

FIRST ANNUAL MASTER-MIND LECTURE

HENRIETTE HERTZ TRUST

CERVANTES AND SHAKESPEARE

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Read May 16, 1916.

THOUGH Cervantes and Shakespeare were contemporaries, and though, for many reasons, their names are now constantly linked together, it cannot be supposed that either of these illustrious men of genius had any personal knowledge of the other. They dwelt in lands far apart, and were separated by more than sundering seas: by differences of language, race, and sentiment. We must curb our appetite for marvels, and be content if we can establish between Cervantes and Shakespeare some intellectual kinship. It is no part of my task to prove that they read one another's masterpieces. That piece of research is reserved for learned men such as those who flourished at Argamasilla—Monicongo, Cachidiablo, and their compeers:

Forse altri canterà con miglior plettro.

During the early seventeenth century intercourse between Spain and England was beset with difficulties, and the literary debt of England to Spain had not yet reached formidable proportions. The balance of such literary indebtedness as had been incurred was distinctly against us. It is tolerably certain that Cervantes went to his grave in the Calle de Cantarranas without ever having heard Shakespeare's name. So far as my information goes, no play of Shakespeare's was rendered into Spanish till 1772, when *Hamleto, rey de Dinamarca* was produced: an indifferent version by the celebrated *sainetero* Ramón de la Cruz, who, knowing nothing of English, used Jean-François Ducis's French arrangement as his basis.

Though Cervantes never heard of Shakespeare, it is not impossible that Shakespeare had heard of Cervantes. There are in Shakespeare a few touches which, with a little goodwill, may be taken as implying some acquaintance, however slight, with Spanish. It is conceivable that Shakespeare contrived to plod through some of the Spanish books which were reprinted in the Netherlands and brought thence

to England; some such supposition is almost unavoidable if we choose to accept Dorer's well-known theory that *The Tempest* derives from Antonio de Eslava's *Noches de Invierno*. Were this so—the theory is not received with universal favour,—we should have to assume either that Shakespeare knew enough Spanish to pick out the plot of a story from a Spanish work, or that there existed in Shakespeare's time some French or English version, no longer known, of Eslava's dreary book. Whatever may be the fact with respect to Eslava, there is no doubt that Cervantes was within Shakespeare's reach. Thomas Shelton's translation of the First Part of *Don Quixote* was published in 1612. Did Shakespeare read it? It seems rather more than likely that he did. The best authorities are of opinion that Shakespeare, though he wrote less copiously for the stage after 1611 than heretofore, kept up his connexion with the theatre by furnishing outlines of plays which were filled in by collaborators like Fletcher. As instances of such collaboration *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth* and—less confidently—*The Two Noble Kinsmen* are cited. To these may be added a third play entitled *The History of Cardenio*, probably identical with *Cardenno*, performed before the Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine shortly before May 20, 1613, and *Cardenna*, presented 'before the Duke of Savoye's Embassadour on the viij daye of June, 1613'. In the official account of sums paid by Lord Stanhope of Harrington, the 'Treasurer of his Majesties Chamber', *Cardenno* (or *Cardenna*) is mentioned with other plays—among them *Much Ado about Nothing*, *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The First Part of King Henry the Fourth*, *Othello*, and *Julius Caesar*. Then follows a silence of some forty years, and no more is heard of the mysterious *Cardenno* (or *Cardenna*) till September 9, 1653, under which date the books of the Stationers' Company record the payment of twenty shillings and sixpence by Mr. Moseley for entering his copies of forty-one plays: amongst these plays is mentioned '*The History of Cardenio*, by Mr. Fletcher and Shakespeare'. It is strange, and not a little unfortunate, that the play was withheld so long: Cervantes, Shakespeare, and Mr. Fletcher were dead. It is no less unlucky, though perhaps it may be significant, that the publisher Humphrey Moseley, after paying his fee, did not issue *The History of Cardenio*. There is no ground for suspecting publishers of being more recklessly lavish with their money than other men. It is possible that Moseley, after printing *The Merry Devill of Edmonton* and attributing it to Shakespeare, grew more cautious in accepting loose current ascriptions. However this may be, there is nothing unreasonable in supposing

that Shakespeare was in some degree responsible for the *Cardenno* (or *Cardenna*) performed at Court by John Heminges and others in 1613; and any play entitled *The History of Cardenio* must almost certainly have been concerned with the episode of 'El Roto de la Mala Figura'—the distraught gentleman in the tattered doublet, the finding of whose valise with the gold crowns inside made the crags of the Sierra Morena seem a paradise to Sancho Panza, who thanked Heaven 'for sending us one adventure which is good for something'. Plainly, Shakespeare might have read the tale of Cardenio's adventures in Shelton's translation of the First Part of *Don Quixote*. Further we cannot go, for the very stuff of conjecture fails us. All trace of *The History of Cardenio* has vanished, unless we are credulous enough to think that this elusive play is represented by the uncanonical *Double Falsehood*, or *The Distrest Lovers*: a view which is faithfully dealt with in Sir Sidney Lee's informing pages.

