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RETHINKING CERVANTES

Joaquin Ortega

FOUR HUNDRED YEARS AGO this fall the greatest literary genius that the Hispanic world has produced was born in Alcalá de Henares, a city set in the heart of Castile and made famous during the early Spanish renaissance by that super-Spaniard, Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, austere Franciscan friar, soldier, statesman, scholar, who founded and endowed the University and the College of San Ildefonso, and brought there eminent scholars from all corners of the earth to edit the monumental *Polyglot Bible*, first undertaking of its nature ever attempted. Alcalá de Henares, impregnated with cosmopolitan airs, was a fitting birthplace for Cervantes, man of the world.

In these tumultuous days Cervantes calls for pointed commentary. His field, like that of Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, or Goethe, is so rich that a single aspect of his work is more than sufficient to plunge the mind into true research, which is, after all, not arriving at any conclusions, but chasing ideas until they escape from the orbit of our power.

I have chosen to outline, for no more is possible in the space at my disposal, some of the contributions of Cervantes to the western world.

Don Quijote de la Mancha, the story of the knight who to right wrongs sallies forth over the roads of the world armed only with essences of honesty and ideals, and of the simple squire who carries his saddlebags loaded with tangible substances, is the greatest fiction ever written of man in his universal aspects.

Don Quijote represents the synthesis of medieval religious tradition struggling for survival in an era of rationalism. Don Quijote is not yet dead, because men everywhere are still struggling to reconcile religion with reason. But if Don Quijote were only the embodiment of medieval religious idealism, his importance would be less. There are many characters in medieval literature, in the Arthurian and Carolingian cycles, in hagiography, that typify this side of man. Don Quijote is also a synthesis of renaissance idealism, of the aspirations

of men who had discovered the beauties of the external world and the power of their minds applied to it.

In his dual mentality and his dual spirit, he is the supreme symbol of the battle between the residue of the man of the Middle Ages and the new man of the Renaissance. The medieval man, maintained for historic and psychological reasons longer in Spain than anywhere else, still *alive* (for there is only need of thinking of an Unamuno), looks to heaven and beyond his senses. The Renaissance man, engaged in living the marvel of his physique and mind, sees in them both manifestations of a divinity which is not in the heavens yonder, but near himself, in himself. The medieval man believed in a faraway God, removed from his understanding. He is pure faith, without torture. The Renaissance man felt his own powers with such an exhilaration that often he forgot God, for he thought himself a demigod. (That is what in substance Neoplatonism means.) He was a magnificent thinker, and the more he analyzed, the more he inquired into cause and effect, the wider the world appeared to him. Inevitably he began trusting himself and distrusting everything else, until faith in what he could not comprehend waned.

The Renaissance, from the point of view of the existence of the individual, was a superb spectacle of personal vanity, such as never before had the centuries seen. Romanticism was to bring us three centuries later another explosion of human vanity based not on reason like that of the Renaissance, but on sensibility, and therefore more intimate and more beautiful, but less value-giving. The Renaissance — the head — had wider horizons than Romanticism — the heart. Both powers, thought and sentiment, with their motor, will, are in final account, the only avenues of assertion of the human being. The man of the Renaissance had acquired new weapons to oppose to faith: logical reasoning, intellectual curiosity, and above all, dialectics. Other men in Greece and Rome, in Christianity and in the Orient, had used similar weapons, but the fundamental difference is that most of these men had stopped on the threshold of the incognoscible, while the typical man of the Renaissance went over it with nonchalance. One is tempted at this point to call our present technological scientism the third explosion of personal vanity of modern times. Our mechanical exploits are leading us to self-glorification, just as exploits of the mind and feeling led the Renaissance and Romantic men to self-glorification.

The main character that Cervantes created embodies not necessarily the conflict between these two postures of man — the medieval and the renaissance — though often they clash very dramatically, but rather their reconciliation. Don Quijote attacks the windmill in the purest display of heroism the ages have witnessed, without even stopping to assure himself that Rocinante could stand the impact, because for him, for his faith, for what he sees with the eyes of his spirit, the windmill is an evil giant that must be destroyed. The welfare of mankind is at stake. He is like you and me when we feel rising in ourselves our heroic voice and are ready to combat the ugly and bad with bare hands, simply because we believe in beauty and good. He is the missionary who burning with philanthropy succumbs in the inhospitable land; the social reformer who suffers insults and ridicule with steady countenance; the true man of revolution who thrusts his chest forth on the barricade so that those that come behind may enjoy a better life.

