

I had better explain, to begin with, that I am approaching myth from its literary side, as an established pattern of significant narrative, which forms either the whole work or an important part of it. The examples which I am going to discuss are the myth of the Age of Gold in *Don Quijote*, and the Descent into the Underworld, in relation to *Don Quijote*. The notion of a lost 'Golden Age' of moral innocence is inescapably linked with consideration of man in nature and in society, and the confrontation of nature and art, since merely to imagine primordial innocence is to remind oneself of all possible dichotomies between the self and its world, the I and the other, time and eternity. To picture such a state with verbal art is to launch words in pursuit of a meaning which will embrace 'then' and 'now,' beginning and end. A pathetic vision, since our words and their syntax reflect the flux and the evanescence of 'now' – we might as well try using water to dam a river! And it easily transforms itself into a figure of hubris, drawn out by the impetus of its own rhetoric and moral certitude. So it imitates and becomes an emblem of that very lapse from unity which it seeks imaginatively to repair or to transcend. If such a vision of the past be made to constitute a mirror for the future as it so easily can, it will present a dangerously simple image for a broken and complex world. A dynamic counterpoint to this separation of the one and the many, will and action, can be discovered in the Descent into the Underworld, by the hero of epic, and especially in the *Aeneid*. It achieves its effect by being placed in the historic journey of an individual to his goal, and in the circle of a destiny which consummates itself in a will which is beyond history. If dichotomies cannot be mended, they can be joined in a dynamic friction which is at the root of our sense of tragedy.

In order to see these themes in due perspective, we should start by considering the heroic history of *Don Quijote* in its relation to classical epic. In making his parody of the novels of chivalry, Cervantes regarded them as a remote and degenerate descendent of epic poetry. He was influenced, of course, by the contemporary discussions of the novel in terms of the *Poetics* of Aristotle, whose commentators judged that prose fiction could legitimately be assigned to the epic genre, and should follow the prescriptions laid down for epic. *Don Quijote*, then, has not one, but two principal literary correlatives – the novels of chivalry, whose language, conventions, personages, motivations and actions are drily mocked throughout, and the epic prototypes themselves, the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*.

In theory, Cervantes, like other writers of his time, accepts the Byzantine romance as paradigm for the long narrative form in his own day, though this third kind is formally indistinguishable from the novel of chivalry. In his own practice he attempted a large-scale romance of this kind only once, in the *Persiles y Segismunda*, published after his death. He hoped it would be his best work, but it is easier to annotate than to enjoy. If the Byzantine romance was taken as the ideal form of the novel of chivalry, it was so by virtue of being the demythologized prose epic of the late classical world. Free from interventions by the gods, the protagonists could work out a destiny appropriate to their virtue, courage, constancy, and understanding of themselves and of nature. Of course, it could readily be Chris-

tianized, since its structure and joyful resolution, which derive from New Comedy, require no readjustment to a providential order (*Persiles y Segismunda* ends both with marriages and a journey to Rome). The undirected journeyings of Don Quijote in *Part I*, and the multiplicity of secondary narratives give the appearance of Byzantine structure. But Cervantes's narrative art is an exceedingly complex one which confronts fiction with reality, and which continually opens new ironic distances between author, fiction, characters, and supposed narrators. Thus the simplistic design of both the chivalresque and the Byzantine romances are dissolved in conflicting points of view.

No novel can be structured exclusively around points of view, however, and as the prototypes of extended modern fiction are superseded in *Part I* of *Don Quijote*, a different mode of narrative organization is needed for *Part II*, and this is achieved by establishing a closer analogy with epic. This is not an abrupt departure, for Don Quijote had already compared himself with epic heroes in the earlier part. The windmills (I,8) are comparable to Briareus, and the dark night with its terrifying sounds of rushing water and infernal machinery (I,20) which are later traced to the fulling mills, recall a similar passage in *Aeneid* III when Aeneas and his men spend a fearful night on the Cyclopes' coast, or perhaps, a later one when Aeneas skirts the edge of Tartarus with its horrors (*Aen.* VI). There are many other Virgilian echoes in this First Part.

