

CHAPTER V

C O N C L U S I O N

In the story of Don Quixote, Cervantes has presented to us a very complex and unique major character who is a practical idealist on knight-errantry. This idealism is the effect of the romances of chivalry that he loved. Despite the fact that knight-errantry has gone out of practice in the 16th-century Spain, he believes that he can restore it with his noble aims to be practiced in the society.

However, in practising the idealism, the don distorts the reality just like the way it is in the books of chivalry, to create adventures and to make his idealism closer to reality. Since he believes the books of chivalry as historical facts, he makes them as his guidance in practising his idealism. So, everything must be in accordance with the books of romances of chivalry, including all the things that he sees in reality.

Of course, as a result of all this, he is treated as a madman by the people he meets, his family, his friends, and even his faithful Squire, Sancho. Yet, sometimes he seems to be a perfect gentleman, that is he practices them sincerely and with courage; he also has faith in God, just like the knights in the romances. He is very good in discoursing

about knight-errantry and he also has views on poetry and other matters of life.

Although the don still practices his idealism, slowly and unconsciously, he regains his sanity and becomes disillusioned. But he does not give up and continue to practice his idealism, until he loses the fight with Sanson Carrasco. He has devoted his whole life in the idealism, so when the reality ruins his idealism, he has no other goals in life than to be an ideal knight. He eventually dies since he has no other purpose in life.

One thing that the don does not realize when he goes through in the society is the fact that the books of romances that he uses as his guidance are fictitious. So, the heroes and the stories are made perfect to meet the demands of an idealized literary chivalry. In fact, the true knights in the Middle Ages were not as perfect as the don thinks they actually were.

But, basically, an idealism is actually just a goal to be pursued in real life. And in fact, every one must have an idealism for himself; and to achieve the idealism, one must always consider the facts about his own limitations, the situations in real life, and then adjust himself with the society. One may change himself to be an ideal person, but it is impossible for a person to change the whole world with an idealism that is forced in reality. Sooner or later he would realize that his way of seeing the whole thing is wrong.

In the case of Don Quixote, he seems to finally find the essence of life in the idealism of chivalry. He sees it as something that should have been revived in order to make the world a better place for every one. He has a strong faith in it. The only thing that is wrong is that he does not consider the reality where he wants to practice his idea.

**SYNOPSIS OF
DON QUIXOTE**

Once a gentleman named Alonso Quixano lived in the Spanish province of La Mancha. He had read so many romances of chivalry that his mind become stuffed with fantastic accounts of tournaments, knightly quests, damsels in distress, and strange enchantments, and he decided one day to imitate the heroes of the books he read and to revive the ancient custom of knight-errantry. Changing his name to Don Quixote de la Mancha, he had himself dubbed a knight by a rascally publican whose miserable inn he mistook for a turreted castle.

For armor he donned an old suit of mail which had belonged to his great-grandfather. Then upon a bony old nag he called Rosinante, he set out upon his first adventure. Not far from his village he fell into the company of some traveling merchants who thought the old man mad and beat him severely when he challenged them to a passage at arms.

Back home recovering from his cuts and bruises, he was closely watched by his good neighbor, Pedro Perez, the village priest, and Master Nicholas, the barber. Hoping to cure him of his fancies, the curate and the barber burned his library of chivalric romances. Don Quixote, however, believed that his books had been carried off by a wicked enchanter.

Undaunted by his misfortunes, he determined to set out on the road again, with an uncouth rustic named Sancho Panza as his squire. As the mistress to whom he would dedicate his deeds of valor he chose a buxom peasant wench famous for her skill in salting pork. He called her Dulcinea del Toboso.

The knight and his squire had to sneak out of the village under cover of darkness, but in their own minds they presented a brave appearance: the lean old man on his bony horse and his squat, black-browed servant on a small ass, Dapple. The don carried his sword and lance, Sancho a canvas wallet and a leather bottle. Sancho went with the don because in his shallow-brained way he hoped to become governor of an isle.

