translations” from Arabic or Greek, the claptrap of prologues, the penchant for abruptly interrupting stories in the middle, and so forth – even as he uses them himself.

Cervantes also criticizes the romances on Spanish nationalist grounds. Quixote, in this sense, constitutes the antithesis of the conventions of the chivalric tradition. The heroes of chivalric romances are invariably from elsewhere – Quixote’s hero Amadis of Gaul, as his name implies, is from France, while King Arthur is from England. The heroes are never from Spain. Rather than being from a romanticized elsewhere, Quixote comes from one of the poorest and driest regions of Spain. Rather than being young and rich and handsome, Quixote is old, poor, decrepit, and probably impotent, whence, perhaps, his preference for an ideal, unconsummated love. He is as clumsy in action as he is elegant in language. Wherever Quixote extends his helping hand, as Ernst Bloch puts it, “he knocks something over.”<sup>12</sup> Sancho Panza too is a degraded version of the sidekick figure from the chivalric novels; rather than an admiring apprentice figure, he is motivated by hunger, greed, and ambition, and is baffled, rather than impressed, by his master.

In *Don Quixote*, the parodic principle applies even to Cervantes’ own book, since Part II parodies and comments on Part I. But parody is the genre that combines critique and affection, and Cervantes’ project is not purely destructive. The parody itself prolongs the devices that it denounces. Cervantes was writing at a time when most readers had read the chivalric romances, which is

no longer the case. Yet one of the paradoxes, as Daniel Eisenberg points out, is that even though Cervantes destroyed the chivalric romance genre, it is only thanks to him that nowadays people read the romances at all.<sup>13</sup>

While realistic novels hide their artifice in the name of truth, novels in the Cervantic tradition flaunt their artifice in the name of another truth – that of art itself. While realistic novels dissimulate their rootedness in the imitation of other texts, claiming to imitate only nature, Cervantic texts proudly display their own imitative strategies by crowding the novel with quotations, stories, and poems, constantly molding a bookish universe inundated with manuscripts, printed matter, and illustrations. Indeed, the prologue of *Don Quixote* reflects a kind of “citation envy.” Although “Cervantes” claims that he is “too slack and indolent to go in search of authors to say for me what I myself can say without them,” his “friend” convinces him that self-respecting books should be “crammed with sentences from Aristotle and Plato and the whole mob of philosophers as to astound their readers and win for their authors a reputation for scholarship and eloquence” (p. 42).<sup>14</sup> On the advice of the same friend, he scribbles a few laudatory poems recommending the book, rather like contemporary authors who pen their own blurbs for their friends to sign.

Despite Cervantes’ claim to “speak for himself,” he does not claim originality. Rather, he proudly bases his story on a found manuscript by a Moorish author, Cid Hamete Benengeli, whom he admires as a fountain of truth and yet at the same time condemns as the descendant of a “nation of liars.” In fact, the source text is doubly unreliable, in itself and because its translation cannot be trusted. Cervantes also problematizes the act of writing itself. He takes the readers into his confidence and asks for their collaboration. The prologue, he confesses, was even harder to compose than the story itself: “Many times I picked up my pen to write it, and many times I put it down, not knowing what to write” (p. 42). In this sense, *Don Quixote* inaugurates that strain of the novel (and later film) which foregrounds the process of creation itself, all those novels (like Gide’s *Faux monnayeurs* or John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*) or those films (like Fellini’s *8½* or Woody Allen’s *Stardust Memories*) that foreground the labor pains of the creative process. At the same time, by including criticism of his own novel – for example, Carrasco tells the Don that some readers have criticized the inserted novellas – *Don Quixote* anticipates another strain of texts: those that incorporate the criticisms that have been made, or might be made, of the texts themselves.

The author’s claim to “truth,” in *Don Quixote*, is troubled from the outset. Even the protagonist’s name is unstable:

It is said his surname was Quixada, or Quesada (for in this there is some difference among the authors who have written upon this subject), though by probable conjectures it maybe gathered that he was called Quixana. But this is of little import to our story; let it suffice that in relating it we do not swerve a jot from the truth. (p. 23)

Thus, Don Quixote as a character is born under the sign of semantic and historiographic instability. The message is double: fictioners speak the truth and nothing but the truth, yet they also engage multiple perspectives and opinions about that truth. At the same time, this alleged multi-perspectivalism constitutes one of the standard confidence tricks of fiction: the idea that there are multiple perspectives on an object or character confers, through a kind of holographic projection, an illusory ontological solidity on the object in question. The indisputable “fact” of the multiple points of view implies that there must be **something** being regarded from those multiple points of view.

Urged on by what Girard calls “mimetic desire,” Don Quixote imitates his hero Amadis of Gaul.<sup>15</sup> His madness is triggered by what Ernst Bloch calls the “spontaneous combustion of accumulated reading matter.”<sup>16</sup> Quixote suffers from the “Alonso Quijano syndrome,” defined by Juan Bonilla as the pathological tendency to “prolong identification with literary characters beyond the strict duration of the reading.”<sup>17</sup> Although Cervantes condemns chivalric literature, he never condemns reading; in fact, he was himself a fanatic reader, reportedly reading even bits of torn paper lying in the street.<sup>18</sup> A core “readerly” analogy subliminally informs *Don Quixote*. Don Quixote reads and interprets reality just as readers interpret the books they read, spectators interpret the films they see, and filmmakers interpret the novels they adapt. Don Quixote’s transformation of windmills into giants is no more marvelous and magical than the miracle of reading itself, which transforms barren symbols, bare arbitrary scribbles on a page or a parchment, into landscapes and characters and narratives and emotions. Quixote himself, Foucault suggests, is “himself like a sign, a long, thin graphism, a letter that has just escaped from the open pages of a book.”<sup>19</sup>

Cervantes was writing after Gutenberg and the invention of the printing press, which was introduced into Spain in 1472, roughly a century before Cervantes wrote the first part of *Don Quixote*. Cervantes wrote, in other words, in a world that was beginning to be inundated by books to an extent never seen before, so that readers en masse **could** imitate literary heroes. In no way obscured, this mimetic imitation-of-reading theme stares out at us from the very surface of *Don Quixote*, emphatically “theorized,” as it were, by Don Quixote himself. The

phrases “imitation of” and “likeness of” proliferate, as when Don Quixote spends the night thinking of his Lady Dulcinea “in imitation of Marcela’s lovers” (XII, 128). Or again, when Don Quixote transforms Dulcinea in his fantasy “into the likeness of that princess of whom he had read in his books” (XVI, 157). So many of the events in *Don Quixote* are triggered by art: the Don looking for, or better creating, bookish adventures, or the Duke and the Duchess entertaining themselves by staging Don Quixote’s fantasies.

At times, “mimicry” comes close to mockery, as when others make fun of Don Quixote “in a mimicking manner.” Explaining to Sancho the need to imitate his literary hero, Don Quixote argues:

when any painter wishes to win renown in his art, he endeavors to copy the originals of the most illustrious painters he knows, and this rule holds good for all the crafts and callings of any importance . . . And so what he who would win the name of prudent and patient must do, and does, is to imitate Ulysses, in whose person and labors Homer depicts for us a lively picture of a patient and long-suffering man, just as Virgil shows in the person of Aeneas the virtue of a dutiful son and the wisdom of a brave and expert captain. They do not portray them or describe them as they were but as they should have been, to give example by their virtues to the men to come after them . . . In this way Amadis was the North Star . . . and all of us who fight under the banner of love and chivalry ought to imitate his example. (XXV, 241)

Here Cervantes plays on the multiple meanings of the word “mimesis.” Derived from the Greek root *mimos*, “mimesis” (imitation) has variously evoked the act of portraying a likeness, the imitation of another person, the presenting of the self, the theatrical staging of an action, the identification of one person with another, or the imitation of another art work.<sup>20</sup> *Don Quixote* engages all of these meanings. Quixote the character imitates literary characters, just as Cervantes the author imitates his literary models and antecedents. Before deciding how to act, Don Quixote reflects on how his literary heroes would have acted in his place. At times he hesitates about **which** literary hero he should direct his mimetic energies toward: Orlando in his “outrageous frenzies” or Amadis in his “melancholy moods?”

Cervantes weaves a novel by needling romance, pitting the veracity of the novel against the mendacity of the romance. Cervantes’ battered hidalgo attempts to act out the idealistic imperatives of chivalric literature, imperatives which were always improbable but which were now even more implausible in a no-longer feudal Spain. For Karl Marx, Don Quixote paid for the error of believing that

knight-errantry was compatible with all economic forms of society. As Don Quixote maps literary patterns onto real experience, he tries to “match” every situation with some literary precedent. Since there is no textual precedent for monetary payment in his sacred texts, he refuses to pay Sancho for his services. Asked to pay expenses, Quixote answers that he had “never read in the stories of knights-errant that they ever carried money with them” (p. 69). Since Homer never mentions Agamemnon’s salary or Nestor’s pension, and since romance never mentions the *per diems* and tax deductions of Amadis of Gaul, Don Quixote dismisses such questions as beneath his dignity.

The self-conscious novel like *Don Quixote* has its deep roots in the millennial tradition of antique fictions like *The Odyssey*, *The Golden Ass*, and Heliodorus’ *Aithiopika*. In fact, Cervantes’ last novel *Persiles y Sigismunda*, by Cervantes’ own admission, attempts to “compete with Heliodorus.” Thus the modern novel begins as a parodic summa, mocking in turn epic, pastoral, romance, comedy, and devotional literature. *Don Quixote* is what Bakhtin calls “pluri-stylistic,” a collage of literary fragments, ballads, poems, proverbs, histories, and pastiches. The self-conscious novel, in this sense, has strong affinities with what Northrop Frye calls the “anatomy,” and what both Frye and Bakhtin call the “Menippea,” a strand of fiction given to constant digressions, comic erudition, and the *mes-alliance* of genres.<sup>21</sup> The great anatomists are those on whom no genre is lost. Exploiting the widest possible range of sources, from Sancho Panza’s earthy proverbs to the Don’s celestial fights, anatomists like Cervantes take “high” and “low” materials and tease them into art, seducing “minor” genres into brilliance. The jarring clash between the Don’s lofty language and Sancho’s “lower” and more earthy speech, for example, brings high ideals down into the earthly realm, into the world of what Bakhtin called the “lower bodily stratum.”

