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*Don Quixote de la Mancha: A Collection of Analyses*

*The Feminine Presence in Don Quixote, I*

In Part 1 of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes uses women to relay several of his points to the reader. Although he uses different women to portray different themes, he uses them collectively to show how they fit into and define society at the time of the novel. Among others, Cervantes presents Dulcinea, Marcela, Dorotea, Camila, and Zoraida, all of whom contribute individually and collectively in *Don Quixote*.

The first woman that Cervantes describes in his novel is Aldonza Lorenzo, a farm girl who Don Quixote renames as Dulcinea del Toboso before he embarks on his first sally. In several ways, Dulcinea highlights the insanity of Don Quixote and the overall idealized view of women that many men have. When Don Quixote renames this woman whom he imagines to be beautiful, Cervantes introduces the idealistic view of women present in the novel. Don Quixote describes the imagined beauty of Dulcinea as unmatched by any other lady; he even goes as far as mandating that the men from Toledo confess her supreme beauty, despite the fact that they have never seen her. This situation is interesting because in making the mule drivers believe her beauty without seeing it, he ropes the mule drivers into his madness and makes them conform to his crazy ways. Furthermore, Sancho Panza, who actually knows “Dulcinea,” has a more realistic view of the farm girl and describes her as a strong, somewhat masculine woman. Because Sancho knows her as someone different than Don Quixote believes her to be, this realistic

view further underscores Don Quixote's madness. Don Quixote's quest in the name of this woman gives a reason for Don Quixote's insane actions, such as his self-imposed and self-justified penitence, en route to nobility. This punishment has no other justification other than for Don Quixote to prove himself for his lady, just like the knights in the novels he read did.

The second woman presented in the novel is Marcela, a beautiful, young, innocent girl who lives in the country. Although she has had several marriage opportunities, she is very self-sustained and does not want to accept anyone's hand in marriage. She is portrayed as a virtuous and free spirit, as she dresses up as a shepherdess and roams the outdoors without fear. The addition of Marcela in the novel alludes to the pastoral romance, a type of literature generally set in the country. In this pastoral genre, shepherds and shepherdesses behave more like people of the court rather than people of the country. However, Marcela is not characteristic of this genre and allows Cervantes to create a satire of the pastoral romance. In pastoral romance, the women at times die from unrequited love; however, in this satire of pastoral romance, Grisóstomo dies from love. Through creating a satire of the pastoral romance, Cervantes introduces gender roles. In the Marcela and Grisóstomo episode, the typical gender roles are reversed. Lastly, Marcela is unique in that she offers a variation on the theme of perspectivism into the novel. In his poem, Grisóstomo talks about her in vain, which makes her seem evil because apparently she is happy that he is miserable. To defend this accusation, Marcela claims that it is not her fault that God gave her so much beauty. At the same time, this statement can make her positive quality of confidence seem like a character flaw of arrogance. Although many men begin despise Marcela for her beauty, she is a modest,

respectable girl who has learned to not care about the opinions of others. Because the reader consequently dislikes and likes Marcela at different times in the narrator's description of her, Cervantes creates an allegory on point of view.

Another influential woman in the novel is Dorotea. Despite smaller roles, Dorotea serves the main role of further developing Don Quixote's madness. Through pretending to be Princess Micomicona in the ploy of the barber and the priest, Dorotea convinces Don Quixote that she is a princess in a vast kingdom that has been taken over by a giant. She begs Don Quixote to return with her to her kingdom and defeat the giant so she can reign in her land. No part of the story that Dorotea uses to pull Don Quixote out of the woods is true, which accentuates Don Quixote's idealistic view of life.

Because Don Quixote believes her fantastical tale, which parallels many of the tales in chivalry books, the reader has more support for Don Quixote's utter insanity and loss of touch with reality. By luring Don Quixote out of the woods and making him feel like a world-renowned knight errant, Dorotea adds to Don Quixote's deception of reality.