But, had *The History of Cardenio* been preserved, and were it demonstrated that Shakespeare borrowed material from Cervantes as freely as from Bandello, this would not carry us far. It is more to our immediate purpose to trace, if possible, the movement of the minds of Cervantes and Shakespeare on independent parallel lines. Each was a man of consummate genius; each, withal his vigorous originality, was influenced by his age; each had in him a vein of wholesome sympathy which did not disdain the splendid common-places of life. We should therefore expect to find in both authors some coincidences of thought and some occasional resemblances of expression. These expectations are fulfilled: such similarities have often been pointed out, and I will be content with giving an example. Everybody who has followed Sancho Panza on his journey in quest of Dulcinea will remember the soliloquy of the squire when he has dismounted from his ass, and is safely out of sight and hearing of his enamoured master:

'Let us know now, brother Sancho, where you are going. Are you going to look for some ass that has gone astray? By no means. Then what are you going to look for? I am going to look for a princess, no less; and in her for the sun of beauty and the whole firmament combined. And where do you expect to find this, Sancho? Where? In the great city of El Toboso. Well, and on behalf of whom are you going to look for her? On behalf of the famous knight Don Quixote of La Mancha, who redresses wrongs, gives food to those athirst, and drink to the hungry. That is all very fine, but do you know her house, Sancho? My master says it must be some royal palace or some mighty castle. And have you ever chanced to see her? Neither I nor my master have ever set eyes on her. And

if the townsfolk of El Toboso, learning that you were here, bent on carrying off their princesses and molesting their ladies, fell to cudgelling your ribs till there was not a sound bone in you—does that strike you as just and proper? Indeed, they would be thoroughly justified, if they did not see that I am obeying orders, and that

You are a messenger, my friend,
No blame attaches to you—none.

But put no trust in that, Sancho, for the Manchegans are as hot-headed as they are honest, and take impudence from nobody. By heaven, if they get wind of you, it will be a poor look-out for you, I promise you. Get thee behind me, rogue! Let the thunderbolt fall! Why should I go about looking for trouble to please anybody?—especially when my search for Dulcinea in El Toboso will be like looking for Maria in Ravenna or the bachelor in Salamanca. The devil, the devil, and no one else, dragged me into this affair.'

Now those interrogative reflections, made by Sancho Panza while seated under a tree outside El Toboso, lead to a conclusion which recalls that arrived at by Sir John Falstaff when he finds himself alone by the King's camp near Shrewsbury:

'Well, 'tis no matter; honour pricks me on. Yea, but how if honour prick me off when I come on? How then? Can honour set to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery, then? No. What is honour? A word. What is that word, honour? Air. A trim reckoning! Who hath it? He that died o' Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. It is insensible, then. Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it: honour is a mere scutcheon; and so ends my catechism.'

This is not uninteresting, since we see the minds of Cervantes and Shakespeare conceiving somewhat similar characters, endowing their personages with a somewhat similar physique, and picturing them as thinking much the same thoughts. Such a parallel is more illuminating than the familiar coincidence of expression frequently quoted. Hamlet warns the First Player not to overdo 'the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature'; and, on the evening after the encounter with Death and the other actors in Angulo el Malo's company, Don Quixote points out to his theatre-going squire that the drama 'holds up to us at every step a mirror in which we see, vividly displayed, what goes on in human life'. It would be easy to multiply instances of this kind: chance resemblances arising out of analogous situations, and hence easily explained. Mere coincidences of expression prove

nothing. No wise admirer of Cervantes will claim that he has Shakespeare's endowment of divine utterance. Shakespeare is undoubtedly the supream artist of the two; he has a wealth of verbal music which nature had denied to Cervantes. Cervantes's expression lacks the ecstasy of beauty; but it is always adequate to its purpose, it has the charm of natural simplicity, and it has in a very high degree the quality of dramatic appropriateness. It is in virtue of his realism and humour that Cervantes excels. This sounds a bold thing to say in view of the character of Falstaff; yet the position may be maintained. Falstaff is essentially English; Sancho Panza enjoys a wider fame, a larger franchise, and is a citizen of the world. Shakespeare has the greater mastery of his material; he handles it with the easy freedom of conscious and assured dominion. Speaking generally, Shakespeare is represented by work of the highest finish. Not so Cervantes: we are free to count his false starts, and to criticize his hesitations.

The methods of Cervantes and Shakespeare often differed, but their interest in the manifestations of human nature makes them akin. Each was absorbed in observing cases of mental disturbance. This is noticeable in the tragic dementia of *King Lear* as in the disconcerting hallucinations of Tomás Rodaja in *El Licenciado Vidriera*, after he had eaten the fatal Toledan quince. A still more striking parallel may be found in *Hamlet* and in *Don Quixote*, as Turgenev pointed out. The precise date of composition of *Don Quixote* is unknown; there is reason to think that it was not begun till after 1591, and that it was finished during the course of 1602-3: at any rate, it is certain that it was going through the press in the autumn and winter of 1604. There is apparently a similar difficulty with respect to *Hamlet*: it must suffice to say that the full text of *Hamlet* became available in the Second Quarto of 1604. Hence there is no great rashness in supposing that Cervantes and Shakespeare were at work on very similar problems at about the same time. I begin by assuming that neither *Hamlet* nor *Don Quixote* is normal, as regards mental balance: you will grant me so much, remembering that the barber in *Don Quixote* had his doubts as to the sanity of Sancho Panza himself. For my part, I will not detain you with a tedious examination of possible sources: the relation between Shakespeare and Saxo Grammaticus, the possible indebtedness of Cervantes to *El Caballero Cifar*, and so forth. These are the remainder-biscuits of erudition—not appetizing, even if wholesome. It may be readily admitted that neither Cervantes nor Shakespeare hesitated to take what suited him, wherever he came upon it. Whatever either of

them borrowed he made his own, and enriched it out of recognition. Whatever hints may have been taken, whatever may have been recast or rewritten, for posterity *Hamlet* is all Shakespeare's, and *Don Quixote* is all Cervantes's.