Many critics have commented on the carnivalesque aspects of *Don Quixote*. Bakhtin pointed to Sancho, with his *panza* (belly), and his appetite, as a typical carnival figure. In Bakhtinian terms, the Quixote/Sancho pair represent the odd couple, the oxymoronic duo which hybridizes the lofty and the grotesque. For Auerbach, they recall the contrasting pairs of comedy: the tall, gaunt, thin man and the short, fat one, the clever man and his stupid companion, the Laurel and Hardy yoking/joking of contrasts.<sup>22</sup> Yet the dynamic of the book, as many critics have noted, is to work toward convergence: the Quixotization of Sancho and the Sanchification of Don Quixote.<sup>23</sup> In *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, Girard mocks the “romantic” critics who reduce the dialogue of *Don Quixote* to one between Don Quixote the *idealist* and Sancho Panza the *realist*, overlooking the subterranean affinities between the two characters, forgetting the ways in which Sancho, for example, absorbs and mimics Don Quixote’s desires.<sup>24</sup> Sancho Panza,

too, leaves his family and friends for the sake of a dream, to the point that Don Quixote, in a rare moment of lucidity, tells Sancho to “drop these fooleries.” It is the Don, Sancho’s “mediator,” after all, who sets Sancho to dreaming of islands and governorships.

Although illiterate, Sancho, too, is also a potential artist. His linguistic creativity exemplifies Bakhtin’s critique of the Formalist hierarchy which posits poetic speech as superior to practical speech; the “practical” Sancho is also poetic.<sup>25</sup> The speech of both characters “embeds” various strata of discourse. While Don Quixote’s speech “embeds” Platonic ideas of beauty, courtly love, chivalric romance, and the *dolce stil novo*, Sancho’s discourse embeds popular slang and speech genres, the proverbial wisdom of the already said. His speech consists in stringing proverbs together in comic (and often contradictory) profusion: “Who buys and lies, his purse will rue the price; what’s more, naked I was born, and naked am I now . . . Many expect fitches of bacon when there’s not even a hook to hang them on” (XXV, 240). But in later episodes, Sancho emulates the Don’s language, just as the Don, in imitation of Sancho, waxes colloquial and proverbial. The entire novel is informed by this process of reciprocal chameleonism, operative on both a characterological and a linguistic/discursive register.

It is therefore simplistic to adopt a “progressive” narrative whereby *Don Quixote* simply “buries” romance and thus announces a triumphal entry into Modernity. Within the conventionalist triumphalist narrative, as Doody puts it, the “Novel replaces the Romance as Reason replaces Superstition, and as the Model-T Ford replaces the horse and carriage.”<sup>26</sup> But romance itself had an element of realism, since castles, knights and equestrian heroes really were part of the medieval landscape. And Nabokov points out that a country gentleman might have mistaken windmills for giants, since they were a cutting-edge technological innovation in seventeenth-century Spain.<sup>27</sup> The point in *Don Quixote* is the dialectic between the two modes, between the romantic and the novelistic, between fantasy and the reality principle, the utopian and the dystopian, even though the various poles occasionally change places.

The paradox about *Don Quixote*, Harry Levin points out, is that it casts a spell while dispelling an illusion: “By disenchanting his readers, he could cast a spell of his own.”<sup>28</sup> Cervantes is simultaneously the smart demystifier and the “sage enchanter” hidden “behind” the Spanish narrator and presumed author Cid Hamete Benengeli. This simultaneous joy in both mystification and demystification reflects some truths about the process both of art’s creation and of its consumption. Within the artist a struggle takes place between the will to create an illusion and the conscious decision to interrogate or even destroy that illusion. The lucidity of the illusionist, the puppeteer, or the filmmaker does battle with the desire

to create a believable and lifelike image. For the reader or spectator, meanwhile, all the reflexive and distancing devices in the world do not necessarily preclude affective participation. Although the character Don Quixote is on one level a purely textual artifact, on another level this imaginary artifact has served for centuries as a magnet for readerly identification. How many people, over the centuries, have described themselves as “a little bit like Don Quixote?”

*Don Quixote* proliferates in what Bakhtin calls, in relation to the Menippeia, “threshold encounters,” impossible meetings between literary characters. A sonnet included in the prologue, for example, is sent by one literary character, Amadis of Gaul, to another, Don Quixote de la Mancha. At one point, Don Quixote converses with Don Alvaro Tarfe, a character from a spurious continuation of the Cervantes novel, inducing what Robert Alter calls the “ontological vertigo” provoked by a “fictional character from a ‘true’ fictional chronicle confronting a fictional character from a false one in order to establish beyond doubt his own exclusive authenticity.”<sup>29</sup> At another point, Cervantes has his protagonist walk into a Barcelona printing shop where he observes the processes of proofreading, typesetting, and revision and is lectured on the economics of the publishing industry. Cervantes thus focuses attention on the concrete procedures by which all books, including his own, were produced. After meeting one of the characters from Avellaneda’s spurious Second Volume of *Don Quixote*, the equally fictitious character Don Quixote (in chapter 72) has a notary draw up a document stating that the real Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are not the ones referred to in Avellaneda’s book, thus leading to what Alter calls a “Copernican revolution in the practice and theory of mimesis.”<sup>30</sup>

One especially suggestive episode involves Master Pedro and his puppet show. Just as the book as a whole offers a critique of a certain kind of readership, here Cervantes becomes a kind of theoretician of “spectatorship.” In the episode, the protagonist, in an outburst of knightly rage, brings Master Pedro’s puppet show to an abrupt halt by venting his fury on hapless puppets, which he presumes to be real Moors attacking a real Maiden, while Master Pedro protests that all the characters are only pasteboard figures. In this allegory of spectatorship, an artistic representation is brought to a halt by the naïve intervention of a personage who confounds reality with spectacle. As Robert Alter points out, the novelist unmasks the contingent precariousness of the illusion generated by the play-world of art. Through his proxy protagonist, Cervantes breaks off the purely verbal puppet show which is *Don Quixote* itself, suspending the narrative and reminding us of its papier-mâché factitiousness.<sup>31</sup>

Master Pedro’s puppet show provides an unwitting model of anti-illusionistic theater, an anticipatory storehouse of Brechtian “alienation effects.” Cervantes

begins his account with a quotation from *The Aeneid* – “Here Tyrians and Trojans, all were silent” – which evokes Aeneas telling the Troy story to Dido and the assembled listeners. The allusion reminds us of the perennial fascination of tales and the excited anticipation, the “growing silent” which usually precedes the beginning of spectacle, whether it be puppet show, play, or film. The narrative structure of the episode, as Robert Alter has pointed out, is paradigmatic of the narrative structure of *Don Quixote* as a whole: a multiple regress of imitations calling attention to their own status as imitations.<sup>32</sup> Master Pedro’s assistant, rather like a literary *benshi*, the silent-era explicators of films, narrates the action while Master Pedro manipulates the puppets. He cites the sources of his purportedly “true” story, in imitation of Cervantes himself with his facetious concern about the sources of *Don Quixote*. In tones reminiscent of Prospero in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, the assistant acknowledges the poverty of the means of representation (“Turn your eyes, gentlemen, to that tower, which you must imagine to be one of the towers of the alcazar of Saragossa”), much in the manner of Brechtian theater, with its minimal sets and exposed construction. The assistant presents the characters (“that character who appears over there . . . is the Emperor Charlemagne”) and calls attention to certain incidents and gestures (“Take notice, gentlemen, how the emperor . . .,” “See, too, that stately Moor . . .”) much like certain of Brecht’s mediating characters, such as Wong in *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, who serve the same function.

In the puppet show episode, Cervantes ridicules Don Quixote’s penchant for taking the representational fictions of art as fit objects for passionate identification. It is the desire to rescue papier-mâché maidens from fictional distresses that triggers Don Quixote’s intervention in the puppet show. Many of the self-conscious novelists who come in Cervantes’ wake try to make their readers critically aware of the pitfalls of taking a naïvely erotic stance toward their fictions. Anti-illusionistic art reminds us of our own eroticized complicity in artistic illusion. All fiction places us in the realm of half-belief, of “*je sais, mais quand même*,” where we believe even while we doubt. No one, presumably, accepts the naïve illusions of *trompe l’oeil*. The impression of reality does not generally become the illusion of reality. No sane person tries to swim in cinematic oceans or converse with statues, and not even the most ardent cinephile literally confuses Elizabeth Taylor with an Egyptian queen. No spectator at a play, Samuel Johnson pointed out, really forgets that he is seated in a theater. Yet fiction requires the kind of complicitous contract that Don Quixote suggests to Sancho Panza when Sancho presumes to overreach him in the description of an adventure: “Sancho, if you want me to believe what you saw in the sky, I wish you to accept my account of what I saw in the cave of Montesinos. I say no more.” It is precisely

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*Don Quixote on the Screen*

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*Don Quixote* has, from the very beginning, been caught up in the irresistible logic of sequels and adaptations. The “original” book underwent many mutations. The first part started as a short story, and then got padded with additional stories and materials and a new character, Sancho Panza. The second part of the novel, written years after the first part, was itself a kind of sequel. In Part II Cervantes takes into account some of the commentaries made about Part I. He admits that he included too many interpolated tales, but deflects the blame toward his Arab source. (Don Quixote himself also complains about Benengeli.) Indeed, Don Quixote encounters, in the second part, other characters reading a novel that claims to be “the Second part of *Don Quixote*,” by a certain “Avellaneda,” which is nothing less than a literary rip-off of the Cervantes novel. Like a novelist denouncing an unfaithful film adaptation based on his work, Cervantes denounces the theft of his characters. (Although Barthes and Foucault could announce, over three centuries later, the “death of the author,” flesh-and-blood authors demand respect, citation, and their royalty checks.) In a sense, then, *Don Quixote* itself thematizes the issue of adaptation, for example by bringing up story sources as relayed by different media. When Cervantes cuts off the battle between Don Quixote and the Biscayan because his **verbal source** has run out, but then continues the story when he discovers a **visual source** in the form of an illustration, he has already invoked a kind of “adaptation.”