More important is Don Quijote's discourse on the Age of Gold, prompted by his reception among goatherds who make him welcome at their simple meal. Though not epic in origin, this speech reveals, through belief in a mythical past, a moral basis for heroic action. We may note its cadenced rhetoric, its internal consistency, and its external incongruity. It is beautifully expressed, and has abundant antecedents in antiquity. But this elegy for the primitive life is declaimed in the presence of representatives of real pastoral simplicity – the goatherds who munch their acorns and do not understand a word of his speech, and Sancho Panza, another simple fellow who cannot wait to abandon simplicity and become a king or, at least, a count. This counterpoint is further enriched as the episode leads into the pastoral tragedy of Grisóstomo and Marcela. Marcela has refused to marry, preferring to become a shepherdess. She is so beautiful and accomplished that all the young men of the area have fallen in love with her and turned shepherds so as to be near her, and the valley echoes with the sound of their melancholy love songs. One of them, Grisóstomo, who was pre-eminent in grace and poetry, has committed suicide. Marcela appears at his burial and makes an impassioned plea for freedom, in which she denies any responsibility either for his desiring her or for his death. To put it in current jargon, she has simply refused to be a "sex-object." Thus Don Quijote's evocation of the myth of primordial innocence is exposed to some searching criticism. The Virgilian eulogy is heard, but not understood, by modern counterparts of those ignorant Arcadians whom Philostratus called "acorn-eating swine," and it is followed by a tragic example of the futility of seeking moral harmony in Nature. All that Renaissance Platonism which declared that true love is harmony of souls, and desire for a goodness which beauty merely represents corporeally, founders on the rock of Nature itself. Not the will only, but the body and the feelings demand their freedom. We might say that for man to indulge his nostalgia for the state of Nature is to desert the state of Grace. Or, on a less purely theological plane, that those men and women who became shepherds and shepherdesses for the sake of love, abandoning their husbandry and their social ties and duties, forgot the true relation of

art to life. For, in the Senecan sense, that is art which enables Nature to be lived with; virtue is an art. "For virtue is not Nature's gift; to become good is an art" (*Letter to Lucilius*). It is scarcely necessary to stress the authority of Seneca in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. Let us simply bear in mind, first, that the four stoic virtues of justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude can only be fully exercised by man in society and, second, that the great inventions of man – the arts of medicine, husbandry and government – are those which improve upon Nature. To desert Art for Nature is as dangerous as mistaking Art for Nature, as Don Quijote does. He began this sequence of episodes by discoursing on the Golden Age, in a beautiful rhetorical solo, created by verbal art to replace the world in front of him. This is the characteristic mode of operation of his mind; his every action has a literary precedent. So, since the representatives of rustic simplicity cannot understand him, they mutely contradict him by their presence.

Don Quijote, Marcela and Grisóstomo, each in their own way are seduced by alluring fantasies of innocence. Don Quijote left home, sword in hand, to reestablish the reign of peace and justice. Marcela and Grisóstomo listened to the siren voices of Nature: freedom, independence, love. The opposing voice – service, submission – is not heard. Marcela, only daughter of the most respected family, had been cared for by her uncle, a priest, who gave her complete freedom to choose. Her condition was exemplary, and she chose to escape what she might have called this "repressive toleration." She becomes an impersonation of Diana-Hecate, and the episode ends as she flees into the darkest part of the wood, with Don Quijote anxious to follow her. Grisóstomo, the brilliant student just graduated from Salamanca, who had composed songs and plays for the corporate religious festivals of the village, becomes her sacrificial victim and chooses pagan burial at the foot of a crag. The retreat from the order of Grace to that of Nature is carefully specified. If Don Quijote enacts the comedy of delusions about external reality, Marcela and Grisóstomo present the tragedy of delusions about freedom. The balance of comedy is restored in the following chapter when Don Quijote's usually docile horse Rocinante is attracted by some mares who have been put out to pasture near by. The owners knock Rocinante down with their staves, and then give a beating to Don Quijote and Sancho when they intervene. But before that happens, the mares themselves give the sorry horse a blunt refusal by kicking and biting. So, those creatures who are "privileged" to partake in the state of Nature are not exempt from the frustrations of existence. Cervantes leads us with characteristic irony to the meadow where Rocinante trots hopefully to the mares, in a classical *locus amoenus*:

...vinieron a parar a un prado lleno de fresca
hierba, junto del cual corría un arroyo
apacible y fresco; tanto que convidó, y
forzó, a pasar allí las horas de la
siesta, que rigurosamente comenzaba a
entrar.

(They halted in a meadow, rich in fresh grass,
beside which ran a pleasant and refreshing brook,
which invited them, or rather induced them to
spend the sultry hours of midday there.)