The characters of the two great protagonists are consistent, as nature is consistent; but there is undoubted evolution in both of them. In the case of Don Quixote, the development is plain to the least observant: no great perspicacity is needed to perceive a difference between the simple country gentleman who, crazed by his incessant reading of dull books, believed himself to be the nephew of the Marquess of Mantua, and the discerning critic who discussed the niceties of literature during his stay at Don Diego de Miranda's. There is a difference, but the basis of the character is unchanged. Don Lorenzo's verdict is essentially just: 'A glorious madman, and I should be a dull oaf to doubt it!' Don Quixote is always before us, consistent in essentials from the moment when we first see him in the 'village of La Mancha, the name of which I have no desire to call to mind', as his creator dryly remarked. There is in him more than a touch of self-righteousness at moments. But he thinks well of others; this confirmed optimist could never bring himself to say: 'We are arrant knaves all.' He is an ascetic, burning to immolate himself for an ideal. Hamlet is more self-centred, and even allowing for the fact that he has thought it

meet
To put an antic disposition on,

his reading of himself may not be wrong when he declares to Ophelia: 'I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious.' He is indifferent to the sufferings of others, is absorbed in his own woes, a vacillating egotist content to unpack his heart

with words
And fall a-cursing, like a very drab,
A scullion.

Hamlet, the victim of introspection, is fleet in the sphere of ideas, benumbed when confronted with realities. Don Quixote, aflame with the passion of self-sacrifice, is prompt in decision, swift in action. Hamlet believes in the ghost because he has seen it: the force of evidence overwhelms him. Don Quixote sees life through an embellishing prism, and interprets facts so that they fit in with his theory of existence; if he submitted to the testimony of his senses, he would have to think that an angry official of the Holy Brotherhood had broken his head; but this base materialism is alien to his

nature, and he resignedly refers, in the best of good faith, to 'the wound that phantom gave me'. He has no more doubt on the point than he has as to the fact that the puppets in the show are really Moors, or paladins at Charlemagne's court. Don Quixote has not Hamlet's psychological intensity nor intellectual subtlety; but he delights in dialectic and is the happier spirit of the two, as he is the finer gentleman. He has the support of an elaborate creed; his ribs may ache with the trouncings which he receives, but his faith moults no feather, and he is constantly buoyed up with thoughts of the restoration of that perfect Golden Age which he commemorates in a resonant rhetorical passage that left the listening goatherds agape with amazement, as well it might. This is the very opposite of Hamlet's outlook:

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on 't! O fie! 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely.

Don Quixote was not unaware of the seamier aspect of the world. He knows that Sancho Panza, for example, is a lying coward, but he tries to put the disturbing thought away from him, and prefers to evoke the vision of his squire administering provinces with sententious wisdom. His glance beautifies all that it rests upon, and he idealizes Sancho Panza as easily as his glorifying vision transfigures the barber's brass basin into Mambrino's helmet, all of the purest gold. And his ennobling faculty affects others. Our first introduction to Sancho Panza—whose character is an afterthought, the most brilliant that ever occurred to any author—reveals him as a crafty, covetous boor. His covetousness, though diminished, never dies; but in all other respects he improves conspicuously. If the Ingenious Gentleman believes in the shadows of dreamland, Sancho Panza's faith is centred on things tangible. What can be more concrete than the island which he feels himself born to govern? It has been argued that his credulity in this matter of the island is incompatible with his fundamental shrewdness. On the contrary: it is essentially true to nature. Few of us are profoundly convinced of our own unworthiness: we are prone to believe that, whatever our good fortune may be, it will not be beyond our deserts. If Don Quixote be destined to become Emperor of Trebizond, there would be nothing strange in the appointment of his faithful squire to a governorship: it would be no disproportionate reward: but, to repeat an old proverb quoted by the Captive in the story of his adventures, *más vale migaja de rey que*

merced de señor—‘better a king’s crumb than a lord’s bounty’. Apart from innate likelihood and the immanent justice of things, Sancho Panza has his master’s word for it, and, as we know from his sulky reply to the fencing licentiate’s cousin, his faith in Don Quixote is complete. Moreover, it is vindicated by the result: he does finally obtain his island through his association with the knight. And it is important to observe that Sancho Panza’s credulity is mainly confined to himself and his personal affairs. He believes—what proves to be the fact—that he would make an excellent governor, just as he believes that his daughter—‘as fresh as an April morning and as strong as a porter’—would make a figure at court as a countess. But he cannot be persuaded that sheep are knights, or that windmills are giants: on those points he is clear that his chief is mad. On all ‘everyday matters, Sancho Panza’s judgement is wellnigh infallible, and he backs his opinions with an array of garrulous aphoristic wisdom which would commend him to Polonius. For the rest, he grows more and more attached to his master, whom he describes in confidence to Tomé Cecial, that squire of agitating appearance who accompanied the Knight of the Grove: ‘He has no thought of doing harm to any one, only good to all, nor has he a touch of suspicion in him; a child might make him think that it was night at noonday; and for this simplicity I love him as I love my heart-strings, and cannot bring myself to leave him, however foolish his acts.’

This is a sound judgement. In nearly all Don Quixote’s extravagances there is an element of virtue; he is magnanimous and actively benevolent without any hope of reward; at worst, his deeds are done for the greater glory of the non-existent Dulcinea whom he worships with the chastest ‘ecstasy of love’, conscious that he can never be worthy of her. It is doubtful if Hamlet ever loved anybody but himself. In what seems like a lucid interval, he asserts that he never loved Ophelia: ‘You should not have believed me: for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it: I loved you not.’ Hamlet is less rigidly consistent than Don Quixote. Save in the episode of the Cave of Montesinos, where Cervantes himself seems in doubt as to how far his hero was the sport of his delusions, Don Quixote’s character is all of one piece. The Spanish writer has not Shakespeare’s depth of searching reflection and splendour of contrapuntal diction. But neither has the Englishman Cervantes’s wealth of varied first-hand experience, his magnanimous charity and inimitable serenity. The English play is richer in psychological subtlety, the Spanish story in texture and in the breadth of its effects.