Cervantes’ “hijo” (son) *Don Quixote* has itself generated many **hijos** and **nietos**. Even the subsequent translations of the novel, some of them consciously dishonest, along with the novel’s many illustrated versions and painterly renditions by figures ranging from Gustave Doré and Honoré Daumier to Picasso and Dali, can be seen as “adaptations.”<sup>33</sup> *Don Quixote* has furnished the theme for poets and dramatists, composers, orchestrators, cartoonists, painters, sculptors, and weavers of tapestries. Within six months of the novel’s first appearance in print, E. C. Riley points out, we find the “visual materializations” in the form of processional figures and carnival personae. There are also the innumerable literary and theatrical and operatic rewritings of *Don Quixote*: Chesterton’s *The Return of Don Quixote*, Miguel de Unamuno’s *Vida de Don Quixote y Sancho*, Borges’ *Pierre Menard*, Kathy Acker’s *Don Quixote*, the opera *Don Quixote*, the

musical *Man of La Mancha* and so forth. The post-text of *Quixote*, in the wider sense, would include Kafka's parable "The Truth about Sancho Panza," where Sancho turns into the character who has absorbed all the chivalric romances and Don Quixote into his imagined demon, thus transforming Cervantes' novel into what Harold Bloom calls "one long and rather bitter Jewish joke."<sup>34</sup> There have also been adaptations "at one remove," as it were. Graham Greene's novel *Monsignor Quixote* rewrites *Don Quixote* as a story of a provincial Spanish clergyman who goes to Madrid with a sectarian communist as his Sancho Panza. (Alec Guinness starred as Don Quixote in a made-for-television version in 1988.)

Cervantes' novel has also been adapted directly for the screen. I can only begin to address here the vast (and never-ending) production drawn from the Cervantes novel. A 1997 Spanish Film Festival, entitled "Cervantes in Images," offered no less than thirty-four films – features, shorts, documentaries, animated cartoons – inspired by *Don Quixote* and other Cervantic texts, and that is assuredly but a tiny proportion of the total. The list of adaptations would have to include at least the following: the 1903 silent French version; the 1908 silent Spanish version; the 1909 Emile Cohl animation; the 1915 American Edward Dillon version; the 1923 UK Maurice Elvey version; the 1926 Danish Lau Lauritzen version; the 1933 G. W. Pabst version; the 1934 animated cartoon by Ub Iwerks; the 1947 Spanish Rafael Gil version; the Orson Welles version initiated in 1955; the 1956 Israeli Nathan Axelrod version; the 1957 Russian Kozintsev version; the 1959 TV play *I, Don Quixote* (the theatrical source of *Man of La Mancha*); the 1962 Finnish version; the 1962 (Spanish) Vicente Escrivá version; the 1963 Carlo Rim version; the 1965 Russian (Yevgeni Karelov) *Deti Don-Kikhota* also known as *Quixote's Children*; the 1972 (Mexican) Roberto Gavaldon version; the 1972 musical *Man of La Mancha*; the 1973 Nureyev version of the Ballet; the 1988 Korean *Asphaltwiui Don Quixote* ("Quixote on Asphalt"); the 1989 Korean version *Naesalang Don Quixote*; the 1990 Alfonso Alvarez surreal short *Quixote Dreams*; the 1991 experimental video *The Cyberkinetic Dream of Don Quixote*; the 1992 Spanish Television version by Manuel Gutierrez Aragon; the 1996 (Russian/Bulgarian) version *Don Kikhot Vostratchatetsya* ("Don Quixote is Coming Back"); and the 2000 TNT Peter Yates version. Nor has this intertextual stream dried up. Currently there is talk of a Disney version slated for 2004 and a Phoenix Pictures project to feature John Cleese as Don Quixote and Robin Williams as Sancho.

Here I will discuss just a tiny sampling from this hypertextual cornucopia. Most adaptations of *Don Quixote* have been somewhat pedestrian costume dramas, as if the adapters were overwhelmed, even paralyzed, by the auratic

prestige of an original that has generated so many copies. Thus most adaptations of the novel simply place an actor, of a certain age, dressed in heavy, often rusty, knightly armor, riding on horseback alongside a portly Sancho Panza, of a certain grossness, mounted on his donkey. The adaptations then have the archetypical duo meander across whatever landscape has been chosen to stand in for the seventeenth-century Spanish countryside. Most of the adaptations include the well-known episodes – the windmills, the flock of sheep, the helmet – but edit out all presumably “uncinematic” materials – literary criticism, interpolated tales, and *mise-en-abyme* techniques. Some of the recent adaptations of *Don Quixote*, for example the TNT television version (2000) directed by Peter Yates and starring John Lithgow (Quixote), Bob Hoskins (Sancho Panza), Isabella Rossellini (the Duchess), and Vanessa Williams (Dulcinea), exploit special effects. Ripply images and strange superimpositions communicate the distorted nature of Quixote’s vision which turns windmills into giants. At one point, the Yates film has Quixote charge onto the stage of a troupe of traveling players to save a damsel in distress – an obvious transposition of the Master Pedro puppet-show episode. But his insanity is integrated into the spectacle; he joins the cast and accepts a round of applause. The interpretation of Cervantes’ protagonist, in this as in most of the adaptations, tends to be locked into the doxa of conventional post-romantic interpretation: Don Quixote the noble defender of lost causes, Don Quixote the hero of the imagination, Don Quixote the deluded knight, foiled always by Sancho Panza the earthbound realist. Few adaptations have tried to create a new gloss not only on Cervantes’ themes but also on his artistic processes and procedures: the inclusion of literary criticism as an integral part of creation, the multimedia effect of the juxtaposition of representations, and so forth.

There are occasional exceptions to this rule, however, cases where directors make imaginative leaps of interpretation, and such adaptations will provide my focus here. One of the most prestigious filmmakers to take on *Don Quixote* was the Russian Gregory Kozintsev. The director’s artistic roots were to be found in the experimental Soviet avant-garde of the 1920s, but over the years Stalinist censors obliged him to make many compromises. For Kozintsev, who also adapted *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, the adaptation of literary classics became a way of mollifying the authorities while still retaining a certain “edge.” Kozintsev filmed *Don Quixote* in 1957, just a year after Khrushchev’s anti-Stalinist speech to the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. The story is filmed against the backdrop of a harsh Crimean landscape, which becomes a kind of character in the film. Nicolai Cherkasov stars as Don Quixote, Yuri Tolubeyev as Sancho Panza, and I. Kasianova as Dulcinea.



Figure 1.1 Kozintsev's *Don Quixote* (1957), produced by Lenfilm Studio

Kozintsev's version of *Don Quixote* highlights both the novel's comic and burlesque features as well as its tragic and philosophical aspects. Just as Kozintsev had stressed the class dimension in his adaptation of *King Lear* – where Shakespeare's king begins to understand the "poor naked wretches" of the world only as he is himself shorn of his regal privileges – so too his *Don Quixote* stresses class conflict and ideology. Don Quixote, wearing a rusty suit of armor and a tin plate on his head, crusades for justice on behalf of the poor and down-trodden. The film especially denounces the cruelty of the aristocrats who torture Don Quixote with their malevolent pranks. The aristocratic Altisadora, for example, pretends to be in love with Quixote, but then laughs at him for thinking she could fall in love with a "broken, old stick" like Quixote. For a Russian audience, the aristocrats presumably triggered memory of the time of the Czars. Kozintsev also introduces a note of anti-clerical critique by having Sancho note that the sexton is not ringing the church bells to call the faithful to prayer, but rather to inform his mistress in a nearby village of the hour of his arrival.

The character of Don Quixote, meanwhile, is socially ambivalent. On the one hand, despite his **hidalgo** status, he confronts the powerful in order to rescue the oppressed, although he also never stops being enamored of nobility. But he really does succor the weak and defenseless; inherent in his notion of knight-errantry is a democratic principle of fair play and equality. The Dulcinea of the film admires Quixote because "he beats up people, irrespective of rank." (Sancho too, in the end, catches the contagion of Quixote's passion for justice; he too becomes a righter of wrongs.) But as someone who imposes his rigid chivalric dogmas and who declares war on anyone who does not share them, Kozintsev's Quixote might also be seen as a veiled critique of the contradictions of Stalinism. Quixote's impotent fundamentalism is ultimately less dangerous than that of the masters of Soviet power, of course, but as someone who sees himself as "ahead" of the benumbed and passively obedient masses, Quixote does seem to incarnate the commandeering ideology of the "vanguard party." His egalitarian projects result only in suffering. He rescues the child abused by his master, for example, but the "rescue" only leads to more beatings, to the point that the child asks Quixote not to rescue him any more.