Reading *Don Quijote* 1, 11-15 as a whole we see the development of a single theme: Man

in Nature, Art as an accommodation between Nature and himself. This accommodation may break down whenever he allows his imagination to present to him ancient myth as if it were fact, or when he overvalues art, and so fails to discriminate between it and life. This is not simply a matter of a middle-aged eccentric mistaking bad novels for historical truth, but of interpreting the rhetoric of myth, its exemplary past tense, as a challenge to present action and future achievement. The accommodation can also give way to destructive unbalance when man so distrusts the arts of civilization that he attempts to purge them from his social reality. With Don Quijote, literature has deliberately been made into a visionary counterreality instead of a reflection of reality; with Marcela and Grisóstomo, the flight into nature has unknowingly turned life into a tragedy where real beings are claimed by the chthonic powers they impersonate. Not until the Nineteenth Century do numbers of people seriously deny that man exists harmoniously with nature in society, only so long as tragedy keeps its distance on the stage, and so long as utopian madness is confined to comic books. If the myth of the Age of Gold is, for Don Quijote, the quintessence of utopian idealism, by virtue of which every new disaster blossoms into new and more extravagant rationalizations, the descent into the cave (II, 22-23) reveals the inner contradictions of that idealism. Or, to put it differently, Don Quijote, the exemplary imitator of fictions and creator of his own drama, is made to contemplate the destruction of his models, while still believing in his triumphant imitation of them. But before talking of that, it would be well to note some features of the structure of the two parts of the novel.

Part I, we have observed, combined the characteristic rambling movement of the novel of chivalry with interwoven autobiographies in the manner of Byzantine romance. It was fitting that the references to epic should be allusive, like outcrops from the geological past of the novelistic form. Part II has a tighter unity, perhaps because Cervantes had been criticised for his digressions in the earlier volume, as we are told he was (II, 3, 44). Part II is more explicit in its use of epic motifs within a well marked pattern of journey and return. As in Part I, Don Quijote sets out and returns home, but the two journeys of the first part are replaced by a single sally in the second, which encompasses the whole book. The knight's purpose becomes more sharply defined – first, to find and to do homage to Dulcinea, and then, after her “enchantment” by Sancho, to restore her to her rightful shape. The effort to make him return home passes from the Priest and the Barber to Sansón Carrasco who, in a limited way is Telemachus to Don Quijote's Odysseus. Such a resemblance as this is hardly precise, but the fact is that it would not suggest itself at all without other, more powerful motifs. The country house of the Duke and Duchess, in its piling of illusion upon illusion, in the transformations of persons that occur there, in its substitution of magic for the normal workings of nature, powerfully recalls the island of Circe. At the same time, the Duchess's hunting attire, the ritual washing that Don Quijote is subjected to, and later, the elaborate pantomime in which the so-called Altisidora pretends to die of love for Don Quijote and is then resurrected amid flames, recalls in a disjointed way the episode with Dido in the *Aeneid*. The episode immediately preceding the arrival of Don Quijote and Sancho at the Duke's estate is that of the mock shipwreck. There, on his arrival, Don Quijote discovers that his fame has preceded him, because the Duke and Duchess have read Part I – which recalls the experience of Aeneas at Carthage, and of Odysseus among the Phaeacians after his shipwreck. The Phaeacian games in the *Odyssey* and those at Drepanum in the *Aeneid* might have had their comic counterpart in *Don Quijote* if the hero had

gone to the jousts in Zaragoza as he planned to do. But Avellaneda had in the meantime published his spurious Second Part; his false Don Quijote had gone to Zaragoza with the result that the "real" Don Quijote changes his itinerary (II, 52). One could add more details of this kind, but we have said enough, I think, to show that the episode of the Cave of Montesinos is not an isolated allusion to the motifs of classical epic.

Don Quijote's determination to descend into the cave is his own: no one obliges or advises him to do it. His is an odyssey of self-will. He heard about the cave and its legends from an acquaintance on the road, and for his companions the visit is a picnic. Don Quijote, however, remembering the fantastic adventures of the knights of romance is immediately seized by a sense of mission, and to Sancho's expressions of fear he replies:

Ata y calla... que tal empresa como aquesta,
Sancho amigo para mí estaba guardada.

(Bind me and keep quiet... for such an
enterprise as this, Sancho my friend, was
reserved for me.)