When Cervantes published the First Part of *Don Quixote* he was

in his fifty-eighth year—a greater age than was to be attained by Shakespeare, who, in 1605, had turned forty, had a great series of masterpieces behind him, and was writing *Macbeth*, if not already sketching out the characters of *King Lear*. Cervantes had no such record. Had he died at the same age as Shakespeare, he would have passed away in 1599, an obscure mediocrity, long since forgotten by the world. Shakespeare had industry and the useful practical qualities of life as well as the sublimest genius; he pressed forward steadily to his goal—independence and retirement. Cervantes was less well equipped for success in life: though clearly replenished with practical wisdom, he showed but little of it in the conduct of his affairs. One of the most mysterious passages in his career is his obvious reluctance to follow up the resounding triumph which he had won so slowly, after being the blank of so many slings of fortune. On the last page of the First Part he suggested the desirability of a sequel, but left it rather doubtful whether he would himself write it. He did not in fact produce his Second Part till ten years later. Why did he tarry? Had he, for the time being, at any rate, said all that he had to say? Did he share the opinion of his own Bachelor Sansón Carrasco that ‘Second Parts are never good’? Was he disinclined to imperil his hard-won reputation, and run the risk of a final failure? One or other of these reasons may have caused him to hang back. He may equally have been influenced by private considerations. His domestic life was not stimulating. He is relatively poor in the presentation of his female characters: Teresa and the Duchess are among the exceptions, but Teresa is a woman of the people, and of the Duchess we have not so much a portrait as a sketch. Cervantes has no characters that can vie with Juliet and Rosalind, with Viola and Portia, with Beatrice and Imogen. The women of his own circle do not appear to have been gracious or entertaining. Moreover, he had other trials which overtook him soon after the publication of the First Part of *Don Quixote*. In the summer of 1605 he was arrested by a blundering official on suspicion of being in some way concerned in the death of a worthless man who had been mortally wounded close by the poor house in the Calle del Rastro where Cervantes lodged at Valladolid. That a mistake had been made was speedily recognized, and Cervantes was promptly set free. There is, I think, nothing fanciful in holding that he was never quite the same gay spirit afterwards. His discouragement was evidently extreme: at any rate, for the time. He produced next to nothing for eight years, and seems to have contemplated abandoning literature altogether. Fortunately he failed to obtain in Italy a post on which his heart was set. This drove him

back once more to his pen, and in 1613 he at last issued his twelve *Novelas Exemplares*. The propriety of the adjective is a matter of opinion: as to the value of the stories all good judges are unanimous, and in the first of these it is possible to detect close analogies between the characters of Preciosa and Shakespeare's Marina, which ultimately derive from a common source. It was not till nearly two years later that the Second Part of *Don Quixote* appeared, and it might not have appeared then, had not Cervantes been goaded into activity by the publication of a spurious sequel with a truculent preface in which he was grossly insulted.

It is impossible not to sympathize with his anger, as it is impossible to deny that he had, to some extent, brought his misfortune on himself. He had, it must be admitted, immense resources of procrastination, and he drew on them extravagantly. He had nothing of Shakespeare's businesslike instinct and punctual industry. Between 1605 and 1615,—while Cervantes produced nothing of great value, with the splendid exception of the *Novelas Exemplares*,—Shakespeare was steadily consolidating his fame by the composition of such works as *King Lear*, *Timon of Athens*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, and (perhaps) *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. I shall not be suspected of disloyalty to Cervantes, I hope, if I suggest that his occasional poems, even his *Novelas Exemplares*, his unlucky *Viage del Parnaso*, his unequal volume of plays and interludes, and his posthumous *Persiles* are less impressive. The superiority in quality and weight is manifestly on Shakespeare's side. The balance was not to be redressed, but all that could be done was done when at last the Second Part of *Don Quixote* was given to the public. It is disturbing to think it is a mere chance that this Second Part ever appeared at all. I am not unaware that Cervantes had specifically promised it in the prologue to the *Novelas Exemplares*; that suffices to put out of court the intruder who came forward with the spurious sequel. He was absolutely bound to accept Cervantes's announcement; posterity is not so bound. We know now that Cervantes's declarations on such points are not final. He was prodigal of pledges: in this same prologue to the *Novelas Exemplares* he likewise promises a work entitled *Las Semanas del Jardin*, of which not a line ever appeared. If we were ungallantly disposed, we might throw the responsibility for this void on his wife, who may have been negligent in collecting his manuscripts. But the case does not stand alone. For thirty years or more Cervantes continued to promise a sequel to *La Galatea*: this sequel was never published, and it is conceivable that it may hardly have been begun. However, by good

fortune, the Second Part of *Don Quixote* did appear, as I have said, in 1615. By that date Shakespeare had retired to Stratford-on-Avon, a prosperous gentleman playing his part in local business. No such good fortune awaited Cervantes. His life was a continuous struggle against adverse circumstance. It continued to be so till the end, and he died in something like penury. He had intimations of his vogue from abroad, and was none the less pleased that his fame in other countries did not depend solely on *Don Quixote*. That he was proud of his success at home is evident from his delighted reference to his book in the Second Part: 'Children thumb it, young folk read it, grown-up people understand it, the aged praise it.'