Unlike the novel, and unlike many other adaptations of *Don Quixote*, Kozintsev's *Quixote* has no narrator. Instead, we have a surrogate narrator (and addressee) in the form of a group of Quixote's relatives and friends and neighbors. As a dramatized, intradiegetic, collective narrator, a kind of village chorus, they tell us about Quixote's exploits. Here Kozintsev picks up on a concern in the novel itself, since Don Quixote asks Sancho what people are

saying about him in the village, to which Sancho has to reply that “the common people look upon your Grace as an utter madman” (Part II, chapter 2). It is this village chorus that worries over Quixote’s madness – “He’s reading those romances again!” – and who report that Quixote mistook a flock of sheep for an army of giants. Perhaps as a concession to the then regnant aesthetic of “socialist realism,” the village chorus provides a kind of default baseline of reality for the fiction. With deliberate anachronism, they call Quixote’s language of sorcerers and potions and enchantments “out of date:” after all, they say, “we’re in the year 1605!”

One of the special “finds” of Kozintsev’s *Don Quixote* is to transform the peasant Aldonza Lorenzo, the woman who triggers Don Quixote’s fantasies, into a major figure. At the beginning of the film, just after Alonso Quijano has decided to become a knight-errant, Kozintsev stages a conversation between Don Quixote and Aldonza Lorenzo, where she expresses jealousy of Dulcinea as the ideal figure who Quixote has molded out of the raw materials of her body. Kozintsev thus humanizes Aldonza Lorenzo as someone who wants to be worthy of the imaginary Dulcinea that Quixote has created. Indeed, as Juan Bonilla points out, spectators of the film might even speculate that everything they are about to see is a fiction invented not by Quixote but by Aldonza, whose mind has been addled by the reading of chivalric romances and who has turned the pale and decrepit Alonso Quijano into a powerful knight who can restore her legitimate status as a noblewoman. This reading would give us, as Bonilla puts it, “a peasant who dreams of becoming a noblewoman thanks to the madness of a hidalgo who pretends to be a knight, while a hidalgo becomes a knight thanks to the fantasies of a peasant who needs him in order to be recognized as a noblewoman.”<sup>35</sup> Aldonza is thus “Quixotized;” she absorbs his fevered imagination. Or is it the other way around?

For Bakhtin, Cervantes wrote within the carnivalesque Menippean tradition. Apart from the many festival-like scenes in the film – for example, the circus-like dance sequence at the inn – this carnivalesque element is also evidenced in the first appearance of Sancho Panza. The film emphasizes what Bakhtin would call the “protuberances” of Sancho’s body, in this case his enormous buttocks.<sup>36</sup> Kozintsev also captures the dialogical, polyperspectival nature of the novel. Repeatedly, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza give rival, contrapuntal interpretations of what they see. Where Sancho sees an aristocratic carriage, Quixote sees a “devil’s chariot.” In such judgments, Quixote is often technically wrong, but poetically correct; it is indeed a carriage, but the aristocrats inside it are in fact virtual devils. His admired Aldonza/Dulcinea is a peasant, technically, but she also has beauty and spiritual nobility, so Quixote is not wrong to see

her as noble. The discourses of both Don Quixote and Sancho Panza thus undergo what Bakhtin would call “mutual relativization.”

An emphasis on class cruelty emerges in Kozintsev’s treatment of the episode, from Part II, involving Quixote and Sancho’s visit to the Dukes’ palace. The aristocrats in this sequence are aware of Don Quixote because they have already read about his adventures in Part I. Converting the palace into a theater, they mount a huge spectacle with the sole purpose of tricking Don Quixote into thinking that the illusory spectacle is real life. Here it is difficult to tell who is more mad, the initially tricked Quixote, or those who invest such excessive energies in tricking him. (Quixote’s ideal, mental knights drawn from romances behave much more humanely than the “real-life” aristocrats.) Kozintsev emphasizes the perverted cruelty of the “dupers,” and the naïve dignity of the duped. The “enchantment” consists in pretending to take literally Don Quixote’s own pretensions that he is a knight-errant. The aristocrats act out Quixote’s own fantasies. At the end of the episode, the buried, presumably dead Altisidora rises from the grave to applaud the spectacle, at which point Quixote finally recognizes the fiction for what it is. We become painfully aware of the gravity of the spiritual defeat of Quixote; having lost his dreams, he no longer has any reason to live. Yet as he lays dying, we see on his eyelids the superimposed image of the silhouetted Quixote and Sancho, looking like armed phantoms, wandering off into an infinite plain, presumably ready to do battle again for the Don’s ideals. Although Don Quixote had told Sancho about the many books that would be written about them, he neglected to mention the many films, such as Kozintsev’s, which would be made about their exploits.

Two adaptations of *Don Quixote* rewrite the Quixote story by emphasizing Dulcinea. Vicente Escrivá’s *Dulcinea* (1962), explores the Cervantes novel from the perspective of the Aldonza character who scarcely exists in the novel except as Quixote’s delirious fantasy of feminine perfection. In the film, Dulcinea is, like the original Dulcinea, a peasant, but this time she is a peasant who absorbs and then carries on Don Quixote’s ideals, ultimately dying for her convictions. Made during the twilight of the Franco dictatorship, much as the Kozintsev version was made during the twilight of Stalinism, the Escrivá version turns both the Don and Dulcinea into victims of the Inquisition, thus resuscitating what had been merely a tacit subtext in the original. Don Quixote is presented as Christ-like – a characteristic noted by many literary critics – and Dulcinea is his disciple. Yet the *mise-en-scène* pushes Don Quixote into the background, as Dulcinea moves to the foreground. In a gendered rewriting of the novel, Dulcinea is less interested in military valor and prowess than her hero and prototype. While the novel’s Don Quixote receives blows only because he has already given them, the

Christ-like Dulcinea receives them unprovoked. It is implied that Dulcinea and Quixote are victims of the Franco-like authorities. As Andrea Cervatiuc points out, the film's Dulcinea ultimately becomes a martyr in the Joan of Arc tradition, while the portrayal of the cruel authorities mocks the cynical idealizations of Franquista propaganda.<sup>37</sup> Cervantes' ironic picaresque is here transformed into hagiography as political allegory.

The Radio-TV Espanola short, *A Myth Called Dulcinea*, directed by Juan Guerrero Zamora, meanwhile, portrays Quixote's love object as a prostitute who treats the enamored Don most cruelly. While her friends try to persuade her to accept Quixote, she sarcastically rejects the Platonic love he celebrates. When her friends dress her up as a "Lady," Quixote ironically sees through the artifice; sorcerers, he complains, have masked the true Dulcinea, turning her into a whore. In a scene reminiscent of the *vade retro* sequence in Buñuel's *Simon of the Desert*, Quixote tells the over-made-up devil woman to "get thee behind me." The film ends with a Dulcinea of sad countenance in the foreground, regretful that she has not accepted Quixote's love, as Quixote and his squire wander off toward the setting sun.

Roberto Gavaldon's *Don Quijote cabalga de nuevo* (roughly "Don Quixote Rides Again," 1972) also takes the Cervantes novel as a point of departure for a new creation, this time from a Mexican point of view. The "de nuevo" in the title alerts the spectator that this adaptation will be impertinent and disrespectful. Indeed, the film's opening intertitles beg personal forgiveness from Miguel de Cervantes himself. The Gavaldon adaptation, as Andrea Cervatiuc points out, builds on a specifically Mexican intertext, to wit the tradition of seeing *Don Quixote* through a juridical lens, emphasizing Quixote himself as an advocate or legal purist. But here Quixote is the accused, while Sancho Panza becomes a means for satirizing legal discourse. Sancho's political platform, meanwhile, forms a parody not of Franco but rather of the official "revolutionary" discourse of Mexico's PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party). Political allusions also inform the Channel 4 TV film *Rocinante* (1987). Set in mid-1980s' England, and more specifically during the aftermath of the 1984–5 miners' strike, the film has a Quixotic character named Bill who embarks on a dreamlike odyssey around England, taking photographs of anything that interests him.

The Spanish Television version by Manuel Gutierrez Aragon is much more thorough than most, since its serial five-part film form allows for a more comprehensive version. The film spends a good deal of time establishing the character of Don Quixote as an obsessive reader **before** his launching out into the land of adventures. A veteran of Cervantes adaptations – he had already made very free adaptations of *Novelas ejemplares* – Aragon departs from the romantic

view of Quixote as the idealistic dreamer of impossible dreams in order to stress the more classical view that he is mad, and that some of his beatings are well deserved. The casting of Fernando Rey as Quixote also brings with it a number of intertextual echoes. First, Rey had already played two other characters from *Don Quixote* – Sanson Carrasco in the 1947 Rafael Gil version, and Sancho Panza in the 1963 Carlo Rim version. He also brings with him the memory of the Quixotic characters that he had played in Buñuel films, most notably Don Jaime in *Viridiana* and Mathieu in *That Obscure Object of Desire*.