Namely, after recounting her misfortunes of life, Dorotea claims, "Continual and extraordinary difficulties take away the memory of the one who suffers them." In response, Don Quixote assures her that he will never lose his memory, no matter what. This dialogue between Dorotea and Don Quixote further supports that Don Quixote is unaware that he has already lost his mind and with that his memory of reality.

Through two long digressions in the novel, Cervantes presents Camila and Zoraida. The significance of these two women is rooted in how they show the division of men and women in society, as well as the role and character of women. In *The Man Who Was Recklessly Curious* and later in the captive's tale, Cervantes makes the point that

women are desperate for love and will often go to extreme measures to be with the men they love. In *The Man Who Was Recklessly Curious*, Lotario tries to dissuade Anselmo from testing his already honorable wife and also paints a picture of the characteristic woman. Camila embodies a woman who is chaste, virtuous, and delicate, but also vulnerable. The narrator emphasizes that women need to be protected from temptation because they often cannot retain their innocence when tempted. This view makes women seem weak because they often will give in to wooing from other men if their husbands are not there to hide them from the wooing. Because women are presented as being such fragile creatures, the narrator also creates a role for the husband: to protect his wife and allow her to submit to him. In the captive's tale, Zoraida takes a risk each time she lowers money and notes into the prison where the captive is, but these are risks she is willing to take in hopes that she can marry the captive. The captive's tale is pivotal in displaying the roles of men and women, as there is a reversal of these roles once the captive gets out of prison. While Zoraida is the risk-taker and pursuer before the captive escapes, the captive must take chances in order to pursue his love once he escapes.

In conclusion, while some women in *Don Quixote* are more instrumental in creating degrees of madness in men, other women play a bigger part in comparing and contrasting the roles of men and women within the historical context. Additionally, the presence of women in this novel introduces the perception of women, which can vary greatly in some instances, depending on the reader. Women are consistently idealized in each of the above instances; the extent of this also varies. Most importantly, each woman adds to the complexity and yet also to the coherence of the novel as a whole.

## The Motif of Reading in *Don Quixote*

Cervantes's novel is focused around books, namely the reading of them. The motif of reading in *Don Quixote* points to the prominence of reading in revealing and shaping Don Quixote as a character. The reading and reactions of Don Quixote himself, the canon, "Cervantes," Don Diego de Miranda, and the duke and duchess enhance the characterization of Don Quixote.

First of all, Don Quixote's obsessive reading of books of chivalry plays a major role in defining his character; his inspiration for his travels as a knight errant comes from the literature that he reads, the literature that causes him to lose his mind. Everything that he experiences in his travels first happened in the books that inspired his travels. In this way, Don Quixote's reading paints an initial picture of himself for the reader. Through Don Quixote's reading, the reader can see where the motivation for his madness exists. Without the element of reading, there would be no reason to Part 1 of the novel, where Don Quixote relates all of his adventures to what he has read. More importantly, however, is that the character of Don Quixote would lose his essence without his reading of books.

The canon from Toledo, whom Don Quixote encounters towards the end of Part 1, responds to his reading of novels of chivalry in a critical manner. He serves as support to the priest's notion that books of chivalry are nonsense and do not deserved to be read. The canon adds to the opposition, namely the priest and the barber, who are trying to save Don Quixote from his madness. Based on his reading, the canon believes that all books of chivalry are the same and that they are foolish stories without a meaningful purpose,

such as to teach. He states that the sole purpose of these books is to entertain and delight, and he argues that books should both teach and delight. The canon believes that fiction that is more thought-provoking, sophisticated, and realistic can entertain the common man and the elite at the same time. The canon represents a different outlook on the reading of books of chivalry; this view is seen in contrast to Don Quixote's view of books of chivalry. This difference helps accentuate to the reader the extremity and likely root of Don Quixote's madness.