We are all of us prone to believe what we wish to believe, and in this respect, as in so many others, Cervantes was delightfully human: his moods of self-complacency, however, alternate with moments of baffling irony and self-mockery. No doubt he exaggerates wilfully when he describes himself as 'merely the stepfather to *Don Quixote*'. Yet, as in most of his seemingly careless phrases, there is here a kernel of truth. Cervantes was apparently a little perplexed at his own triumph, and more than a little chagrined at the tacit but universal assumption that he was a man of one book. This was not his own view of the matter. In his heart of hearts, he would rather have won recognition as a dramatist than as a writer of romance, and he persuaded himself that he had, in fact, done wonders in the theatre with the plays which he wrote soon after his return from Algiers. The facts are against him: owing to lapse of time, his impressions had grown dim. But, with respect to the wonderful success of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes was not mistaken; he did not know the bibliography of his own works as well as we do, and when he ventures on details about editions, he makes unimportant slips which the very dullest of us can correct. But, as to the general accuracy of his statement, abundant corroborative testimony is forthcoming from contemporaries. That he was renowned in Spain is clear; that contemporaries should appreciate his full significance was not to be expected. The Frenchmen attached to Brûlart de Sillery's special mission were informed by one who knew Cervantes personally that he was 'old, a soldier, a gentleman, and poor'. It would have startled contemporaries to know that, when he went to his tomb fourteen months later, Spain had lost in him the greatest man of genius she has produced. We are here to-day to express our ardent admiration of the mighty creator and inventor that we recognize him to be. But let us not pride ourselves unduly on our acumen. We have the advantage of living three centuries later, and of seeing

men and things in their historical perspective. We are free from contemporary influences, safe from the dangers of cabals and cliques, sheltered from the gusts of taste, the petty prejudices which affect all men more or less. Time does its work, and settles many questions. We do not now read *Don Quixote* in the spirit in which it was written three hundred years ago. It comes down to us with an incomparable prestige, enriched by the sparkling commentary of a thousand perspicacious and ingenious critics.

Don Quixote is now invested with a glory of which Cervantes never dreamed. At the time of its publication, and long afterwards, it was regarded simply as an amusing book. The author himself records that the average Spaniard clamoured for 'more Quixotades: let Don Quixote charge and let Sancho babble, and, no matter what it be about, we shall be content with that'. But from the outset there were always a few who read the book with other eyes and greater understanding. There were some, it appears, who 'would have been pleased had the author omitted some of the trouncings inflicted on Señor Don Quixote in various encounters'. It was not till the romantic movement began to develop that the deeper wisdom of Cervantes's great book was tardily disengaged from the more visible humours of the story: this is well brought out by a French writer, M. J.-J. A. Bertrand, in *Cervantes et le romantisme allemand*, an interesting monograph which, by the irony of chance, was published during the summer of 1914. Schlegel and the rest are entitled to due credit for their clear-sightedness. The trick of symbolic interpretation has now been learned by many, and some of these practitioners have obtained bizarre results. It is tolerably plain that the author of *Don Quixote* made sly allusions at times to persons and things that he disliked. But when we are invited to believe that his book is a caricature of some of the most glorious figures in his country's history, a satire on the army in which he served, and a covert attack on the church of which he was a devout member, our confidence in our guides diminishes.

Cervantes took on none of the airs and graces implicitly imputed to him by sciolists. He was not a philosopher nor a social reformer; he was simply a man of letters whose main objects were to interest his readers, and to gain his bread. He does indeed allege that he wrote *Don Quixote* to destroy the books of chivalry, and no doubt he began his work with that intention; but it does not follow that he condemned all the romances of chivalry, and in fact he singles out some of them for praise—and not always praise with a tart flavour of mockery. Moreover, his original intention was

not continuously borne in mind. As he warms to his work, his parody of the books of chivalry is less malicious, more infrequent, and the parody is often lost sight of altogether, when the parodist has time to become more interested in his own creations, more concerned with the development of his own story. This is what Cervantes really was: a born teller of stories. He shows it elsewhere than in *Don Quixote*. We have Sir Walter Scott's word for it that the *Novelas Exemplares* 'had first inspired him with the ambition of excelling in fiction, and that, until disabled by illness, he had been a constant reader of them'. It is true that some, at least, of the *Novelas Exemplares* are little masterpieces. It is perhaps a mere chance that some of the tales included in the *Novelas Exemplares* were not inserted in *Don Quixote*: one of the best of these short stories—*Rinconete y Cortadillo*—was, it seems, already written when the First Part of *Don Quixote* appeared in 1605, for the tale is specifically mentioned by its title in the forty-seventh chapter: 'The landlord approached the priest and gave him some papers, saying that he had come across them in the lining of the valise in which the *Novela del Curioso Impertinente* had been found, and that he might take them away with him, as their owner had never returned; for, as he himself could not read, he did not want them. The priest thanked him, and then, opening them, saw at the beginning the inscription *Novela de Rinconete y Cortadillo*; whence he perceived that it was a story of some kind, and he inferred that, as the tale of the *Curioso Impertinente* had been good, this would be so too; for both might well be by the same author.' Whether the story of *Rinconete y Cortadillo* was already actually on paper, or whether only its outline was sketched in Cervantes's mind, cannot be known positively. What is beyond all doubt is that Cervantes was strongly attracted by the short story, of which two specimens are embodied in *Don Quixote* itself. One of these, *El Curioso Impertinente*,—though suggested by a passage in Ariosto, and often utilized by later writers—has not had the good fortune to please modern critics; and, as may be gathered from the Bachelor Sansón Carrasco, its insertion was thought a mistake by many of those who first read it: 'not that it is poor or badly told, but that it is out of place, and has nothing to do with the history of his worship Señor Don Quixote.' That there is force in this objection is tacitly admitted by Cervantes, for he does not repeat the experiment in the Second Part, though in the forty-fourth chapter of this sequel he makes a perfunctory attempt to defend his procedure, and with amiable, bantering self-assurance takes it on himself to praise 'the elegance and art' of the interpolated stories. This is amusing

by-play, an effort to carry off a mistake of judgement and keep up appearances.