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### The Realistic Magic of Orson Welles

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One of the most intriguing adaptations of *Don Quixote* is the partially finished and never commercially released version by Orson Welles. Arguably one of the most “Cervantic” of directors, Welles was one of the most versatile practitioners of the art of adaptation in diverse media – radio, film, television – having adapted not only Shakespeare’s plays (*Othello*, *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, the Henry plays in *Chimes at Midnight*) but also such varied works of fiction as Tarkington’s *The Magnificent Andersons*, Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Kafka’s *The Trial*, Isak Dienson’s *The Immortal Story*, Eric Ambler’s *Journey into Fear*, Whit Masterson’s *Badge of Evil*, and Melville’s *Moby Dick*.<sup>38</sup> The more important point, however, is that Welles was a believer in **unfaithful** adaptations. Why adapt a work, he frequently said, if you’re not going to change it? Even Welles’s most famous media stunt, the Mercury Theater’s Hallowe’en “War of the Worlds” CBS broadcast, was an “unfaithful version” of the H. G. Wells science-fiction novel, one which relocated the story from Victorian England’s future to Depression Era New York City. Welles’s broadcast alarmed listeners, who took it as real, precisely because it was **not** set in Victorian England, and because Welles innovatively mingled the codes of radio reporting with the fabulous idea of a Martian onslaught. (For more on Welles and H. G. Wells, see the essay by Julian Cornell in *A Companion to Literature and Film*.)<sup>39</sup>

Welles was not only a “Renaissance Man” – in the sense of being a multi-talented artist who staged plays, wrote novels, scripted radio programs, and directed films – but also a “Man of the Renaissance,” in that his aesthetic enthusiasms were rooted in the carnivalesque exuberance of Shakespeare and Cervantes. In a case of elective artistic affinities, Welles represents a latter-day high-tech prolongation of the Menippean, carnivalesque, and Cervantic tradition. Welles’s Rabelaisian spirit and “excessive” body reminds us in its gigantism of Bakhtin’s

account of carnival and Rabelais in *Rabelais and his World*. Welles's body is cut to the measure of Falstaff (whom Welles portrayed in *Chimes at Midnight*), the most grossly irreverent of Shakespeare's protagonists. The Welles body is reminiscent of Bacchus, or of the fat lords of misrule, called Rei Momos, who launch the carnival celebrations in Brazil, and that Welles himself registered in *It's All True*, much as he registers carnival celebrations and the running of the bulls in Pamplona in his *Don Quixote*. It is no accident that Welles's *Don Quixote* shows the Dionysian director himself accepting an award from the "Sherry Wine Association."

Welles had always been a breaker of rules, a rebel figure who placed himself in opposition to dominant theatrical and cinematic practice. And here we have another sense in which Welles can be compared to Cervantes. The Spanish author, as we have seen, wrote **against** a tradition – chivalric romance – while creating for the reader the same pleasures generated by the tradition being attacked. Welles in a sense also filmed against a tradition, to wit the dominant Hollywood tradition. Hollywood entertainments, in this sense, can be seen as the twentieth-century equivalent of the facile and improbable pleasures of chivalric romance. (Harrison Ford and Mel Gibson and Samuel Jackson now play the contemporary Amadis who rescue damsels and slay dragons.) Yet Welles never forgot the need for spectatorial pleasure. His goal was to make complex, multi-leveled, critical films which were nevertheless hugely entertaining, in a manner reminiscent of a Shakespeare or a Cervantes.

Like Cervantes himself, Welles represents the zenith of **both** realism, on the one hand – we recall his fastidious concern with accuracy in the symptomatically titled *It's All True*, or the deep-space *mise-en-scène* praised for its realism by André Bazin – **and** reflexivity and magic, on the other. Indeed, Welles was a practiced magician, as he demonstrated not only in *F for Fake* but also in numerous television performances. Indeed, one might say that Welles is the magician behind his films, much as Cervantes was ultimately the "sorcerer" lurking behind the "enchantments" of *Don Quixote*. Welles's oeuvre as a whole creates a dialectic between two poles: the "true" and the "real" of *It's All True* and the "fake" and the "magical" of *F for Fake*.

Welles began shooting *Don Quixote* as a CBS-TV drama in 1955. The drama was refused by a CBS executive, but Welles continued with the film, and was reportedly still working on it on the eve of his death in 1985. Shot in Spain, Italy, Morocco, and Mexico, the film was to feature Francisco Reigueria as Don Quixote, Akim Tamiroff as Sancho Panza, and Patty McCormack as Dulcinea. The film was so slow in arriving that Welles joked that he planned to entitle it after the question so often asked of him: *When Will You Ever Finish Your Don*

*Quixote?* The film was only posthumously assembled, culled from reams of footage and an hour of Orson Welles's recorded voice reading the voice-over narration and the lines of the two main characters. The search for the footage was itself a chivalric quest, since it was compiled by Spanish film distributor Patxi Irigoyen after an 18-month search across two continents. The material was finally fashioned by Spanish director Jesus Franco into a 116-minute 35 mm film, culled from over 300,000 feet of footage. Irigoyen was convinced that he had all the material except a scene in which Don Quixote attacks the movie screen. Yet at one point Italian film editor Mauro Bonnani asked for a halt in the première of the Irigoyen/Franco version because the film did not include 20,000 meters of footage in his possession. The more or less completed film was presented at the 1992 Expo in Seville under the title *Don Quixote by Orson Welles*. Just as Cervantes' *Don Quixote* was beset by debates about the relations between its two parts, so Welles's adaptation was the trampoline for posthumous debates about how Welles, as opposed to Jesus Franco, would have edited the film. (Jesus Franco himself said that he had used only a tiny proportion of the footage that Welles had filmed.)



**Figure 1.2** Francisco Reigueria in Orson Welles's *Don Quixote*, produced by El Silencio Producciones

Welles's experience in filming *Don Quixote* in some ways homologized Cervantes' experience in writing *Don Quixote*. As Welles himself put it, "The same thing happened to me that had happened to Cervantes; just as he started to write a short story and ended up writing a novel, I started with a short TV project and ended up with a feature film."<sup>40</sup> The theme of the lure of the ideal and the brute resistance of the real, so central to the Cervantes novel, was in this case played out on the plane of film production, in the form of well-laid plans being rudely laid to rest by the financial and practical contingencies of independent production. Cervantes' interrupted textual narrative became in the Welles case the constantly interrupted narrative of the production itself, constantly beset by shortages of funds and the untimely death of key performers. Like most novels, but unlike most films, *Don Quixote* was self-financed. As Welles himself pointed out, publishers, unlike producers, do not usually force a novelist to finish a book if the author wants to take a break."<sup>41</sup> Just as Cervantes referred to *Don Quixote* as his *hijo* (son), Welles referred to his adaptation as *il mio bambino*. And just as Cervantes never stopped tinkering with *Don Quixote* – indeed, he only finished it because it was beginning to be plagiarized – Welles continued playing with and re-editing the materials of *Don Quixote* until the very eve of his death.

Welles's project was itself Quixotic, in that it pursued the impossible dream of adapting an extremely prestigious work of fiction on a shoestring budget. Welles called *Don Quixote* a "home movie," and his low-budget approach homologizes, as it were, Quixote's own genteel poverty and low-budget adventurism. The shoot itself was an improbable adventure. Welles's improvisational approach, with a minimal crew of six people, resembled that of an underground film. Welles did lighting and second camera, his wife Oja Kodar worked as continuity person, the driver carried the lamps, and so forth. Welles described the process as follows:

it was made without cuts, without even a narrative trajectory, without even a synopsis. Every morning, the actors, the crew and I would meet in front of the hotel. Then we'd set off and invent the film in the street, like Mack Sennett . . . The story, the little events, everything is improvised. It's made of things we found in the moment, in the flash of a thought, but only after rehearsing Cervantes for four weeks. Because we rehearsed all the scenes from Cervantes as if we were going to perform them . . . Then we went into the street and performed not Cervantes, but an improvisation supported by these rehearsals, by the memory of the characters.<sup>42</sup>

Here filmmaking itself becomes a form of knight-errantry, a picaresque series of on-the-road improvisations.

Welles treats the filming of *Don Quixote* not as a “faithful” costume drama but rather as a transposition and actualization of the novel. In this sense, the film recalls Welles’s innovative practices in the theater, for example his audacious modern-dress version of *Julius Caesar*, which compared the politics of ancient Rome to contemporary fascism, or his all-black “Voodoo *Macbeth*,” performed in Harlem in 1936, which used African musicians and relocated the play in the revolutionary Haiti of the “Black Jacobins.”

Welles does not only update the story of *Don Quixote*, he also emulates and updates Cervantes’ narrative techniques. Unlike most adapters of *Don Quixote*, Welles does not eliminate the self-reflexive touches. Picking up on a technique developed in Part II of the novel, he repeatedly has people say: “Look! There’s Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. We read a book about them.” Working “in the manner of Cervantes,” Welles also self-reflexively thematizes the obstacles and hazards and trade secrets of film production, just as Cervantes had spoken in *Don Quixote* of the mechanical processes of printing and publishing. While Cervantes stressed the anachronistic nature of Don Quixote’s worldview, rooted as it was in medieval values and in an outmoded forms of literature, Welles in the film also deploys anachronism as a structuring device. Sancho is amazed to discover the “box full of news,” i.e. a TV monitor. But at the end of the film, Quixote reconciles himself with “progress,” proclaiming that he sees nothing wrong with human beings going to the moon; what bothers him is the transformation of human beings into machines. The moon is still associated with poetry and dreams, but the earth has become dominated by mechanical apparatus. Welles transposes the notion of anachronism. He originally wanted to send Quixote to the moon, but since astronauts had actually gone to the moon, Welles gave up a sequence that would no longer have had the charm of the fantastic.

Welles pointed out in interviews that the anachronisms in *Don Quixote* had lost their efficacy because “the differences between the sixteenth and the fourteenth centuries are not very clear in our minds . . . [therefore] I’ve simply translated this anachronism into modern terms.”<sup>43</sup> As a result, Welles shows Quixote in medieval armor walking alongside Spaniards in contemporary dress, knights on horseback next to drivers in cars, the presence of television, and so forth. A newsreel speaks of NASA and missiles. If Quixote’s swords and armor were already anachronistic in the age of gunpowder, Welles’s film implies, they are astronomically more anachronistic in the world of NASA and space missions. Indeed, Sancho Panza lacks the vocabulary to even name the new technologies. For him, a radio is a “singing box.” After glimpsing Welles’s Don Quixote on a TV monitor, Sancho asks passers-by, as his hands outline the shape of a TV set, whether they have seen his master “in a small box.”