But let us not forget that Don Quijote also discourses with much sense throughout the pages of the book on matters which fall within the reach of the middle man, of the practical and reasoning man. Let us not forget that he dies reasoning, recapitulating the many errors into which his impulsiveness has led him, though it is a fine irony of Cervantes to make him at last discover reason in the vague folds of physical sleep.*

* The problem of the significance of Cervantes in the Spanish renaissance has agitated critics in recent times, and, as it is wont to happen when there is agitation, leading some of them to extremes. For instance, there are the "mystics," who believe that Don Quijote represents the indomitable spirit of medieval Spain defending itself against pagan intrusions; there are the "devotees of Hispanidad," for whom the Renaissance was merely an interlude in the history of Spain without roots in the national psychology and Don Quijote, therefore, an incongruous character; there are the "Europeanists," those who after having probed into Cervantes' unerring instinct for artistic values, his non-conformism and his intuition of the ultimate results of the philosophical and literary currents of the times, claim that the Renaissance side of Cervantes is the one worth measuring. It seems to me that these attitudes are erroneous, though it must be recognized that Cervantes was more Renaissance than Middle Ages. He was immersed in the *poeticas* of his age, not so much through analytical study as through that faculty of the Spaniard to seize quickly what is in the air. Gustave Lanson has sharply described this Latin faculty, which is more accentuated in the Spaniard than in any other member of the Mediterranean family. However deep the *renacentismo* of Cervantes may be, to attach slants and predispositions to Cervantes is to miss the Cervantine spirit. Cervantes was one of those rare men with a perfect sense of peace and balance. Granting that he may have preferred the Renaissance, as he undoubtedly did, we must also grant that he would have dealt full justice to the Middle Ages, as he did. Using a bold image, it may be said that Cervantes is "bicephalous" *always*, and that the two sides of his split thoughts join each other in perennial greeting. Those who would make him the container of any particular ideology overlook the fact that in the vastness of his thought he became the container of many ideologies, some of them apparently contradictory. Let the point rest there, for a discussion of it, with the necessary evidences in his works, would take this essay too much afield.

Cervantes' lesson seems to be that man must nourish both faith and reason and be nourished by both, for with only one or the other half of life is shut to him.

Now this reconciliation of faith and reason has been for millenniums one of the fundamental problems of mankind. Spain, more than any other country, had had a long record of argumentation without apparent solution. It was only in Spain that the three medieval scholasticisms — the Christian, the Arabic, and the Jewish — had lived together. Cervantes' new contribution to the western world was not to have solved the problem, but to have arrived at the greatest possible harmony between the adverse factors in the midst of an epoch in which reason seemed to be paramount, and to have given this harmonization permanency in the heights of art, where nothing dies. A neat gesture of intellectual Quixotism this undertaking of Cervantes! And as man is still puzzled between belief and reasoning, and he certainly will continue so to be for centuries to come, his book has the stamp of immortality and perennial youth. The disquisitions of the theologians and philosophers — wordy and pompous, words to speak with words, words void of the fixedness of artistic presence — will be forgotten, but *Don Quijote* never will, because words in it are not used as a finality or as an explanation. They are legitimate and unobtrusive tools to build a man of flesh and bone who invites constantly the intimate side of our nature and our sense of self-responsibility and emulation. In the same manner people may forget Jehovah, the Law, the finger pointed, the exclusion; but they will never forget Christ, the Voice, the sympathetic glance, the inclusion.

While Don Quijote is above all (though, of course, he is many more things), the symbol of the juxtaposition of those two currents of medieval and renaissance idealism, Sancho brings to the book other values. He is the life of the senses in their pristine state: he is what he can see, and smell, and taste, and hear, and touch. His perceptions open with his senses and close with his senses. He will never think windmills to be evil giants. In him the correlation subject-object will always be real, consistent. Ah!, but he is also a *man* like Don Quijote, with a soul that though as a rule does not lead him to distort realities, does lead him occasionally in a direction counter to that which the experience of his senses points out. In the second part of the story,

particularly, his urges gradually transcend the mere material imperatives.