In the prologue of Part 2 as well as from chapters 59 forward 74, Cervantes responds to his reading of the "false" *Quixote*. Cervantes's reaction to the false "sequel" further impacts Don Quixote because many of his later adventures and discussions are centered on criticizing and discrediting the false sequel. The false sequel impacts the readers of Part 2 as they read Cervantes's reaction to the false sequel. The first time the false sequel enters the "real" novel is in Part 2 at the inn in Zaragoza. Some men at the inn are reading the "false" *Quixote*, and Don Quixote hears them talking about it. The two men show distaste for the sequel compared to the first part, and Don Quixote begins to talk to about the "false" *Quixote*. The two men tell Don Quixote that he and Sancho are poorly portrayed in the false sequel, and the men, along with Don Quixote and Sancho, harshly criticize the false sequel. They criticize it so much that Don Quixote decides to go to Barcelona instead of Zaragoza, which is where he goes in the "false" *Quixote*, because he wants to prove the author of the "false" *Quixote* wrong. Throughout the latter part of the Part 2, several people criticize the false sequel in several ways. The criticism on the false sequel consumes this portion of the novel. At the end of the novel, Don Quixote mentions the false sequel and its author in his will. The author of the real

Part 2 closes by addressing the fact that Don Quixote is dead and using this as a reason to state that he is the only one who can write about Don Quixote. He also uses this to prove that Don Quixote cannot go on any more adventures, and thus nobody can write about more of his adventures, because he is dead and buried. Based on the frequency the “false” *Quixote* and its author are mentioned in the later chapters of Part 2, the reader can see that the real author really wants to prove himself and his work as the truth to all other readers.

Another character instrumental in defining Don Quixote in different light is Don Diego de Miranda. Unlike many of the other characters of Part 2, Don Diego de Miranda has not read Part 1. He is a reader, but he does not read books of chivalry because he does not enjoy them. Don Diego serves as a foil to Don Quixote; he is an ordinary, sane man who does not read fantastical books of chivalry. Because of his normalcy, he is not a particularly exciting character in contrast to Don Quixote, whose madness is entertaining. Although Don Diego has not read Part 1, he still adds to the character of Don Quixote by showing readers how reading can make a character interesting or dull. Because of Don Quixote’s reading and extreme reaction to books of chivalry, he is a character that people enjoy reading about. Don Diego, on the other hand, is a reader but does not stimulate readers as much as Don Quixote does, perhaps because of his normal, rational response to books.

In Part 2, the duke and duchess further reveal the madness of Don Quixote through an active response to their reading of Part 1. The duke and duchess are examples of readers who are highly entertained by Don Quixote’s madness, so much that they take it upon themselves to create more adventures of Don Quixote for people to read about.

The duke and duchess intensify Don Quixote's madness, as their treatment of Don Quixote make him "truly" believe he is a knight errant. In fact, Don Quixote believes that once he leaves the castle of the duke and duchess, he will be more famous. By playing tricks on Don Quixote that seem like adventures to him, the duke and duchess augment Don Quixote's madness. Through characters such as the Dolorous Duenna and Clavileño and events including the hunt and the attack of the cats on Don Quixote, the duke and duchess give Don Quixote an environment where he can exhibit his ill-justified yet comical skills in knight errantry. All in all, the duke and duchess increase the fantastical element of the novel by providing the readers with situations entertaining to them but detrimental to the mental health of Don Quixote. The actions of the duke and duchess mock the insanity of Don Quixote. Now, Don Quixote is not the one creating the fantastical situations; the duke and the duchess are the creators of these unreal situations. Just as the madness of Don Quixote entertains them, they create situations so the reader finds enjoyment in Don Quixote's craziness too.

The reading of books is not only a motif but also an intertext in both parts of the novel. In Part 1, books of chivalry are the intertext, while Part 1 is the intertext in Part 2. Cervantes's motif of reading is a key aspect of his novel; without this inclusion, the novel would have little direction or motivation.

From the first chapter, reading dominates the mind and actions of the main character, Don Quixote. Reading becomes an increasingly larger component in Part 2, when the reading of Part 1 motivates other characters' actions. The motif of reading allows readers to examine Don Quixote from several different angles, all of which contribute to the complex central figure of Cervantes's novel.