Welles's treatment of anachronism betrays a certain amount of ambivalence. While ridiculing Quixote's blindness, Welles seems to sympathize with his veritable rage against mechanistic modernity. In his *Vida de Don Quixote y Sancho*, the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno had argued that Quixote was not deluded in seeing windmills as monsters. Although windmills later became an object of nostalgia, in Cervantes' time they exemplified a new form of high-tech modernity which revolutionized the social landscape. As producers of energy, windmills anticipated locomotives, turbines, steam engines, automobiles, and missiles, expressive of all the ambiguity of the "dialectics of enlightenment."

According to Juan Cobos, Welles's original project was entitled "Here comes Don Quixote; a Spanish Panorama," and was intended just as much as an introduction to Spain as an adaptation of Cervantes' novel. Welles wrote the following introduction to the project:

This is not a film about Don Quixote. It is a film about Spain. A very personal vision of the country and its people through the regard of a producer-director, presented by himself as if he were playing host to a group of friends and guests.

Orson Welles will appear throughout the film as himself, speaking to the public in direct and intimate terms. He will be a guide, the narrator, and master of ceremonies.<sup>44</sup>

In this sense, the Quixote film forms part of a Wellesian tradition which began with another personally narrated and ultimately unfinished film, *It's All True* (made in 1992), meant to be a "very personal vision" of Brazil much as *Don Quixote* was a personal vision of Spain.

The Welles version of *Don Quixote* revels in the language and style of the novel. Welles is among the few who seems to have grasped the novel's fundamental modernity, here updated through a jazzistic montage and a stylized *mise-en-scène* deploying Welles's usual baroque, oblique-angled style. Welles is strictly "faithful" to the letter of the text, especially insofar as Don Quixote's dialogue is concerned, yet he recontextualizes the words through surprising images. Don Quixote's encounter with an "infernal machine," for example, is rendered as a highway meeting between Quixote and a woman astride a Lambretta motorbike. Perhaps remembering the crucial role of radio in his initial formation as an artist, Welles recorded his commentaries first, then dubbed the voices, and had his editor follow the verbal rhythms set down by the recordings. Like Cervantes, who makes a cameo appearance in *Don Quixote*, Welles too appears in the fiction: he is both heard as a narrating voice and seen as a character going by his own

name and as the filmmaker that he is, in the film itself. We hear Welles's directorial cues, and see him filming, with lightweight equipment, from a moving automobile. The novel's references to "enchantments" are here rendered as the "magic" of cinema.

While Welles's *Don Quixote* is marred by the posthumous editing and by the monotony of the studio-sound of the dubbed voices, it is nevertheless possible at least to glimpse the exhilarating aesthetic possibilities the film opens up. First of all, the film audaciously mingles a wide gamut of storytelling procedures. Unlike most adapters of *Don Quixote*, Welles does not see the novel merely as a source of story episodes, but also as a series of cues for very diversified narrational techniques. First, we have Welles as voice-over narrator speaking in his own voice. As narrator, Welles describes the film as an affectionate introduction to Spain. He also offers his own theories about Don Quixote. The "knight of the sad countenance," he tells us, "was not a madman but a gentleman," who moves us because, in words that could apply equally to Welles himself at Don Quixote's age, he has "so much heart, and so little means." Sancho Panza, meanwhile, is "marvelous even in his stupidity." His friendship with Don Quixote as registered by Cervantes "has survived" – and here we find a veiled reference to Spanish dictator Generalissimo Franco – "various tyrannical regimes." By offering a commentary on the novel and its characters, Welles emulates, as it were, Cervantes' own metafictional technique of including literary criticism in the work.

Welles's second narrational strategy involves the relaying of the exact words of the novel itself, whether directly through dialogue, or indirectly through narrative voice-over, or through summary, as in the following: "The author of this work remembers that he preferred to pass over the following events in silence as he fears that he will not be believed. Nevertheless, the author says he recorded everything just as it happened." Although the words are Cervantes' own, in a filmic context they become an ironic allusion to the veristic claims made for film as a medium, i.e. claims that film represents reality "just as it is" due to the objectivity of the camera.

A third narrational technique involves a kind of "threshold encounter" between the off-screen narrator and the on-screen character. When Welles as off-screen narrator expresses an opinion, for example, Sancho as on-screen character dialogues with him (and with us as spectators), telling us that "He's right too!" The narrator's grateful "Thank you, Sancho" is then followed by Sancho's polite "You're welcome."

A fourth narrational device involves soliloquy, as when Sancho's interior monologues are "overheard" by the spectator. We are reminded of Welles's Shakespeare adaptations, where close-to-camera soliloquy forms a frequent technique.



**Figure 1.3** Welles as Welles in *Don Quixote*, produced by El Silencio Producciones

Or at times the film offers something close to interior monologue, as when we overhear Sancho's thoughts, acoustically up-close, but visually distant.

Welles's adaptation, like the novel, is relentlessly reflexive, much in the "manner of Cervantes." Not only do we see Welles in the act of filming, but we also hear reports that the character Don Quixote has attacked the movie screen, much as his literary prototype attacked Master Pedro's puppets. (Unfortunately, the footage staging this key passage seems to have been lost.) Sancho's job as an extra on the Welles film-within-the-film becomes the pretext for calling attention to the actual processes of making films. As Sancho follows his donkey off the road, he is repeatedly warned by the director to stay "in frame." When the scene is finished, we hear production jargon such as "Cut" and "That's a wrap." Sancho promises his wife that the film will make him rich and famous. Sancho's mediatic "fifteen minutes of fame" come to replace the islands and governorships which formed the promised booty in the novel, a perfect correlative in an age where celebrity often seems more desirable than property or position. And just as Cervantes, in the second part of *Don Quixote*, has other characters

recognize the Don and Sancho because they had already read about them, so Welles has other characters speak of having seen them, whether in person or on television.

In Welles's *Don Quixote*, film's "automatic difference" reveals the feats that only film can perform. We discern this special quality in Welles's renderings of many of the anthological passages from the novel. In the sequence based on Don Quixote's battle with a flock of sheep – imagined to be an enemy army – Welles places the camera at ground level. We see Don Quixote, lying on his back, as the sheep jump laterally over his flattened body. Sancho Panza, meanwhile, runs toward the camera from the deep background space, rushing to rescue his fallen master. Throughout the film, Welles exploits the specific resources of the cinema. He plays with scale and focal length, so that the spatial relationships and the relative scales between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are in constant mutation. High angles make both characters disappear, as if camouflaged, into the arid landscape, or solarized backlighting renders Quixote as an abstract silhouette, reminiscent of the stringy lines of Picasso's famous drawing.

Only a film can show, rather than merely describe, the plastic beauty of windmills. Cervantes spoke poetically of the "big wings" of the windmills, but only a film can literally mobilize the Cubist multiplication of perspectives on a windmill, as Welles does, so that the blades of the windmill slice toward the camera, or "wipe" the frame, or cut up the landscape by being placed in the foreground. Such are the potential "gains" in the translation from novel to film. And while the Cervantes novel features very little physical description, cinema's "excess" physicality can also give us the **actual** landscapes (or more accurately their imagistic simulacrum) and the beautifully striated skies of Spain (and of the other Mediterranean countries where Welles filmed). And while Cervantes can verbally describe Sancho Panza looking at the moon through a telescope, only a film such as Welles's can give us a point-of-view shot showing what Sancho sees as he looks through a telescope. Film also provides the material and visual contextualization of abstract ideas. Welles deploys angle and *mise-en-scène*, for example, to contrast the Don's idealism and the squire's down-to-earthness; while low angles idealize and heroicize Don Quixote, high angles place Sancho Panza against an earthly backdrop, since he is "of the earth, earthly." Parallel montage contrasts Quixote's lofty encomiums to Dulcinea's beauty, set on mountain-tops, with Sancho's skeptical reflections as he searches for her in rural settings crowded with pigs, cows, and farm girls.

Welles also captures the multi-perspectival feeling of the novel. His rendering of the combat with the windmills, for example, alternates the perspective of Quixote, imagining giants, and the perspective of the skeptical Sancho Panza

who sees only windmills. But Welles does not use special effects to achieve this result; he deploys only *mise-en-scène* and framing to mold two contrasting perspectives. Just as Cervantes alluded to the historical events of his time, Welles laces the film with critical comments on contemporary issues. Welles even manages to throw barbs both at General Franco – an off-screen voice denounces “obscurantism, oppression, and tyranny” – and at the entertainment industry. A street salesman tries to sell Sancho “the moon for two pesetas,” i.e. a look through a telescope taken as the equivalent of the moon itself.