Common man that he is, he possesses, however, high qualities, a "social intellect," virtues, self-esteem. He is kind, loyal, enduring, knows how to distinguish right from wrong, takes a childish pride in his own deeds, and, what is most important of all, he has a tendency to imitate his master who is a little crazy perhaps, but withal, he admits, a respectable person, worthy of admiration. The usual run of common men, be they rich or poor, are a little awed in the presence of the superior man. They pretend at times their own superiority, but in their inner selves they recognize their inferiority, which is expressed in arrogance, hostility, or distrust of what is above them, in order to cover up their uneasiness. This trend of thought reminds me of an unforgettable scene which I saw in a committee room of a state legislature when a very well-groomed president of a famous state university — wearing spats and a coat with silk-lined lapels — appeared before the assembled members to argue for his appropriation. The chairman of the committee, *ipso facto* unbuttoned his shirt and placed his feet on the table, the soles of his shoes directly facing the important person, as if to declare with his crude but eloquent manners that the commonwealth belonged to dirt-farmers, to common men like himself, and not to those who wore fancy clothes and spats to boot.*

Sancho, who is the prototype of the "perfect common man," can be a little arrogant, hostile, or distrustful, but not for long. Sancho is, in short, the Majority, the mass-man, the p-e-o-p-l-e — weak and strong, covetous and generous, trustful and diffident — the ordinary in all of us, the daily experience in minor tone, the fluctuation between the positive and negative poles of our natures, the nails that pin us down to earth. While Don Quijote is the Minority, the excellent man, the individual — what one *is* because one wants to be it as the result of internal imperatives of behavior; the extraordinary in all of us, the experience that we would like to live and live not, the major tone, that

* This defense mechanism of the common man, is, in my opinion, and contrary to the current criticism of lack of finesse of the average American, the most precious asset for the preservation of our democracy. America is made up largely of average men who instinctively distrust the intellectual. And as all panaceas which could radically change the tone of our middle-ground democracy (Cf. communism, fascism, nazism and the rest of the "isms"), must be hatched by thinkers or semi-thinkers, it is to be hoped that they will have rough going while many fellows like that farmer-legislator are loose upon the land.

breathless rhythm of aspiration, the ideal pole that takes us out of the routinary shelf of our nature, the wings that free us from earth.

The notable thing in Cervantes is that here also we do not sense any struggle — though there are dramatic moments of discord, or rather discordance — but instead supreme understanding between master and servant, between the high and the low in us. One cannot live without the other. This brotherhood, imposed at the same time by the internal necessity of the elements of our psyche which seek to complement themselves within the self, and also by the external need of the facts of life which force us to lean on our neighbor, has two names of great value. Internally it is called spiritual peace; externally it is called democracy. Two concepts that the men of yesterday and of today have loved and still love, and which they have not known and still do not know how to convert into fruitful realities. Thus we see Benavente in that quiet and profound play, *Los Intereses Creados* (*The Bonds of Interest*), which introduced in 1919 the Theater Guild to the audiences of America and which passed almost unnoticed in the raucous atmosphere of the postwar, torn with the internal and external dilemma of the vital compensation, and solving it with an ironical smile. Thus we see that almost all of the actual problems of the world in the international sphere (rich nations against poor nations), in morals (imperatives or compromises), in politics (parliamentarism versus authoritarianism), in education (instruction of the masses or instruction of the best), in the other social orders as well, can be reduced to a maladjustment of minorities and majorities. Ortega y Gasset in his *La Rebelión de las Masas* (*The Revolt of the Masses*) laments the rise of the mass-man and asks for quality and selection. On the other hand Lenin in the breviary of communism, *The State and the Revolution*, tells us in his exaltation of the proletariat that any worker who knows the rudiments of letters can be entrusted with the functions of government.

Cervantes was wiser than Benavente, wiser than Ortega y Gasset, wiser than Lenin and all the rest, because instead of observing coldly the discordance as Benavente does, or leaning toward the extreme minority or the extreme majority as Ortega y Gasset or Lenin do, he neither shrugged his shoulders like Benavente, nor pretended to have found the solution like Ortega y Gasset and Lenin, but limited himself to present to us the Majority and the Minority in peace and harmony. He did with this as he did with Reason and Faith: he gave us the

most artistic model of conciliation. And I want to repeat here what I said when treating the dilemma Reason-Faith. The panaceas and the opinions in the struggle between majorities and minorities will be forgotten, but never will be forgotten the live picture that Cervantes painted of the friendship between the aristocrat and the man of the people. And in his masterpiece we shall find love and understanding for all social classes.