The don's first encounter was with a score of windmills on the plains of Montiel. Mistaking them for monstrous giants, he couched his lance, set spurs to Rocinante's thin flanks, and charged full tilt against them. One of the whirling vanes lifted him from his saddle and threw him into the air. When Sancho Panza ran to pick him up, he explained that sorcerers had changed the giants into windmills.

Shortly afterward he encountered two monks riding in company with a lady in a coach escorted by men on horseback. Don Quixote imagined that the lady was a captive princess. Haughtily demanding her release, he unhorsed one of the friars in an attempted rescue. Sancho was beaten by the lady's lackeys. Don Quixote bested her Biscayan squire in a

sword fight, sparing the man's life on condition that he go to Toboso and yield himself to the peerless Dulcinea. Sancho having little taste for violence, wanted to get on to his isle as quickly as possible.

At an inn Quixote became involved in an assignation between a carrier and a servant girl. He was trounced by the carrier. The don, insulted by the innkeeper's demand for payment, rode away without paying. Sancho, to his terror, was tossed in a blanket as payment for his master's debt.

The pair came upon a dust cloud stirred up by two large flocks of sheep. Don Quixote, sure that they were two medieval armies closing in combat, intervened, only to be pummeled with rocks by the indignant shepherds, whose sheep he had scattered.

At night the don thought a funeral procession was a parade of monsters. He attacked and routed the mourners and was called the Knight of the Mournful Countenance by Sancho. The two came upon a roaring noise in the night. Quixote, believing it to be made by giants, wanted to attack immediately, but Sancho judiciously hobbled Rocinante so he could not move. The next day they discovered the noise came from the pounding of a fulling mill.

Quixote attacked an itinerant barber and seized the poor barber's basin, which he declared to be the famous golden helmet of Mambrino, and Sancho took the packsaddle.

Next, the pair came upon a chain-gang being taken to

the galleys. The don interviewed various prisoners and decided to succor the afflicted. He freed them, only to be insulted by their remarks concerning his lady, the fair Dulcinea. Sancho, afraid of what would ensue from their releasing of the galley-slaves, led Quixote into the mountains for safety. There they came upon a hermit, a nobleman, who told them a long story of unrequited love. Quixote and the hermit fought over the virtues of their ladies. Deciding to do penance and to fast for the love of Dulcinea, Quixote gave a letter to Sancho to deliver to the maiden. On his way back home, Sancho met Don Quixote's friends, and Sancho told them about the old man's whereabouts. They returned with Sancho to the mountains, in hopes that they could trick Don Quixote into returning with them. The priest devised a scheme whereby a young peasant woman would pose as a distressed princess. Don Quixote, all but dead from hunger and exposure, was easily deceived and the party started homeward.

They came to the inn where Sancho had been tossed in the blanket. The priest explained the don's vagaries to the alarmed innkeeper, who admitted that he, too, was addicted to the reading of romances of chivalry. At the inn Don Quixote fought in his sleep with ogres and ran his sword through two of the innkeeper's precious wine-skins. The itinerant barber stopped by and demanded the return of his basin and pack-saddle. After the party had sport at the expense of the befuddled barber, restitution was made. An officer appeared with a

warrant for the arrest of the don and Sancho for releasing the galley slaves. The priest explained his friend's mental condition and the officer departed.

Seeing no other means of getting Don Quixote quietly home, his friends disguised themselves and placed the don in a cage mounted on an oxcart. He was later released under oath not to attempt to escape. A canon, joining the party, sought to bring Quixote to his senses by logical argument against books of knight-errantry. The don refuted the canon with a charming and brilliant argument and went on to narrate a typical romance of derring-do. Before the group reached home, they came upon a goatherd who told them a story and by whom Quixote was beaten through a misunderstanding.

Sometime later the priest and the barber visited the convalescing Don Quixote to give him news of Spain and of the world. When they told him there was danger of an attack on Spain by the Turks, the don suggested that the king assemble all of Spain's knights-errant to repulse the enemy. At this time, Sancho entered despite efforts to bar him. He brought word that a book telling of their adventures had appeared. The sight of Sancho inspired the don to sally forth again. His excuse was a great tournament to be held at Saragossa.