It does not seem to have occurred to many readers that *Don Quixote* itself might well have taken the form of a *conte*. That this was Cervantes's primitive design is, however, extremely probable; there are indications that he meant to end his narrative with the fourth chapter. Though the opening of the book is admirably written, the author is not yet fully acquainted with his characters; he has not even conceived the figure of Sancho Panza, and, when he first describes the personal appearance of the squire, makes a blunder which shows that he has never observed him properly. Cervantes moves at first with halting step; slowly the possibilities of his material disclose themselves, the possibilities become certainties, the author follows the example of his hero on the road to the Campo de Montiel, giving Pegasus his head, and, imperceptibly, what was to have been a brief travesty of a dull literary craze broadens out into a vivacious, exuberant transcription of the entire social comedy. *Don Quixote* is a triumph of humour, observation, and invention. But it is more: it is of the nature of an authoritative historical document. The student who wishes to reconstruct the social history of Spain during the late sixteenth century must turn to *Don Quixote* in order to visualize the individual as well as the type. In that great panorama of the Later Renaissance in Spain, there defile before our delighted eyes men and women of all conditions: varieties of country gentlemen, lettered like the mad knight himself, affable like Don Diego de Miranda; wealthy and hospitable like Don Antonio Moreno; grandees like the jesting Duke and his sprightly Duchess (to whose attraction Lamb was curiously insensible); merry graduates like that incorrigible wag Sansón Carrasco or Alonso Lopez, whose leg was broken through Don Quixote's endeavours to right wrongs and redress injuries; *nouveaux riches* like the befooled Camacho, whose prodigal entertainment so naturally commended him to Sancho Panza; well-to-do libertines like Fernando, whose escapades fail to make him 'sympathetic'; sober lawyers like Juan Pérez de Viedma, on his way to take up a colonial judgeship in Mexico; budding poets like Don Lorenzo, delighted to read their verses to courteous and patient guests; captives escaped from Algiers, and bubbling over with reminiscences romantic but true; different types of the clergy, including the haughty chaplain who left the Duke's table in a rage, the didactic canon who advocated the unities and recommended a high-handed censorship of plays, the village priest who did such mischief in Don Quixote's library and wore so strange

a disguise before he changed clothes with the barber. To these must be added merciless employers like Juan Haldudo the Rich of Quintanar, who flayed Andrés alive and gave the newly dubbed knight his first opportunity of intervening to protect the weak, an intervention so disastrous to the protected; peppery Biscayans murdering the King's Spanish, and treating the hero as though he were Malchus, the high-priest's servant; doctors like Pedro Recio de Agüero, with ascetical views on diet; landlords who, though exigent as to payment, were ever ready to cap verses with an embarrassing guest; muleteers who were prompt, on the slightest provocation, to take the law into their own hands; goatherds of all moods and tempers, courteous and quarrelsome; predatory *Moriscos* who rob travellers with a charming politeness; surly convicts who behave with frank ingratitude to their liberator. It would be easy to continue the enumeration, but enough has been said to give an idea of the scope of *Don Quixote*. Arithmeticians profess to have counted six hundred and sixty-nine personages in *Don Quixote*. When Sancho Panza overheard his master, a bachelor, giving unsolicited advice to the newly-married Basilio as to the apt choice of a wife, the edified squire is reported as saying to himself: 'I used to think in my heart that he only knew about matters that concerned knight-errantries: but there is never a dish that he does not lard and dip his spoon into.' The presentation of the six hundred and sixty-nine personages, often carefully characterized and always representative of the class to which each of them belongs, justifies the application of Sancho Panza's remark to Cervantes himself. 'Here is God's plenty', as Dryden said of the pilgrims in *The Canterbury Tales*. Were it permissible to leave out of account the English kings and nobles who had a real existence in the flesh before they were brought to life again in the historical plays, it might perhaps prove that Shakespeare was not a more fertile creator.

It is arguable that Cervantes's immense renown as a novelist has caused readers to be less than just to his other works. He apparently thought so himself, and it is true that *Don Quixote* has eclipsed everything else that he wrote. But is not the popular verdict right? Undoubtedly. Cervantes himself would have been willing, as it seems, to stake his reputation on his plays. He would have lost. With not more than two exceptions, his ambitious plays are failures: at the best, they are clever rhetorical exercises. A stronger case might be made for the interludes, some of which are really brilliant, often sparkling with risky humour. It is significant, however, that the best of these interludes are written in prose. Cervantes

is not a great dramatist, nor is he a great poet. In the latter respect, the truth was slowly borne in upon him ; writing in old age, he pathetically deplores the fact that his constant ambition to excel in poetry had been thwarted by the parsimony of nature.

I, who do toil and strain my being whole
To show, what Heaven's grace will not allow,
The semblance of a poet's gracious soul, . . .