Therefore, another contribution of Cervantes to the western world is to have given an artistic mold and a kind solution to this qualitative dilemma that has preoccupied men since they organized themselves into communities.

That is not all. Sancho has a philosophy too, which is neither medieval idealism nor renaissance rationalism, although it might be said to partake here and there of both. The core of his philosophy is pragmatism, made up of sayings, aphorisms, attitudes that have been bequeathed to him by many men like himself who have lived before him and who have had to give themselves answers to certain questions which were beyond the cognizance of their senses. Sancho sees what he sees with the eyes of his face, and what his physical eyes cannot see is seen by those collective eyes of past generations, by tradition. If Don Quijote is a civilization, Sancho is a culture. The former is what one thinks and converts into action; the latter, what is felt instinctively and is converted either into action or into resistance to action. These two postures converge into each other. Sancho with his homely wisdom brings Don Quijote down to the rich soil of national culture. And vice versa, Don Quijote with his conceptual schemes of thought and militant action brings Sancho to the upper regions of universal civilization.

Sancho represents the most useful lessons that experience has taught man through the ages. Within his modest range he is an early representative of the philosophy of experimentation. He is, like Claude Bernard, ready to admit anything, but you have to show him. This personality of a man who knows what he knows and is ready, but not overeager, to learn, had incubated through Antiquity and the Middle Ages another philosophy, moral and sententious, satirical and exemplary: the philosophy of the fable, the apologue, the anecdote. Common men are not capable of lucubrations, yet they can see clearly a fact, they can watch an action, they can hear a tale, as anybody else can,

and from them figure out paths of wise conduct. Which is the same thing as to say that underneath external history—in capital letters, Don Quijote—there is another internal history—in small letters, Sancho—far more serviceable for human beings. What is, because someone has made it be, is less substantial than what is because one cannot help it to be otherwise. Many civilized persons often know all they want to know—or at least they think they know—and know not what they should or need know.

Therefore, with this side of Sancho, Cervantes, in his great labor of reconciliation of all the physical and mental potentialities and vistas of man, brings to the attention of the western world another dimension, already known, it is true, but now welded into a large scheme where it lives equitably with other dimensions of man which before were hostile to it.

A good, total life, Cervantes seems to tell us, is not faith alone, or reason alone, or the lesson of experience alone, or natural morality alone. It is a combination of the four. We must orchestrate them, we must close the quadrangle if we aspire to a full life.

Cervantes works out this quadrilateral philosophy into a system (shall I dare call it a system in view of the accusations of lack of letters, or improvisation, etc., which have been hurled against him by shortsighted critics?) which is peculiar to the genius of his land. All the so-called philosophic systems are in the ultimate analysis, in form as well as in substance, entirely subjective positions to explain to oneself the why of things. Cervantes, as any other fellow, has a perfect right to formulate his. His system is the Spanish dialectic. There are logics of reason and logics of the unreasonable; there are logics of thought and logics of action; there are logics of ideology and logics of passion; and there are dialectics of external order and dialectics of internal order. The system of Cervantes is not based on principles deployed in a closed scheme for the explanation of facts, but is based on the facts themselves, in all the facts of life put into motion for the elucidation of the principles, and what he proposes himself is to reach a vision rather than an explanation of its intricate relationships. This does not mean to say that Cervantes is merely inductive, but that his art saves him from mechanical deductions.

It is inevitable—knowing Spanish psychology—that the best of the

Spanish thought has been invested in the creation of live human beings. That is why our music and our literature and our painting and our very lives do not present the colossal aspect of a symphony of Beethoven, of a treatise of philosophy, but that of fragments where fugitive truth is imprisoned on passing: a beautiful ballad, a picturesque saying, a superb character in the midst of the banality of the classical comedy, a haunting melody which pours itself, with feeling, in the popular song; the nervous traits of eternal truth which a Goya seizes. And that is also why the history of our civilization presents itself as a series of summits without a sense of immediate continuity, it is true, but with a profound sense of continuity of the pure Spanish values in the course of our national existence. What I mean to say, in short, is that Spain is more culture than civilization, more attitude and sensibility than plan and thought.