Failing to dissuade Don Quixote from going forth again, his friends were reassured when a village student promised he would waylay the flighty old gentleman.

Don Quixote's first destination was the home of

Dulcinea in nearby El Toboso. While the don awaited in a forest. Sancho saw three peasant girls riding out of the village. He rode to his master and told him that Dulcinea with two handmaidens approached. Frightened by the don's fantastic speech, the girls fled. Don Quixote swore that Dulcinea had been enchanted.

Benighted in a forest, the knight and his squire were awakened by the arrival of another knight and squire. The other knight boasted that he had defeated in combat all Spanish knights. The don, believing the knight to be mistaken, challenged him. They fought by daylight and, miraculously, Don Quixote unhorsed the Knight of the Wood, who was Carrasco, the village student, in disguise. His squire was an old acquaintance of Sancho. The don declared the resemblances were the work of magicians and continued on his way. Upset by his failure, Carrasco swore vengeance on Don Quixote.

Sancho filled Quixote's helmet with curds which he procured from shepherds. When the don suddenly clapped on his helmet at the approach of another adventure, he thought his brains were melting. This new adventure took the form of a wagon bearing two caged lions. Quixote, ever intrepid, commanded the keeper to open one cage -- he would engage a lion in combat. Unhappily, the keeper obeyed. Quixote stood ready, but the lion yawned and refused to come out.

The don and Sancho joined a wedding party and subsequently attended a wedding festival at which the rejected

lover tricked the bride into marrying him instead of the rich man she had chosen.

Next, the pair were taken to the Caves of Montesinos, where Quixote was lowered underground. He was brought up an hour later asleep, and, upon awakening, he told a story of having spent three days in a land of palaces and magic forests where he had seen his enchanted Dulcinea.

At an inn Quixote met a puppeteer who had a divining ape. By trickery, the rascal identified the don and Sancho with the help of the ape. He presented a melodramatic puppet show which Don Quixote, carried away by the make-believe story, demolished with his sword. The don paid for the damage done and struck out for the nearby River Ebro. He and Sancho took a boat and were carried by the current toward some churning mill wheels, which the don thought were a beleaguered city awaiting deliverance. They were rescued by millers after the boat had been wrecked and the pair thoroughly soaked.

Later, in a forest, the pair met a huntress who claimed knowledge of the famous knight and his squire. They went with the lady to her castle and were welcomed by a duke and his duchess who had read of their previous adventures and who were ready to have great fun at the pair's expense. The hosts arranged an elaborate night ceremony to disenchant Dulcinea, who was represented by a disguised page. Sancho was told, to his great discomfort, that he would receive five

hundred lashes as his part of the disenchantment. Part of the fest was a ride through space on a magic wooden horse. Blindfolded, the pair mounted their steed and servants blew air in their faces from bellows and thrust torches near their faces.

Sancho departed to govern his isle, a village in the domains of the duke and duchess, while the female part of the household turned to the project of compromising Quixote in his worship of Dulcinea. Sancho governed for a week. He made good laws and delivered wise judgments, but at the end of a week he yearned for the freedom of the road. Together he and his master proceeded toward Saragossa. Don Quixote changed their destination to Barcelona, however, when he heard that a citizen of that city had written a spurious account of his adventures.

In Barcelona they marveled at the city, the ships, and the sea. Don Quixote and Sancho were the guests of Moreno, who took them to inspect the royal galleys. The galley which they visited suddenly put out to sea in pursuit of pirates and a fight followed. Sancho was terrified.

There came to Barcelona a Knight of the White Moon, who challenged Don Quixote to combat. After the old man had been overcome, the strange knight, in reality the student Carrasco, sentenced him to return home. Don Quixote went back, determined next to follow a pastoral shepherd life. At home, the tired old man quickly declined. Before he died, he renounced as nonsense all to do with knight-errantry, not

. realizing that in his high-minded, noble-hearted nature he himself had been a great chivalric gentleman.