Welles also practices the Cervantic technique of *mise-en-abyme*, of representations embedded in other representations. The film proliferates in shots of statues, coats of arms, etchings, and other representations of Don Quixote. A newsreel in the film refers to “Orson Welles’s adaptation of Cervantes’ well-known novel.” Just as Cervantes’ novel was multi-generic and pluri-stylistic, Welles’s film too mingles staged episodes and documentary materials, for example mini-documentaries about Spanish cities and festivals. Correlating genre with character, Welles links Don Quixote to the fiction film, and Sancho Panza to the documentary, as if the two major modalities of filmmaking formed generic correlatives to Quixote’s romanesque fantasies and Sancho’s novelistic realism. At times, Welles places his fictional characters in the middle of documentary footage, much as Cervantes mingled fictional and “real” characters. Sancho Panza is included in footage of the “running of the bulls” in Pamplona, where we also see Henry Fonda as a camera-wielding tourist. Many sequences consist of documentary-like successions of still shots of photogenic windmills, historical monuments, steel-and-glass buildings, and so forth. Sancho Panza’s quest for Dulcinea triggers documentary shots of the Spanish provinces. A newsreel, reminiscent of the parodic “March of Time” newsreel that opens *Citizen Kane*, shows Welles being interviewed by Spanish television, alongside reports on US Navy missiles, NASA and the space race. Welles, who later became known for his Charles Masson wine commercials on TV, even receives a sherry wine prize for his connoisseurship. Here Welles brings us close to the media-saturated reflexive world of postmodern representation.<sup>45</sup>

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From *Don Quixote* to Postmodernism

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Although it might seem a stretch to link Cervantes to postmodernism, in a sense the novel *Don Quixote* anticipated virtually all of the contemporary reflexive devices characteristic of both modernism and postmodernism: the cameo appearance by

the author; the metacritical commentary on fiction itself; the recycling of pre-existing materials; the direct address to the reader/spectator; the penchant for interruption and “breaks;” the foregrounding of readership (and spectatorship); the inclusion of interpolated materials; polyperspectivalism; the combinatory collage aesthetics; the mutual relativization of genre; the blurring of boundaries between the fictive and the real; and *mise-en-abyme* technique. Cervantes’ practice of juxtaposing various types of media representations, for example the placing of the original manuscript by Cid Hamete Benengeli, in Arabic, alongside lifelike pictures representing scenes from that novel (Don Quixote and the Biscayan), makes him a proleptic practitioner of what would now be called “multi-media” or “hypertext.” At the same time, the very fact that we can see Cervantes as postmodern suggests that the term itself is somewhat inflated and ahistorical; what postmodern discourse presents as “new and exciting” is in fact not new at all.

Nor is aesthetic postmodernism new in the cinema. Long before postmodernism, a venerable tradition in the cinema explored the same frame-breaking, puppet-smashing theme developed in the Master Pedro’s puppet-show passage in *Don Quixote*, through scenes where cinematic representation is brought to a halt by the naïve intervention of a personage who confounds reality with filmic spectacle. In E. S. Porter’s *Uncle Josh at the Picture Show* (1902), the country bumpkin title character goes to the movies and sees a farmer taking advantage of a woman. Josh rolls up his sleeves and angrily rushes toward the projected image, felling the screen and revealing the rear projector and the projectionist. Godard’s Jarryesque *Les Carabiniers* (1963) cites and revises the Porter film by having the film’s obtuse protagonist, ironically named Michelangelo, try to caress the screen image of a naked woman in a bathtub, succeeding only in pulling down the screen.<sup>46</sup> (Woody Allen’s *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, as we shall see in chapter 4, reverses the movement by having the characters leave the screen to join the spectators.)

In the broadest sense, the post-text “adaptations” of *Quixote* include the audio-cassette “adaptation” readings of the novel, the 1985 Nick Kershaw pop song “Don Quixote what do you say . . . are we shouting at windmills like you?” and even the Don Quixote Restaurant and the Dulcinea Ballroom at the Hotel Cervantes in Torremolinos, Spain. The post-text also includes the 1960s’ cartoon that shows Quixote in his underwear, on a donkey, and Sancho in armor on Rocinante, anachronistically predicting: “You realize, don’t you, that this will change all of Western literature.”<sup>47</sup> Don Quixote has even been symbolically launched into space to defend a new damsel in distress – Mother Earth. In an article entitled “Don Quixote against the Asteroids,” *Le Monde* (October 18,

2002) informs us that the European Space Agency is considering a number of projects articulating possible defenses against asteroids. One of the projects foresees two spaceships: one, named "Don Quixote," is to crash into an incoming asteroid, while the other, named "Sancho Panza," will observe what occurs before, during, and after impact. As in the original novel, this space odyssey "adaptation" has Quixote receive most of the blows, while Sancho just stands by and watches.

In literary terms, *Don Quixote* has been "postmodernized," not only by Borges in *Pierre Menard* but also by Kathy Acker in her 1986 novel *Don Quixote*. Published in the same year as the English translation of Lyotard's essay on postmodernism, the Acker "adaptation" is divided into three parts: "The Beginning of Night," "Other Texts," and "The End of the Night." Don Quixote is now a woman, but a dead one, who narrates the story. (We will encounter both the "dead narrator" and "the mute character" again in subsequent chapters). The subtitle of the Second Section goes as follows: "Being dead, Don Quixote could no longer speak, being born into and part of a male world, she had no speech of her own. All she could do was read male texts which weren't hers."<sup>48</sup>

The book opens as Don Quixote – Acker does not feminize the name into **Dona** Quixote – is about to have an abortion, at which time she conceives the improbable goal of loving another person and thus righting "every manner of political, social and individual wrong" (p. 9). For this Don Quixote, "having an abortion is a method of becoming a knight and saving the world" (p. 11). But the portrayal of the abortion also spoofs Quixotic/chivalric language so that the mundane act of urination becomes a "formidable adventure:"

This was the manner in which she pissed. "For women, Oh woman who is all woman who is my beauty, give me strength and vigor. Turn the eyes of the strength and wonderfulness of all women upon this one female, this female who's trying . . . this female who's locked up in the hospital and thus must pass through so formidable an adventure." (p. 12)

Acker also spoofs Cervantes' chapter titles ("How Don Quixote cured the infection left-over from her abortion so she could keep having adventures"), his interpolated tales ("The Selling of Lulu") and his metacritical disquisitions ("Intrusion of a Badly Written Section"). Like the Latin American "magic realists," Acker takes Quixote to the Americas: "Don Quixote in America, the Land of Freedom." By using cut-'n'-mix hypertextual strategies, Acker interbreeds various texts. Emulating Cervantes' own practice of citation, she has her

characters discuss the work of Deleuze, Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault, while also evoking the Derridean critique of origins by claiming that the Arabs “do not believe in “originality.”<sup>49</sup> Acker further carnivalizes the Cervantic text by inserting obscene materials from the Marquis de Sade, while citing anti-porn feminist Andrea Dworkin, alongside Ronald Reagan, as “evil enchanters” with whom Quixote must do battle (p. 102).

Acker’s Quixote is, above all, a reader, although a skeptical one. And here we remember that Quixote himself, rather like a contemporary adolescent addicted to video games or to Internet surfing, buried himself in his books so that his “brain dried up and he lost his wits.” Living his literary life 150 years after the invention of the printing press, Don Quixote exemplifies the power of books to create an alluring realer-than-real world. The perennial desire to live out a fantasy drawn from fictional worlds takes on new proportions in the world of the new media. The computer, as Janet H. Murray points out, can now provide a cyber location for places we long to visit:

A few clicks on the World Wide Web and we are instantly in one of the feudal fiefdoms of the “current Middle Ages” set up by the Society for Creative Anachronism . . . Unlike Don Quixote’s books, digital media take us to a place where we can act out our fantasies. With a telnet connection or a CD-Rom drive, we can kill our own dragons . . . putting on a VR helmet or standing before a megascreen, we can do it all in 3-D. For the modern Don Quixote, the windmills have been pre-programmed to turn into knights.<sup>50</sup>

Just as Cervantes has Don Quixote and Sancho Panza meet people who have read about them, mingling readers and fictional characters in an impossibly hybrid space, characters on world wide web serials answer public fan mail and invite fans to post their own opinions on common bulletin boards.

As the cinema in its long-heralded specificity now seems to be dissolving into the larger bit-stream of the audiovisual media, be they photographic, electronic, or cybernetic, the cinema must now compete, as purveyor of fictions, with television, video games, computers, and virtual reality. These new media open up “immersive” possibilities far beyond those enjoyed (and suffered) by Don Quixote. A new blockbuster cinema, made possible by huge budgets, sound innovations, and digital technologies, favors a “sound and light show” cinema of sensation. “Concert films” immerse the spectator “in” the image. Sensation predominates over narrative, and sound over image, while verisimilitude is no longer a goal but only the technology-dependent production of vertiginous, prosthetic delirium. No longer the deluded master of the image, the spectator becomes the

inhabitant of (and interlocutor with) the image. And Don Quixote himself has now wandered into this digital world. A laser-generated cartoon game called *Super Don Quixote* is advertised as showing “a would-be windmill-tilter [guiding] the Don past hazards new, fending off giants or skipping from rock to rock to avoid being swept off in a flood.”<sup>51</sup>

Cervantes meets the postmodern again in the recent abortive attempt by Terry Gilliam, one of the founders of the eminently postmodern group Monty Python and director of *Brazil*, to make a revisionist version of *Don Quixote*. Like Orson Welles, Terry Gilliam had been trying for years to adapt the Cervantes novel. Gilliam had a \$35 million budget to make an adaptation, to be entitled *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*, in a transparent allusion to *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. It was to feature Jean Rochefort as Don Quixote, Vanessa Paradis as Dulcinea, and Johnny Depp as a modern advertising genius who, while shooting a commercial, gets magically transported back into Cervantes’ seventeenth century, where Don Quixote mistakes him for Sancho Panza. But the film production itself became a tragic-comic epic, as Gilliam took the kinds of body-blows to which the Don himself had been subjected. After seven weeks of pre-production in Spain, the whole project was undone by catastrophic floods, disabling illnesses (Jean Rochefort’s prostate infection), translation problems, and the anachronistic roar of jets taking off from a nearby NATO base. Finally, the insurance company, the contemporary equivalent of Cervantes’ obscure and demonic forces, called a halt to the enterprise. It was as if, as Gilliam himself pointed out, a “Quixotic” project was undone by modern-day “sorcerers.” The journalistic accounts of the disaster, meanwhile, inevitably spoke of “tilting at windmills” and “pursuing the impossible dream.” An “unmaking of” documentary, *Lost in La Mancha*, records the film’s “trajectory of disenchantment,” summed up in Gilliam’s anti-climactic phrase: “Lights, camera, and inaction.” (Like the Don himself, Gilliam plans to continue despite the blows.)