The genuine artistic form of the Spaniard, his form of thought, his form of life itself, is the example, *the man in action (idea y hecho)*, the most unifying and indivisible of substances, toward which everything converges and wherefrom everything flows: humor and tragedy, the lyric and the dramatic, the true and the false. That is why it is so difficult to separate in a Spanish work of art the idea from the execution, the contents from the container. They are one and the same thing. Their unity is organic, nor formal. In order to prove this, just try to divide into components a Greco, a Cervantes, or a Goya. The task is futile from the critical point of view. It is necessary to apprehend them in totality or to reject them in totality—with exactly the same totality with which the protagonists conceived their *vision* of life.

In the creatures of his brain Cervantes *formed*, free from preconceptions and mental masturbations, the knowledge of the ages. Unamuno, that unique “professor of poetry,” would shout, and thus take good care of certain critics, that this is a legitimate *form of philosophy* for those who may have the internal and external eyes well-adjusted to each other. What happens is that the majority of the unpoetic professors are short-sighted in both eyes.

I insist. Cervantes practices his “philosophizing” (let me be permitted to use the term) so artistically that when the echoes of the ostentatious philosophies of the professionals of thought are extinguished, his *magnum opus* of vital philosophy will still be sought by those searching for unadulterated truths.

Within the scheme of two inter-pivotal characters—two, I mean to say, who rotate on their axes and who penetrate constantly in the field of rotation of each other—characters loaded with human significance, two characters who are in truth one, defining each other in themselves and in the other, by juxtaposition and by opposition and conformity, each one with value *per se* and also with a value of extension into the other, Cervantes draws with firm pulse a complete allegory of human life. Don Quijote and Sancho go to sleep at night each caressing his unreal dreams, but in the daytime they plunge into their real selves which are made of realities and unrealities and they keep on exchanging them in juicy barterings of ideas and sentiments. Each dialogues with his own self and with the other self, and with all the myriad of selves that they meet in the roads and inns (activity and repose: action and contemplation) of their itinerant lives. Can there be conceived a richer medium for distilling a functional philosophy of life? The method is Socratic in essence, but enlivened with the flesh and bone of direct impact with the subject and object of reality.

Never before, never after, has an artist of the pen, or of the brush, or of the chisel, or of the pentagram, approached man from more points of view. Besides Cervantes' polyform, polychromy, polytone, and polytopography (physical and human) the multiplane perspectives put on their canvases by some of our revolutionary painters show puny in comparison.

Cervantes' primary accomplishment was to unite the extreme planes so as to be able to interpose all the scales of the intermediate ones. So, in his novel there is war and there is peace, and there is also the suspense—without anguish—of what must continue in different stages of struggle or of harmony as the infinite circumstances of life shall determine. The mural he has depicted is as vast as the walls of time and space and man upon them.

There is pressure from within in all human acts: one's aspirations to knowledge that often resolves itself into belief and acceptance when one's powers fail. Almost all men believe in something, prefer something, whether they know it or not. Faith is a form of knowledge. Variable in quantity and in intensity, there is in all men an internal, spiritual pressure. There is also a pressure from without in all human acts: what one senses and thinks as an agent endowed with gifts of per-

ception and volition, giving endless encouragement and consciousness of power. This is an external, sensorial pressure.

Cervantes, charitable, understanding, intelligent beyond measure, has exercised a cordial, religious, pathetic effort to counterbalance these two pressures and make it possible for man not to be crushed between them. Viewed thus, in the presence of so many contemporary thinkers gasping between the two pressures which they cannot harness, or better even, neutralize, as Cervantes did, our great Spaniard emerges in the western world as an architect of consolation, as one of its most effective civilizing patterns.

Cervantes is* also a landmark in the history of civilization as expressed in art, for one or two more things. The well-pondered conjunction of all sides of man, made alive in his book as a dual prototype, Don Quijote-Sancho, furnished the western world with an "idea of the gentleman" which has been incorporated into universal speech and which still prompts imitation and enriches mind and heart. The history of human civilization may be aptly summarized in the "idea of the gentleman" which has prevailed at the various stages of time. There is an Oriental gentleman, as typified by Confucius, Buddha, and Mohammed; there is a Classical Western gentleman as typified by the model of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Roman empire-builder; there is a Christian gentleman—the meeting point of Orient and Occident—as typified by Jesus Christ himself and the medieval knights, those in cloth rather than in armor, who burned in the love of Him; there is a Renaissance gentleman as typified in the models of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Leonardo, and Ariosto. There is also a modern gentleman who is Don Quijote, and his son, though spurious, the British gentleman.*