Cervantes isolates this sense of mission by attending to the circumstantial detail with curious precision. The cave is a real geographical location, and the time of day is specified: they arrive at two in the afternoon. The terrain, the names of the plants which Don Quijote hacks away with his sword, how the rope is tied around him, how many fathoms of it are paid out before it slackens, how long, by the reckoning of his companions, he spent below ground, all these are faithfully recorded. This is no mythical edge of the world and no supernatural token is needed in order to pass through. A flight of ominous birds knocks him down, but we are on solid ground, and the time is the time as told by the clock. Don Quijote is hauled up, asleep. Then, after they have eaten, at four o'clock under an overcast sky, he tells what he saw. With unobtrusive care, Cervantes has done more than conventionally set a scene; he has established a tone of precision, clarity and veracity. The master illusionist has said, "Look, there's nothing up my sleeve."

Don Quijote's dream world takes us to "the most beautiful, pleasant and delightful meadow nature could create or the liveliest human imagination conceive," – the *locus amoenus* again. There is a palace with crystal walls, where he is welcomed by Montesinos, is shown Durandarte lying on a sepulchre, and observes Belerma with a train of ladies who mourn with her. There are characters from well-known chivalric ballads, and one of these poems tells how, after being mortally wounded in battle, Durandarte implored Montesinos to cut out his heart and carry it to his beloved Belerma. Finally, Don Quijote sees his own Dulcinea transformed into a country wench, who sends her companion to him to pawn a skirt for the sum of six *reales*. Again, we observe the soberness of detail and the clarity; but now it is the typical obsessive clarity in which the dreamer, helpless and impassive, watches his inner tragedy figuratively played before him. Like all bad dreams, this one is full of absurdities and incongruities which may be funny to anyone except the dreamer. Don Quijote's sense of mission on descending into the cave is confirmed by Montesinos; they have been waiting for him, these many centuries, for this exploit was reserved by Merlin for him alone. Rousing Durandarte, Montesinos presents the saviour Don Quijote, but Durandarte answers, in a weak voice,

y cuando así no sea... cuando así no sea, oh primo!,
digo, paciencia y barajar.

(And if that should not be, if that should not be,
cousin, I say: patience and shuffle the cards.)

In a single phrase the prophecy of the great Merlin (one of the unquestioned potentates of Don Quijote's waking fantasy) is cast in doubt, and the noble Durandarte has expressed his resignation in the language of a tavern gambler who is suffering a losing streak. "If Don Quijote is to be my saviour," he seems to say, "my losing streak will continue forever." In this vision, doubt intrudes upon Don Quijote's fantasy of a greatness reserved for him alone, and vulgarity corrodes these romantic monuments on whom he has modelled his life. It is one thing for a ballad to tell how the dying hero, in a symbolic gesture of selfless passion, ordered his friend to cut out his heart and send it to his lady. It is quite another matter for that friend to tell Don Quijote how he did it, in realistic terms: struggling with the knife which (as can be expected of a dream knife) has a point but no edge, riding five hundred miles with the heart in his saddle bag, sprinkling it with salt so that it wouldn't smell too bad, giving it to Belerma. Belerma is now in eternal mourning, but only four days a week, to a regular schedule. Time has interfered with eternity. The reason for her rationing her grief is not explained, but it can be found in ballads which show her as pert and flighty towards Durandarte. Don Quijote, for obvious reasons, never cites these ballads, but his picture of this femme fatale – sallow, big-mouthed, flat-nosed, gap-toothed – would be recognizable to any physiognomist as the portrait of a shameless hussy.¹ There is travesty of Don Quijote's expressed conviction that knight errantry is a kind of priesthood, for Montesinos carries a rosary, every tenth bead of which is the bigness (Don Quijote tells us, with exemplary lack of exaggeration) of a *medium* ostrich egg, and he is dressed like a priest in some anti-papist comic opera, while the women (supposedly ladies of the court of Charlemagne) wear turbans on their heads. Against Don Quijote's religion of love and beauty, the ugly treacheries of love thrust themselves into the dream. The tragicomic climax comes when he sees Dulcinea, not as he has imagined her to be (imagined is not the right word, since she has become too ethereal for imaginative representation, rather *La gloriosa donna della mia mente*,) but as the country wench that Sancho caused him to believe in only a few days ago. If truths which have been suppressed can avenge themselves in the fantasy, so can the commonplace which has been compelled for too long to play the role of the sublime.

