Fall 1998


Elizabeth Wilhelmsen

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln, ewilhelmsen1@unl.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/modlangspanish](http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/modlangspanish)

This monograph concerns Cervantes's *Don Quijote, Part II* published in 1615, sequel to the perhaps better known *Don Quijote, Part I*, which saw the light of day in 1605. Deviating from standard criticism, the author of the study insists upon this narrative as a novel in its own right, with its own special meaning (66, 157). Making the assertion that to date no book length study has been devoted exclusively to the *Quijote* of 1615, Henry W. Sullivan characterizes this text "as a salvation epic," one which portrays "the passage of Knight and Squire through a Purgatory in this life" (xi).

If an "eschatological vision" is "adumbrated in Part II," (67) such did not occur in a vacuum. Sullivan cites in support of his thesis biographical data such as: on 17 April, 1609, Cervantes joins the Confraternity of the Slaves of the
Most Blessed Sacrament; on 2 July, 1613, he takes the habit of the Third Order of Saint Francis; in the Prologue to the Novelas ejemplares, dated the same year, he expresses concern for his immortal soul; further, as the author of Don Quijote lay dying, on 2 April, 1616, he requests to be fully professed as a Franciscan Tertiary (20-21). Sullivan discerns parallel eschatological questions in other late works of Cervantes, including El rufidn dichoso, the Persiles and the Viaje del Parnaso (11, 20-22). The evidence indeed suggests that during the last years of his life, Cervantes's thoughts bore principally upon "the Four last things of Christian eschatology: Heaven, Hell, death and the Final Judgment" (12). The analysis thus evinces "a common thematic of the epic of salvation running through Cervantes's life, through his late works, and Part II of the Quixote" (22).

The "central intrigue in Part II," Sullivan attests, "concerns Sancho's blithely announced project to sainthood (DQII:8); the providential purification emanating from this project; and the knight's purgatorial progress towards a model Christian death, salvation and immortality" (59). For said metamorphosis to be realized, what the author terms "the double catabasis" (22) has to be undergone; that is, Don Quijote must descend into the Cave of Montesinos and the squire must fall, as he does, with his donkey, into the dark pit on the road. These experiences, coupled with the afflictions inflicted upon the protagonists by the cruel Duke and Duchess, complete the process of purification. Supported by a considerable amount scholarship, Sullivan cites a lengthy repertoire of theological authorities, including St. Catherine of Genoa, St. Robert Bellarmine, SJ, and Francisco Suarez, SJ (78-101) paying special heed to the somewhat recent doctrine that sins can be preemptively expiated through suffering during this life.

Chapter 4 focuses upon the issue of Don Quijote's cure in terms derived from the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan. The knight's malady, "paranoid psychosis," is alleged to be successfully cured through a descent into his inner world of the unconscious. The author builds here upon an established school of psychoanalytic Cervantine criticism. However, the root causes put forth for Quijote's symptomatology, such as an abnormal childhood relationship with his father and an incestuous attraction toward his niece, have no particular basis in the text. In these pages of the analysis, we confront a reconstruction of Cervantes's text through Freudian/Lacanian lenses more than a plausible interpretation thereof. Sullivan indicates that his overview of the novel is ultimately subsumed into a Lacanian perspective (157).

Though this reviewer applauds a number of the insights presented in this monograph, she has to take issue with "Appendix A," in which the author examines several Cervantine fictional marriages in the light of the decrees of the Council of Trent. The union of Femando and Dorotea, as Sullivan observes, comes close to fulfilling the requirements for validity notwithstanding its secrecy. The Council, however, though recognizing previously contracted clandestine marriages had ruled that clandestineness would be an impediment to validity thenceforth (Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, 24th session,
chap. 1). The lawfulness of this bond therefore cannot be upheld. The Grisógono-Marcela and Cardenio-Luscinda unions are also examined. The author judges the former "marriage," that between the improvised shepherd and shepherdess, to be "invalid." It has to be indicated that we are not dealing with a marriage at all, since the genteel Marcela had shunned her suitor completely and absolutely. In the case of Cardenio and Luscinda, matrimony is fully intended. It is nowhere contracted, however, within the pages of Cervantes's text. According to the Council, agreement between the parties did not suffice to constitute marriage. It had to be formally, that is, ceremoniously contracted (ibid.). We are again contemplating a non-marriage, one in which the question of validity or invalidity is moot.

ELIZABETH WILHELMSEN
The University of Nebraska, Lincoln