This is an ingenuous confession of truth. Cervantes was endowed with a powerful imagination ; he had a facile command of verse, and was not deficient in the art of graceful versifying. But beyond that he does not go. He is without the endowment of magical expression, without the charm of verbal melody, and is uncertain in technique, just as he is too exuberant to adapt himself to the framework of the drama. Curiously enough, he belonged to the strict old school of dramatists, and, though he might have been expected to welcome the greater amplitude and freedom of the *comedia nueva* introduced by Lope de Vega, he was, for one reason or another, frankly hostile to the innovation (perhaps still more hostile to the innovator). True, he ended by arguing in its favour, but his repentance came too late. It was once sought to explain away the obvious shortcomings of the more formal dramatic compositions of Cervantes by alleging that they were intentional burlesques of the plays then being written by Lope de Vega and the new school of dramatists. This theory, which would have stirred Cervantes to indignation, has been scoffed out of existence by posterity ; the admission involved in it is fatal. The plain truth is that Cervantes was too prolix for the theatre ; he has so much to say that he cannot be pent up within the narrow limits of the stage convention. He infringes all rules with a careless gaiety ; if he cannot condense his poetic material into fourteen lines, he will write sixteen, but will insist on calling his composition a sonnet. And as in small matters, so in great. In *La Galatea* the construction is weak ; there is no unity of narrative in the succession of unrelated episodes. It is even so in the posthumous *Persiles y Sigismunda*, where unusual pains have been taken by the author. Now, 'this effect defective comes by cause'. Concentration is not Cervantes's strong point. By a splendid accident, in *Don Quixote* the form is perfectly suited to his discursive genius. Samuel Johnson once asked : 'Was there ever yet anything written by mere man that was wished longer by its readers excepting *Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *The Pilgrim's Progress*?' For our own enjoyment, we would not have *Don Quixote* a page shorter

than it is; but one can imagine that a meticulous artist would excise some passages, and it is difficult to meet the contention that there is no good reason why the narrative should ever stop. It is clear that Cervantes himself was in some embarrassment to find a suitable conclusion; for a moment or two he toyed with the idea of converting Don Quixote and Sancho Panza into a pair of shepherds. 'I will buy some ewes and everything else needful for the pastoral calling; and—I under the name of Quixotiz, and thou as the shepherd Panzino—we will roam the woods and groves and meadows, singing songs here, lamenting in elegies there, drinking of the crystal waters of the springs or limpid brooks or brimming rivers.' Fortunately the mood passed when Cervantes had conveyed his hero safely back to his native village. There was nothing for it but that Don Quixote should die: Cervantes, flashing out against the interloper who had come between him and the public, proclaims: 'For me alone was Don Quixote born, and I for him; it was his to act, mine to write: we two together make but one.' And then, the story being ended, and artistic reasons for restraint no longer existing, he denounces the impostor 'who has dared, or may dare, to write with his coarse, ill-trimmed ostrich quill the achievements of my brave knight'. This passage decided the fate of another famous character: for, according to Samuel Johnson, it 'made Addison declare, with undue vehemence of expression, that he would kill Sir Roger'.

All this serves to illustrate the capricious fluttering flight of Cervantes's fancy: elsewhere an apparent lack of control works to his disadvantage; in *Don Quixote*, the haphazard discursiveness becomes a source of strength, for all the author's material can be thrown into the crucible. Not a scrap is wasted: the veriest dross is transmuted into gold. Though Cervantes was neither a great dramatist nor a great poet, his masterpiece is pregnant with dramatic suggestion as it is penetrated with poetic imagination. He understands with perfect comprehension the prosaic outlook of Sancho Panza; he is fully in sympathy with his crazy, idealistic hero. From all we know of him, it is reasonable to suppose that he would have approved of Lammenais's saying: 'there is something lacking in the noblest life that does not end in prison, or on the battle-field, or the scaffold.' We cannot feel confident that Shakespeare would have been as forward as was Cervantes to lead perilous enterprises, planned by men grown desperate. As Mr. Bradley has said, Shakespeare might well have created a Don Quixote no less humorous than Cervantes's: we cannot feel confident that he would have created a figure so impressive, so tenderly pathetic, so beloved. It cost Cervantes no great effort to

identify himself with Don Quixote; unconsciously, no doubt, some of his own chivalrous nature is portrayed in his hero's character. He was no longer young when he first sketched *Don Quixote*, and his impetuous temper had been subdued to a wise patience. And the process of dulcification continued. If we compare the Second Part of *Don Quixote* with the First Part, published ten years previously, we shall note the madcap frolic mellowing into the gentlest and most impersonal humour. Cervantes is autobiographic, and intervenes for an instant now and then in the text; but he never intrudes himself unduly, and rarely stands between the reader and the development of the story. This does happen in the Second Part, towards the end, and we all know the reason why—the provocation given to the author by the impostor with the ‘ill-trimmed ostrich quill.’

Cervantes's eye is constantly on his sitters; he is the first novelist who dares to make his personages speak as they would speak in real life; the few passages in which he departs for a moment from this standard are deliberate bravura exercises. He was not wholly untouched by the literary fashions of his day. Can any writer be so? Was Shakespeare? Prospero's allusion to ‘the fringed curtains of’ Miranda's eye is perhaps as modish as any phrase in Marcela's alembicated speech—a speech in which, as Sr. Rodríguez Marín acutely notes, an absent-minded compositor has printed several hendecasyllabics as though they were prose. From tricks and mannerisms Cervantes is not exempt. His taste was not impeccable; absolute beauty of phrase is not his preoccupation; he aims at being natural and at conveying an exact impression of manifold life. That object he achieves with a success unrivalled out of Shakespeare. He does not approach Shakespeare in the magic power of evocation, in picturesque description, in the use of lovely epithet; he is less disconcertingly neutral, inscrutable, and aloof. On the other hand, he is not inferior to Shakespeare in the mastery of dialogue, and in method is more constantly realistic; he submits voluntarily to a difficult test by keeping his chief characters in their harsh native surroundings; he does not transport them to the beautifying atmosphere of Arden or Illyria or Messina; he exhibits them in the arid sunlight of Spain,—‘tawny Spain’,—challenges comparison with nature, and survives the trial. His effects are broad; he does not focus all his powers on the teasing analysis of a single passion; he does not expand an anecdote. He strove to convey all humanity into literature, and his end has been attained: his characters, as George Meredith said, have in them more ‘blood-life’ than can be found out of Shakespeare.

