

"*Don Quijote*, el romanticismo y el renacimiento de lo caballeresco," *Ínsula*, 538 (1991), 16–17. Éste es el texto inglés entregado a la traductora. Es adaptado del último capítulo, sin notas, de mi libro *A Study of Don Quixote* (en español, *La interpretación cervantina del Quijote*). El texto traducido no ha sido digitalizado.

Extracto sin notas de mi libro, inédito en castellano, *A Study of "Don Quixote"* (Newark, Delaware: Juan de la Cuesta Hispanic Monographs, 1987).

### *Don Quixote*, Romanticism, and the Revival of Chivalry

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While the history of interpretation of *Don Quixote* has been the subject of much comment, the only part of the book's influence which has received recent attention is the key role it played in the development of the novel. That almost nothing is said about its influence on literature in general, on ideas, culture, customs, and indirectly even on politics, leads me to the suspicion that there is a great deal to be said about it. A proper place to focus our examination of *Don Quixote*'s influence is on the Romantic movement; this is both because of the great impact of Romanticism, which in many ways is with us still, and because of the recent controversy over "the Romantic approach to *Don Quixote*".

Inquiry, however, is pointless if we are dealing with misinterpretation by the Romantics, in which case their use of Cervantes is merely a footnote to the movement as a whole. It would

seem, however, that this is not the case. We owe them a great deal: the birth of modern Cervantine studies, which, along with the birth of Hispanism in general is, if not inseparable from the birth of Romanticism, very closely linked to it. The Romantics were the first to suggest the work's complexity, different levels, and self-reflective nature; they were the ones who pointed out that the "extraneous" stories of Part I are indeed an integral part of the book. They were also the first to describe the linguistic finesse of Cervantes' writings, the first to see Cervantes' use of lower-class characters as a positive feature. Finally, they were also the first to understand Cervantes' complex views on chivalry: that while attacking untruthful chivalric literature, he was defending what he understood to be true chivalry, and had considerable sympathy for some of the books he was attacking, if only they were presented and understood as literature ("poetry"), instead of history.

The examination of *Don Quixote's* influence on the movement is, then, a legitimate question. It would seem, right from the very start, that its influence must have been considerable. *Don Quixote* was *the* novel in eighteenth-century England, in which novel was *the* genre. Practically every aspect and phase of German life between 1750 and 1800, so far as it is reflected in literature, is directly or indirectly related to *Don Quixote*. Spain was the favorite country of the early Romantic movement in both England and Germany, and *Don Quixote* its favorite book. Virtually all of the contradictory themes which have been found in the Romantic movement are ones which the Romantics said they found in Cervantes.

It is no easy matter, however, to specify the influence of a book which was perceived contradictorily, sometimes by a single person, on a movement of which there is no definition. Without entering into the controversy over the definition of the Romantic movement, I will limit my comments to showing that the Germans and Englishmen who shaped the Romantic movement had the greatest admiration for *Don Quixote*. I focus on Germany and England

because those are both the countries in which *Don Quixote* was at the time the most popular, and in at the very least a curious coincidence, the countries in which the Romantic movement began and with which it is most often associated. I will subsequently discuss two themes.

The two men more than anyone else credited with starting the Romantic movement are the brothers Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel. The younger Friedrich is the movement's spiritual and philosophical father; to him is ascribed "the discovery of the whole romantic theory and the first use of the term 'romanticism' as the designation of a distinct phase in literary history." He found in Cervantes "le véritable artiste romantique," "inspiré et conscient." *Don Quixote* was for him the model of the novel, and the novel, "Spain's heritage," is *the* romantic genre. [[Nota al traductor: heritage = patrimonio.]]

Less original, but a very important popularizer, both within and outside Germany, of the ideas of his brother is August Wilhelm Schlegel. As an indication of his importance, he is responsible for the famous distinction between classic and romantic; although he did not invent the contrast, he formulated it in a manner which gained general acceptance and spread widely in Germany and beyond. He proclaimed *Don Quixote* the "perfect masterwork of higher romantic art."

It is Ludwig Tieck, however, who is usually considered the head of the German Romantic school; though his prestige has shrunk, he was at the time a man of great influence and stature. Tieck is also the first German to take a special interest in Spanish literature in general, of which he accumulated a remarkable library.

Tieck's friendship with Cervantes was as a youth sealed for life; *Don Quixote* was for a long time his daily companion. *Don Quixote*, he wrote is "surely the only book in which

humor, pleasure, jest, seriousness and parody, poetry and wit, the greatest imaginary adventures and the harshest realities of life have been raised into a genuine work of art." Tieck translated *Don Quixote* into German (1799-1801); his daughter, at his suggestion, translated *Persiles* (1837), for which translation he wrote an introduction.