There are also in the history of human culture common men, as typified in the models wrought by successive epochs, no less representative of inner forces—individual and social—than the gentlemen. These common men are the potential imitators without whom the "idea of the gentleman" is not conceivable. Their function was passive until Cervantes came upon the scene. It was not until Cervantes brought forth Sancho and made him speak shoulder to shoulder with his

* This "son" needs a little explanation. Great Britain has imitated Don Quijote through letters and through social adaptation, but she has taken from Don Quijote the form and from Sancho the spirit. An idealistic opportunism, so to speak.

superior, that this common man rose to the category of gentlemanhood. And this is another capital contribution of his art. He is so conscious of it that in the Prologue of his masterpiece he says that he does not expect thanks for giving Don Quijote to the world, but that he does want recognition for having given Sancho the stature that belongs to him. Cervantes treats Sancho like a hero and incorporates his norm into the code of the gentleman. He makes him participate in the daily experience of the gentleman, not as servant but as companion. He is no longer to be absent from the show of life in literature, for Cervantes put him there, in the center, and gained a leading role for him with the credentials of art.

To be sure, there was a democracy in medieval Spain nursed by a long and equalizing militant action directed toward the expulsion of the Moors. In war times all men tend to be equal facing danger, or even more, to be categorized as to the manner in which they face danger, and Spain had been warring for eight centuries to reconquest her soil from the infidel. To be sure, there was also a new valuation of man as such, brought about by the neohumanism of the Renaissance. But none had, before Cervantes, lifted this common man and placed him on terms of parity beside the gentleman. None had made the superior and the inferior man love each other so deeply and intimately. None had seen before so humanely, so Christian-like, the intrinsic value of the many, of the people. None before Cervantes had spoken to this Sancho attentively and softly close to his ears, or had listened to him with such attention and softness, in order to capture his eternal truth and worth.

To prove this, it is only necessary to go back to the literature previous to Cervantes, where the common man appears *predetermined* and with his horizons limited, while the horizons of Sancho keep on expanding with those of Don Quijote until both almost feel, think, and act alike.

Since this momentous event in the history of literature—the categorization of the common man — writers have undertaken in earnest a reappraisal of the internal value of man, of man shorn of externals of rank, blood, and possessions, and have called their efforts Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism, Surrealism, Existentialism, and the other “isms.”

With Cervantes the modern novel came to be. It was a fresh start

because besides giving the norm, he brought all the previous forms of narrative into his book—a sort of inventory, a backwash of all the fiction that there was up to his time: the peripatetic tale, the legend, the ballad, the apologue, the *patraña*, the Italian psychological, sentimental and pastoral novels, the knight errant story, the *picaresca*, the Moresque, etc. He cultivated all these models with more or less fortune, trying to stylize them, to study them in order to learn their respective techniques—and this is more important from the point of view of the formation of the artist than the relative merit of the imitation. The strong in art, like a Goethe, are nourished by the past. That is the only manner of acquiring historic sense of what one does. And Cervantes had a supreme historic sense. He knew what had been done, what he was doing, and what he aspired to do. His book is the past, the present, and the future, woven into a timeless cloth.

Once in possession of the previous models, he submerged them into a unity, a “novel of novels,” a New Novel with the old materials rejuvenated and an Original Theme—*all of man* in a singular, unique, simple, artistic conception. Originality in art, more than invention, is to do the same things in another way.

Thus, if we should accept the conventional patriarchate, we might still call Boccaccio something like the grandfather of the novel; but the paternity must be reserved for Cervantes, who gave it, directly, the blood that courses through its veins. We could very well summon to the stand for this identification the shadows of Dickens, Balzac, Turgenev, Galdós, and many other good boys among his abundant progeny. For the truth of the matter is that the more one penetrates into the nature of fiction, the more one is convinced that after Cervantes there has not been any great novelty in the genre. Psychoanalysis, dehumanization, and similar newfangled approaches intended to go deep into the recesses of man and his world, are but natural derivations, logically implied in the universal and protean formula, the *all-inclusive* manner of writing novels devised by Cervantes.

Emphasis on the subconscious or on the conscious mechanism of life, emphasis on this or that there shall always be, because the human race needs to change plumage now and then. But all will start and end with man, with a whole and complete man, indivisible and representative, and with a life varied and fluid, of many faces all true—with what, in fact, Cervantes saw clearly was the legitimate objective of the novel.