Don Quijote is clearly perplexed by what he has seen. Even he, who saw evidence for enchanters in windmills, sheep, inns, and disappearing libraries, can hardly have expected such absurdities as these. And he has come back to the surface without accomplishing anything. Odysseus was also disappointed: he learned nothing from either Proteus or Teiresias that he did not already know. His experience in Hades was rather the purging of rage and vainglory through his encounter with the dead, and then the knowledge of a fear greater than any this life can inspire as he flees from the Medusa. Aeneas alone can look forward with knowledge of the future stream of events, but still with a certain distaste, and without elation. Perhaps Cervantes profited from Vergil's complex attitude towards Aeneas. For as Aeneas becomes a new man after Book VI to the extent that he has a manifest destiny to fulfill, he also becomes more problematic and less humanly attractive, more tragically isolated, a man sacrificed to a cause. Don Quijote puzzles over the meaning of his vision, and Cervantes lets us

see his doubts. But when those irresponsible artists, the Duke and Duchess, contrive illusions, and rob him of his freedom to interpret reality, they make it possible for other qualities – courage, intellectual curiosity, generosity, eloquence, (and, most notably, those four stoic virtues) to flourish in a world of adversity which he did not bring about. The descent into the cave – that Hell, as Sancho significantly calls it, more than once, – and the attempted duel with the lion, by reason of their pure folly, come nearest to disinterested courage. Cervantes turns Vergil around, enlarging his hero's appeal to our sympathy as he delegates his authorial manipulations to other characters in the story and exposes to vulgar curiosity Quijote's weaknesses.

The myth of the Golden Age, with its nostalgia for a lost innocence is, for Don Quijote, a program to be realized in the future. He is a soldier of apocalypse, since apocalypse is the reflection ahead of us of the original perfection of the cosmos. The form of epic imitates the pattern of the eternal return, the myth of cosmogony, but it also celebrates the splendor of an individual through a linear sequence of episodes. *Don Quijote* takes this familiar structural image of life as a journey, within the equally familiar archetype of the ordeal or exile-and-return, as initiation into a new mode or level of existence. The descent into the underworld is at the point where curved and linear intersect, where the individual sees himself in the timeless perspective of his culture and his race, and draws a charge of moral energy from that moment of intersection. Odysseus and Aeneas acquire energy in knowing that there is a level of justification on which their end and their beginning will meet. But the task of the epic poet is more complex than this: he has to allow the hero to justify himself to his mission and to his view of the eternal realities of reward and suffering, but also he must justify to the hero his future burden. The greatness of Vergil is seen in the way that Aeneas is not easily convinced. If Rome is to be built, must there be more mutilations like that of Deiphobus, more betrayals like that which he dealt to Dido? When Aeneas finally slays Turnus, Vergil illuminates his savagery with images of fire and fury which recall the destruction of Troy, and we can see that this fear has also been justified. Don Quijote awakes with strange ambiguous words on his lips:

Dios os perdone, amigos; que me habéis quitado de la la más sabrosa y agradable vida y vista que ningún humano ha visto ni pasado. En efecto, ahora acabo de conocer que todos los contentos desta vida pasan como sombra y sueño, o se marchitan como la flor del campo. ¡Oh desdichado Montesinos! ¡Oh mal ferido Durandarte! ¡Oh sin ventura Belerma!

(God forgive you, my friends, for you have snatched me from the most delightful existence and the most agreeable prospect that any human ever beheld or enjoyed. Now indeed I know that all the joys of this life pass like a shadow and a dream, and wither like the flowers of the field. O unhappy Montesinos! O sorely wounded Durandarte! O luckless Belerma!)

Luckless, indeed; and luckless Don Quijote who must not only be the figment of his own imagination to the end, but also must create fictional worlds for the Duke and Duchess, for

Cide Hamete, for the anonymous chroniclers, and for that mysterious absence, Cervantes. He will not found cities or change men; but he will create an empire of the imagination where reality is transformed into a book. That is his misery and his splendor. As for his desire to "disenchant" Dulcinea, Montesinos and the rest, that is mistaken and yet, in the reader, this is precisely what his dream has done, in opposing empirical reality to the enchantment of romance. Here we can see another point of contrast with Homer and Vergil. The great Achilles is now no more than a disgruntled shade who would rather live as a slave than be a dead hero, so Odysseus has to learn not to be seduced by glory. Aeneas turns his back on past happiness so as to carry out the plan of the gods. Don Quijote's dream is quixotism seen from behind the mask; it does not represent the accommodation of personal energy and suprapersonal destiny which is exemplified in the epic hero, nor does it point to any final end which might consummate or transcend the beginning.