The study of Cervantine influence on English Romanticism is more difficult. There is unfortunately no survey of Cervantine or other Spanish influence on English literature during this period, akin to Violet Stockley's *German Literature as Known in England 1750-1830*, or the various studies of the Hispanic influence in the United States as well as in Germany. The most complete survey, Martin Hume's *Spanish Influence on English Literature*, scarcely goes beyond the seventeenth century, the possibility of influence on the English Romantics seemingly never having occurred to the author, and Edwin B. Knowles, Jr., while helpfully studying *Don Quixote* in England during the period 1605-1660, correctly points out that it is the only period which has been thoroughly combed for Cervantes' influence. However, we can mention, as a start, the case of Wordsworth, the author of the manifesto of the English romantic movement, the signal for the break with the age of neoclassicism. He himself gave *Don Quixote* a central place in his autobiographical *Prelude*.

To strengthen the case for influence, setting aside such potentially rewarding topics as Cervantes' influence on the Romantic idea of the hero or view of nature or love, I will limit my comments to two particularly confused areas, in which aspects of the birth of Romanticism seem inexplicable without the direct and indirect influence of *Don Quixote* and the Spanish chivalric books for which Cervantes' text served as introduction. The first of these is the revival of interest in medieval literature ("romances"): the term "Romantic" was applied to the movement because it meant "in the spirit of romances," and the recognized expert on romances, author of what the younger Schlegel called "the most romantic of

romances," was Cervantes.

Johann Jakob Bodmer offered in 1741 the first German critical analysis of *Don Quixote*. He was also the discoverer of German medieval literature, publishing Wolfram's *Parzival* in 1754 and a partial edition of the *Nibelungenlied* in 1757. The revival was continued by those Cervantine enthusiasts, the Schlegel brothers and Tieck.

In England, Thomas Percy initiated the revival of medieval literature and shaped contemporary English poetry with his very influential *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. Percy's study of Spanish literature, however, was earlier, and more important than his better-known projects involving Scandinavian, Oriental, and Hebrew literature. In his earliest extant letter he refers to his use of "editions" of *Don Quixote*, which he called repeatedly his favorite book. He collected the books ("romances") in Don Quixote's library, with a view to publishing annotations of to the book, as well as a revised translation. One can well argue that his favorite book influenced him to study the medieval period.

Southey, intimate of Coleridge, during this period named, through Scott's influence, poet laureate of England, felt that it was only because "these Spanish histories of chivalry were so villainously rendered [translated] that they produced so little effect upon our literature." To remedy this deficiency, he published English versions of *Amadis* (1803) and *Palmerin of England* (1807); a copy of his translation of *Palmerin* had a considerable influence on the poetry of John Keats, who also knew *Amadis*. These works were followed by Southey's translation of the *Chronicle of the Cid* (1808), and his own work on the Spanish king Rodrigo (1814). It was immediately afterwards (1816) that the first edition of Malory in nearly two centuries was published, giving birth to Arthurian scholarship in England and beginning the revival of Arthurian literature that has lasted to the present day.

A further development which would seem inexplicable without Cervantes' influence is the great cult of chivalry in nineteenth-century England and Germany and to a lesser extent in the South of the United States, today almost forgotten because so embarrassing, and so disastrous in its final product. The revival of chivalry in England is primarily attributable to Sir Walter Scott. He was the most famous living author in the world in the early nineteenth century, the one who, incidentally, Spanish authors have imitated more than any other; he was also the favorite author of King George IV. At one point five dramatic adaptations of *Ivanhoe* were running in London simultaneously.

Scott had the most unbounded admiration for Cervantes; he compared himself to Cervantes as an author. While it was the *Exemplary Novels* that had first inspired him with the ambition of excelling in fiction, he knew *Don Quixote* well. He read it in the original, and apparently used it as a Baedeker for his extended tour into the land of romance books. At one point he seriously contemplated doing an English translation. Over 100 allusions to *Don Quixote* in Scott's works have been collected.

Clara Snell Wolfe has observed that "a very extensive phase of Scott's writing--the choice of medieval chivalresque material for his novels--may owe much to his reading of Spanish.... That the typically chivalresque in Scott finds its counterpart in *Don Quixote* and likewise in *Amadis*, its model, is manifest." The beginning of Scott's Waverley novels, in general his shift from writing chivalric verse ("The Lay of the Last Minstrel") to prose was his contact with *Amadis*, through Southey's translated text. In his review of that book, he remarks that "the fame of *Amadis de Gaul* has reached to the present day, and has indeed become almost provincial in most languages of Europe. But this distinction has been attained rather in a mortifying manner: for the hero seems much less indebted for his present renown to...Montalvo...than to Cervantes."

At the very least, Cervantes' influence deserves considerable further examination.