The idea of the gentleman that Cervantes, gave us is that of a man who can harmonize everything within himself, belief and doubt, reason and passion, experience and dream, moral imperatives and material realities. There is certainly no Spaniard dead or alive, nor any son of any other country, who fits the model perfectly. But there was a Spaniard who conceived the model. That is something.

England, which has pretended to establish the rules of the gentleman in the modern world, has drunk insatiably from the Cervantine fountain. England has read *Don Quijote* more than Spain itself, and British writers have been influenced more by this book than by any other except the Bible. I was not much surprised when shortly after the First World War a British social worker, who had been a librarian in the front of battle, told me that *Don Quijote*, strange as it may seem, had been one of the favorite readings of the Tommies. Those Tommies in hours of tension were taking refuge in the calm voice, the pure idealism, the fortitude, and the gracious humor of this perfect gentleman Spain had given them. The British took from Spain not only her material empire, but tried to take the spritual one as well. Let us hope that they may be capable of keeping at least the latter.

Spain: cathedrals, crosses, peaks, swords, forgotten plains . . . a sorrowful symphony of straight lines slashing the air. Playing this symphony, men, men looking on and looking up, for there is not much to look to below. A land of men, as Somerset Maugham says in his *Don Fernando* with a sympathy for the giant figures of her history—a sympathy which is at times diluted by a dose of malice and incomprehension.

Yes, hard men and tender men, bad men and good men, egotistic men and generous men, rude men and refined men, proud men and humble men . . . but men all. El Cid, Guzmán el Bueno, Juan Ruiz, Fernando de Rojas, Cortés, San Ignacio de Loyola, the Gran Duque de Alba, San Juan de la Cruz, Oquendo, Fray Luis de León, the Gran Duque de Osuna, Lope, Quevedo, Gracián, Jovellanos, Balmes, Castelar, Giner, Pí y Margall, Costa, Galdós, Menéndez y Pelayo, Unamuno, Valle Inclán, and the greatest man of all, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra and his *alter ego*, Don Quijote, he of the *triste figura* and the beautiful interior.

★ ★ ★

P. S. AN UNDELIVERED LETTER ("MOVED; LEFT NO ADDRESS") TO JOHN G. WINANT.

November 4, 1947

When correcting the proofs of this article, the paper came with the news of your death. I have looked at you for many years through the eyes of Cervantes. In an unpublished book of mine entitled *A Historical Gallery of "Bad" Americans*, you are one of the characters. You belong in my ironic gallery because you were out of step. In virtue, you were perhaps the greatest public servant of your day. Like Don Quijote you had a "*triste figura* and a beautiful interior." You also sallied forth like Don Quijote to right wrongs. Amidst greed, compromise, disregard for individual liberties, passion and conflict, you stood for ethical imperatives and justice. Your last public utterance in the *New York Herald Tribune* Forum condemning our avidity for material wealth—in all its implications—might well be taken for your last will.

Some of us can understand your suicide. Superior men live a life of the spirit, and spiritual crises eat deeply inside the self. Minor men who live the life of the flesh, of appetites—for power, for physical comfort, for expediency—, get along at all times and in all circumstances. Principles do not bother them. But you were a man of principles. Your whole career is a demonstration of the joy and the tragedy of living up to one's moral dictates. You conceived your life not as a scheme to success, but rather as an all-embracing function of communing with God and the World to deliver unto both your measure of good. When the history of these years is written by a historian who looks below the surface of the social scene to discover true values, you, John Winant, will occupy a place among that unfortunately too small a minority of Americans who carried the weight of our higher responsibilities.

Work in happiness does not kill anybody, but work with worry kills always the man of sensibility. Actual or figurative death. Don Quijote died of melancholy in his bed. You died of melancholy too, in blood, which is the bed of our time.

Last summer I spent two weeks at Dartmouth College discussing with other citizens our foreign policy. You were a man of peace. Your earnest countenance crisscrosses now in my mind the landscape of New England where you grew and worked, where this America in which so many men have invested their hopes, was born. You always remembered your American origins, and that is why your life has what other lives lack—historical continuity.

Be proud of your life given to others as befits a Christian gentleman. Be also proud of your death, which is an indictment against our disoriented society. Cervantes is waiting for you. Greet him for me.—J. O.