He set about his task late in his own career, after many checks and some disasters. Fortunately, it was not too late. The presentation is complete, the execution ripe, but not too ripe: *Don Quixote*, as Tennyson said, is 'mature'. Inevitably there have been a few captious censors in Spain and elsewhere. Cervantes's fraternal affability to all ranks of society jars on the nerves of those who contrive to regard the majority of their fellow-creatures as 'the swinish multitude'. Half a century ago the plebeian Cervantes was set in his place by a writer of eccentric talent and fantastic patrician pretensions. This writer, while admitting Cervantes's genius and the charm of some of the episodes, described *Don Quixote* as a monotonous book, reeking with garlic and proverbs. What to this difficult reader seemed monotony has seemed to others inexhaustible variety: but it would be waste of time to argue a point which has been finally ruled. It is more plausible to contend that fewer of Cervantes's creations have impressed the world than Shakespeare's. This is perhaps true, but it cannot be taken as indisputable. It would be an illusion to suppose that all Shakespeare's plays have entered into the current of European literature. The ten plays which deal with English historical themes from the patriotic English point of view may be dropped at once; they could hardly be expected to thrill Continental audiences. Even the comedies, in which gaiety and poetry are so deftly blended, have not succeeded in supplanting Molière's creations: Arnolphe, Alceste, Georges Dandin, Harpagon, Mascarille, Scapin, Elvire, Célimène, still keep the stage. Hamlet fills houses everywhere, but his true home is in the north. As we draw nearer to the sun, we find Shakespeare chiefly represented by his romantic plays and tragedies: by *Romeo and Juliet*, by *Othello*, and by *Macbeth*. These points are merely noted as relevant to any discussion on the 'universal vogue' of Shakespeare. Unquestionably his dominion is vast: so is that of Cervantes. By common consent, Cervantes is the father of the modern novel. Signs of his influence are to be observed where least expected—even in Marivaux. But it is needless to go outside England. Our own great novelists—men of genius like Fielding and Sterne—were proud to boast themselves Cervantes's disciples, and the histories of literature mention many other followers. Many as they are, I will plead for the addition of one name which is apt to be forgotten: that of Henry Brooke, the overshadowed author of *The Fool of Quality*, an unsatisfactory novel but a remarkable piece of literature, which has gained little by Wesley's appreciation and has lost something by Charles Kingsley's extravagant praise.

Blanco White, who was in the uncomfortable position of ceasing to be a Spaniard without becoming quite at home in England, held that it was impossible for any Englishman to appreciate *Don Quixote* fully. These sweeping statements are more easily made than proved; against Blanco White's view may be set that of a Spanish Cervantist, that *Don Quixote* is best read in English—a dark saying which I do not presume to understand. But these whimsies need not detain us. If eighteenth-century Englishmen did not reach Blanco White's exacting standard, they did their best to naturalize *Don Quixote*. Nor were they content with formal translations, four or five of which were issued in England between 1706 and 1796. Other means were tried. There is a song which, in one form or another, is known to all of us; it will suffice to quote the first stanza:—

The dusky night rides down the sky
And ushers in the morn:
The hounds all join in glorious cry,
The huntsman winds his horn:
And a hunting we will go.

The refrain has an English ring about it. There is another song, no less familiar, the opening stanza of which is:—

When mighty roast beef was the Englishman's food,
It ennobled our hearts, and enriched our blood;
Our soldiers were brave, and our courtiers were good:
Oh! the roast beef of old England,
And old England's roast beef!

This has a decided English flavour, and it may take some a little aback to find Sancho Panza joining in the chorus. Both songs occur in Fielding's *Don Quixote in England*, a piece begun at Leyden in 1728 for the writer's private amusement, 'as it would, indeed, have been little less than Quixotism to hope any fruits from attempting characters wherein the inimitable Cervantes so far excelled. The impossibility of going beyond, and the extreme difficulty of keeping pace with him, were sufficient to infuse despair into a very adventurous author.'

England, which produced the first translation of Cervantes's famous book, has never faltered in her loyalty to him, and his influence on English literature is deep and wide. No one needs to be told the source of the two characters that Thackeray calls 'Don Pickwick and Sancho Weller'; nobody doubts the relationship of Colonel Thomas Newcome to *Don Quixote*. As to Cervantes's surpassing merits there are no two opinions in England. They are insisted upon by men who

have few views in common. The indefatigable novel-reader Macaulay, the saturnine Carlyle, and the fiery, fitful Ruskin are all enthusiastic for Cervantes. Tennyson's name has been already mentioned, and from my own knowledge I can say that Swinburne was one of Cervantes's most fervent devotees. In England the tradition of admiration for Cervantes is continuous and unabated. As has often been said, it is not more certain that Shakespeare is the first of dramatic poets than that Cervantes is the first of novelists. Both are supreme inventors; by the creative force of imagination they have called into being a host of characters which convey all the illusion of reality; though dwelling in a world impalpable, these characters have an existence much less shadowy than that of many historical figures. In the exquisite medium of verse, Shakespeare's supremacy is incontestable. But, to be just, we should compare like with like, and if we make the easy experiment of setting a prose passage from—say—*As You Like It* beside a corresponding passage from *Don Quixote*, the supremacy becomes doubtful. It would be insincere to pretend that there are no flaws in Cervantes and Shakespeare; in *Don Quixote*, with which I am more directly concerned, there are many. At some of these blemishes I have glanced: it would be ungracious and ungrateful to do more, for, whatever its shortcomings, the book remains one of the greatest in all literature. In addition to the imaginative wealth, the puissant portraiture, the wistful wisdom, and the pathetic humour which have won it immarcessible renown, it has on every page the irresistible charm of Cervantes's sunny personality.