## The Presence of *Don Quixote* in *City of Glass*

The *City of Glass*, by Paul Auster, directly mentions *Don Quixote* and is very similar to the novel in several ways. Not only do Don Quixote and Daniel Quinn have comparable characteristics, both of the novels they play major roles in satirize a certain type of literature, and the author of each of these novels enters his novel and consequently immortalizes himself.

Both Don Quixote and Daniel Quinn try to erase their identities by relating to the real world yet still diving deeper and deeper into fiction. Don Quixote, an insane main character who lives like a character in the books he is obsessed with, has qualities that are similar to those of Daniel Quinn, the main character of *The City of Glass*, who most likely is insane at the end of the novel due to his extreme involvement in the case of Peter Stillman. In addition to Don Quixote being mentioned at the end of Auster's novel, when Quinn has most likely gone insane, Quinn, as he spends time thinking in the mysterious room, even asks himself why he has the same initials as Don Quixote. When he mentions Don Quixote's name, the reader can begin to draw parallels between Quixote and Quinn. Both characters were more insane at the end of their respective novels than they were at the beginnings. Additionally, the two characters allow fictional literature (whether it be reading or writing it) to control all the actions of their lives. Just like Don Quixote's travels are inspired by the books he reads, Quinn becomes so obsessed with writing all of the details he can possibly garner about the mysterious Peter Stillman. He does this to such an extreme that he eventually does not have enough physical strength to go on. This presents another similarity between Don Quixote and Quinn: both of them become very

physically weak during their journeys inspired by a type of fictional literature, either reading or writing.

Auster's novel is a mystery novel at the surface, but the allusions to *Don Quixote* make the novel more complex. In addition to the direct allusions to *Don Quixote*, the overall form of *The City of Glass* points to *Don Quixote*. Auster tries to have the relationship to the form of mystery novels that *Don Quixote* has to book of chivalric romance. Essentially, both authors seek to satirize a type of literature. Like *Don Quixote* is a satire of books of chivalry, *The City of Glass* is a satire of the mystery novel. An example of the satire in Auster's novel is in the ending: whereas most mystery novels end with a resolution, *The City of Glass* leaves the reader with several unanswered questions. By not presenting a resolution, Auster plays with the anticipation and expectations of the reader, which ultimately exhausts the reader. In Cervantes's novel, Cervantes plays with the reader's expectations by the displaying the rash action and decisions of Don Quixote on his quest to knight errantry.

Another way that *Don Quixote* enters the plot of *The City of Glass* is when Quinn and Auster discuss Auster's latest writing, which is about *Don Quixote*. By entering the novel, Auster immortalizes himself as both an author and a character (One must not forget that Cervantes immortalizes himself as a character, too, when he enters his novel in the prologue to Part 1). In this part of the novel, Auster states that Don Quixote was a "stand-in" for Cervantes and believes that Cervantes could not have hated something so much without loving it in some way. Cervantes, although he satirized books of chivalry, had to have some deeper affection for chivalric novels that he expressed through the character of Don Quixote. Similar to Cervantes's shamed reverence for chivalric novels,

Auster has a shamed reverence for mystery novels that is expressed through Daniel Quinn. Also, both authors give credit to others for their works in order to make their works seem more credible. Auster says Benengeli is a combination of Sancho (the witness), the barber and the priest (the authors), and Samson Carrasco (the translator). Similarly, Auster legitimizes his story by speaking through the story of the narrator, who the reader best knows as Daniel Quinn. Daniel Quinn obviously is interested in mysteries, although Auster satirizes them.

It is important to note the parallels between Auster's novel and Cervantes's novel. The intertextuality in *The City of Glass* plays a role because it presupposes that readers of the novel have read *Don Quixote*. It is evident through the allusions to *Don Quixote* in *The City of Glass* that Auster found the literary technique and style of Cervantes effective and thus modeled his novel on *Don Quixote* and Cervantes's relation to this text.