Do observations such as this suggest an interpretation of the book which would confirm our post-Romantic modes of pessimism? Does Cervantes leave us with the picture of man adrift in a world without purpose, imposing on reality whatever order his autonomous imagination can devise, discovering continuity and direction only in retrospect, like the bright erratic path of the vulnerable snail? Our reading of the earlier episodes which hinged upon Don Quijote's speech about the Age of Gold has already implied what the answer might be. Now we must give full weight to *who* Don Quijote is, for he is not an everyman, or even any man, but a role created and acted by Alonso Quijano, which ceases to exist when Alonso Quijano recovers his wits. Thus the story of the knight has a 'before' and an 'after': *Don Quijote*, the novel, is the story of Alonso Quijano both before and after it is the history of Don Quijote the personage. In the last chapter of Part II, Alonso Quijano awakes from sleep and cries out:

Bendito sea el poderoso Dios, que tanto bien
me ha hecho! En fin, sus misericordias no tienen
límite ni las abrevian ni impiden los pecados
de los hombres.

(Blessed be Almighty God who has granted me such great
favor! Indeed, his mercies know no bounds, nor are
they limited or hindered by the
sins of men.)

Don Quijote has ceased to exist either as reality or as fantasy. The fictional models of heroic virtue are renounced, as he who once was but no longer is Quijote abjures the false books. For Quijano, as for Cervantes, the only true Book and unambiguous Word has declared what the final end is to be, and that end is not the revelation of the Cave of Montesinos. Cervantes's creature has to be stripped of worldly glory, after the pattern of epic, and the only true mission for him, which is beyond fiction and role, is to make a Christian end of his life. The Cave is reserved for those literary phantoms that have haunted the mind with false images of power and glory and love, where fantasy is tortured by reality. When the knight was awakened after his emergence from the cave, we recall, he reproached his companions for robbing him of 'la más sabrosa y agradable vida y vista que ningún humano ha visto ni pasado'. Now he has to reprove them for flattering his former delusions and taking his mind away from the truth: 'déjense burlas aparte' ('stop fooling'). Thus, if

we are attentive, we discover here, at the conclusion of the book, the epic of Alonso Quijano the Good in which all the rest, the history of Don Quijote, has been a marvelous *peripeteia*. The wanderings and adventures of our *bidalgo* have taken place in the interval between two sickbeds: that of the poor country gentleman in Part I, chapter I, and the brief recovery of the same poor gentleman in Part II, chapter 74, as the sickbed is about to become a deathbed. So the novel has circled back to find its end in a *telos* after all. The adventures of *Don Quijote* were the chronicle of Alonso Quijano's journey through a Hades where, like Odysseus, he is at last purged of vainglory and, like Aeneas, he turns his back on the past and submits to a higher will. Cervantes, like Vergil, risks losing our sympathy at this point, and many readers have rebelled against the hero's death, in the odour of sanity. The danger in being solemn about Don Quijote's follies and enthusiastic about his idealism, or weeping over much for his misfortunes, is that we may find ourselves living a romance of chivalry, abandoning grace and reason for the siren-song of nature, and the uncharted wilderness of fantasy. Don Quijote is created by the feverish dream of Alonso Quijano, and the whole tale was told by a lying Moorish enchanter. The death of Alonso Quijano breaks the spell and the enchanter has ceased to exist. If he has bewitched us, our reading of *Don Quijote* becomes a dream in Montesinos's cave. The reader, insofar as he plays the role of Don Quijote, must assume, as his hero does, the most exacting role of all – the disillusioned spectator of himself.

To conclude: these two myths are complementary emblems of human experience, and Cervantes deploys them in a way which enables us to see the relatedness of the beginning and the end of his story. The one serves to reveal how vulnerable to fantasies is the will to act in society; the other creates a psychological space in which the self can scrutinize its guiding fictions and the accommodations of being and role in the deepest levels of personality. Their literary value lies in their power to reveal depths in the life of the hero, and in the life of the novel.

University of Rochester

Notes

- * This is an abbreviated and altered version of a lecture given before the North Central Conference of the Renaissance Society of America, held at Canisius College, Buffalo, N.Y., in April 1971. The original title was "Cervantes and Classical Myth."

1 The evidence for this assertion will soon be published elsewhere.