On reflection, it makes perfect sense that one of the founders of *Monty Python* would adapt *Don Quixote*. Artists like Gilliam are, in a sense, the Cervantic *picaros* of our own time, much as *Don Quixote* was the *Monty Python* of its time. Apart from Gilliam’s own delusional foibles – the delirious budget of *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, his quixotic struggles with powerful producers – the title itself, with its allusion to the Western, reminds us that the Western genre is the contemporary equivalent of the chivalric fictions mocked by Cervantes. And *Monty Python* too has always been highly Cervantic. Comic epic, for example, has been a *Monty Python* staple. *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* invoked the same archive of materials referenced by chivalric literature and *Don Quixote* – the legends revolving around Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. *The Life of Brian*

constitutes mock hagiography, where an ordinary man is mistaken for the Messiah. But apart from theme, *Monty Python* is stylistically Cervantic by being parodic, multigeneric, reflexive, and digressive (partly because it is the product of six very different people writing disconnected scenes). And what could be more Cervantically polyperspectival than the unforgettable debate, on one of the *Monty Python* TV shows, that opposed the Sancho-like realist Mr Praline, convinced that the parrot is dead – given the visual evidence of its falling to the ground, lack of perceptible respiration, being nailed to its perch, and so forth – against the Quixotic shopkeeper, who cites the bird’s strength and his affection for fjords as clear evidence that it is alive.

If *Don Quixote* evokes the advent of both modernity as an epoch and of modernism as an artistic tendency, the contemporary reincarnations of Cervantic reflexivity evoke the hyper-real world of media politics, the incessant self-consciousness of contemporary television programming, and the postmodern novel. Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose*, for example, calls up the category on which *Don Quixote* was based – comic epic – in that the plot revolves around a monk’s censorship (and burning) of the lost volume of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, the one having to do with comedy rather than tragedy. At the same time, reflexivity evokes the referentless world of the simulacrum, where all of life is always already caught up in mass-mediated representations. Postmodernism also implies an altered approach to parody. In the mid-1980s, Fredric Jameson suggested that the modern and modernist uses of a critical, hard-edged parody – rooted, as we have seen, in traditions going back to Cervantes and beyond – had given way to the postmodern practice of pastiche as expressive of the cultural logic of late capitalism. John Docker, in *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*,<sup>52</sup> on the other hand, saw parody as the all-pervasive genre in contemporary mass culture. In this context, we find the “postmodern reflexivity” of commercial television, which is often reflexive and self-referential. TV shows like *The David Letterman Show* and *Beavis and Butthead* and *The Daily Show* are relentlessly reflexive, usually within a pervasively ironic stance which looks with distaste at any position-taking. Young people today are as likely to learn about the news from the Jon Stewart parody *Daily Show* as from the “real” news, which given the nature of “serious” news is probably just as well. Many of the distancing procedures characterized as reflexive in Cervantes or Welles or Godard now typify MTV and many television shows. Pastiche, as the most typical aesthetic expression of postmodernism, constitutes a blank, neutral practice of mimicry, without any satiric agenda or sense of alternatives, nor, for that matter, any mystique of “originality” beyond the ironic orchestration of dead styles, whence the centrality

of “intertextuality” and what Jameson calls the “random cannibalization of all the styles of the past.”<sup>53</sup> While Cervantic parody exposed social reality through the critique of fictions, postmodern television exposes nothing but its own devices.

Strategies of parodic and reflexive allusion that go back at least as far as Cervantes are therefore central to postmodern popular culture in both its liberatory and regressive forms. The interrelated worlds of rap and hip-hop show a fondness for direct address within a cut-’n’-mix “sampling” aesthetic. The postmodernist, as Gilbert Adair put it in a title, “always rings twice.” Thus commercials for Diet Coke feature long-deceased Hollywood actors, updating and commercializing the Kuleshov experiments in montage. The music video for Madonna’s *Material Girl*, meanwhile, encodes *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, even though some of Madonna’s contemporary fans might not be aware of the fact. TV shows like *Northern Exposure*, *The Simpsons*, *The Critic*, *Beavis and Butthead*, *Twin Peaks*, *The Osbornes*, are endlessly reflexive and self-referential. The titles of postmodern films themselves pay homage to this strategy of recycling (*Pulp Fiction*, *True Romance*).

René Girard offers another way of looking at this same phenomenon. For Girard, the European novel, and the history of culture more generally, show a coherent trajectory; they progressively reveal the ever more bitter fruits of mimetic desire, beginning with Cervantes and finally exploding in the work of Dostoevsky, where the mediator is seen as loved and hated, as simultaneously admired model and despised obstacle. According to Girard, the victims of metaphysical desire (like the protagonist of *The Talented Mr Ripley*) seek to appropriate their mediator’s being by imitating them. Cervantes thus anticipates the fandom phenomenon: Don Quixote wants to be a star like Amadis, and Sancho too wants his “fifteen minutes of fame.” This same love/hate amalgam is imaged in films like *Stardust Memories* and *The King of Comedy*, where “fans” torment and even kill the stars (Selena, John Lennon) that they presumably love.

Cervantes, as Alter put it in a humanist language, was the first of many artists “to see in the mere fictionality of fictions the key to the predicament of a whole culture, and to use this awareness centrally in creating new fictions of their own.”<sup>54</sup> Postmodern culture also stresses the “fictionality of fictions,” otherwise known as the “precession of simulacra,” but in a quite different mode and key. Yet at their best, the contemporary arts and media also write, in their fashion, in “the manner of” but also “differently from” Cervantes. And, on occasion, they manage to do what Cervantes did – to lay bare the devices of art while also exposing the mechanisms of society.

- 1 Robert Alter, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-conscious Genre* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), p. xi.
- 2 See Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. III, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), p. 1048.
- 3 See Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Don Quixote* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1983).
- 4 Some dictators, like Augusto Pinochet, banned *Don Quixote* because it seemed a plea for freedom and an attack on established authority.
- 5 René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1961), p. 52.
- 6 Harry Levin, *The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Novelists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 48.
- 7 Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, p. 1.
- 8 Cited in Ramon Chao, *Conversaciones con Alejo Carpentier* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1985), p. 165.
- 9 See F. Rodriguez Marin, "Don Quixote en America," *Estudios Cervantinos* (Madrid: Atlas, 1947), pp. 592–3.
- 10 See Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, trans. Montgomery Belgion (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).
- 11 Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 152.
- 12 Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, vol. III, p. 1035.
- 13 See Daniel Eisenberg, *Cervantes y Don Quixote* (Barcelona: Montesinos, 1993), p. 92.
- 14 All references are to *Don Quixote*, trans. Walter Starkie (New York: Signet, 1987).
- 15 Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*.
- 16 Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, vol. III, p. 1036.
- 17 Quoted in José Luis Garcia Martin, *Nuevas visiones del Quixote* (Oviedo: Colecciones Nobel, 1999), p. 14.
- 18 See Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 8.
- 19 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (in French *Les Mots et les choses*) (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 46.
- 20 For a comprehensive survey of the uses of the concept of mimesis, see Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992).
- 21 See Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957); and Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

- 22 Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953).
- 23 Salvador de Madariaga develops this theme in his *Guia del lector del "Quixote," Ensaio Psicologico* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1926).
- 24 Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*.
- 25 See M. M. Bakhtin and P. N. Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).
- 26 Margaret Anne Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), p. 3.
- 27 See Nabokov, *Lectures on Don Quixote*, p. xvi.
- 28 Levin, *The Gates of Horn*, p. 43.
- 29 Alter, *Partial Magic*, p. 6.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 Nabokov speaks of "the army of Don Quixotes engendered in the cesspools or hot-houses of dishonest or conscientious translation." See Nabokov, *Lectures on Don Quixote*, p. 112.
- 34 See Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), p. 129.
- 35 See Juan Bonilla, "El Quixote de Kozintsev," in Martin, *Nuevas visiones del Quixote*, p. 55 (my translation).
- 36 For an analysis of the carnivalesque elements in the film, see Barbara Leaming, *Grigori Kozintsev* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), pp. 77–93.
- 37 See Andrea Cervatiuc, "El punto de vista en las adaptaciones filmicas de Don Quijote," unpublished masters thesis in the Department of French, Italian, and Spanish at the University of Calgary, Alberta, 1999.
- 38 I am very much indebted to Juan Amalbert, the owner and restorer of the Welles film, who generously provided me with a videotape of the film.
- 39 Julian Cornell, "All's Wells that Ends Wells: Apocalypse and Empire in *The War of the Worlds*," in Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (eds), *A Companion to Literature and Film* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).
- 40 Quoted in Youssef Ishaghpour, *Orson Welles cineaste: une camera invisible*, vol. III (Paris: Editions de la Difference, 2001), p. 824 (my translation).
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 823.
- 42 See Mark W. Estrin (ed.), *Orson Welles: Interviews* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2002), p. 38.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 44 Cited in Cervatiuc, "El punto," p. 69.
- 45 I would like to thank Gabriela Basterra, my colleague at New York University, for our lively discussion while screening Welles's *Don Quixote*.
- 46 I explore these Master Pedro-like sequences in more detail in my *Reflexivity in Film and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

- 47 Cited in E. C. Riley, "Don Quixote: From Text to Icon" (<http://www2h-net.msu.edu/~cervantes/csa/articw88/riley/htm>), p. 4.
- 48 Page 39. All references are to Kathy Acker, *Don Quixote* (New York: Grove Press, 1986).
- 49 For an extended discussion of Acker's *Don Quixote*, see Nicola Pitchford's on-line essay "Flogging a Dead Language: Identity Politics, Sex, and the Freak Reader in Acker's *Don Quixote*" (<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/pmc/text-only/issue.900/11>).
- 50 See Janet H. Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), p. 98.
- 51 Quoted in Riley, "Don Quixote: From Text to Icon."
- 52 John Docker, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture: A Cultural History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
- 53 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 65.
- 54 Alter, *Partial Magic*, p. 3.