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Don Quixote. Translated, with Notes, James H. Montgomery. Introduction by David Quint. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2009. Xlii + 846. ISBN: 978-0-87220-958-9.

The quixotic endeavor of translating Miguel de Cervantes' masterpiece *Don Quijote* into English is a challenge that few scholars have dared to undertake. Yet, during the first decade of the twenty-first century alone, there have been four translations that make it possible for readers of English to appreciate Cervantes' genius.¹ The author of the most recent translation is James H. Montgomery, who is a former Spanish professor and a retired librarian. When Montgomery began his translation twenty-six years ago, he did so with a desire to recreate the original as closely as possible without distorting Cervantes' literary style: "I have made every effort to recreate the sense of the original as closely as possible, though not at the expense of Cervantes' literary style, which provides the foundation for so much of the *Don Quixote*, especially its wit" (xl). In addition, Montgomery focuses special attention on preserving the humorous elements of the novel in order "to restore the novel to its deserved place of honor among the world's most

¹ *The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha*. Translated by John Rutherford, with an introduction by Roberto González Echevarría. 2000 (without the introduction). Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 2001.

Don Quixote. Translated by Edith Grossman. New York: HarperCollins, 2003.

Don Quijote. Fourth-Centenary Translation. Trans. and with notes by Tom Lathrop. Illustrated by Jack Davis. Newark, DE: European Masterpieces, 2007.

esteemed comic masterpieces" (xl). Montgomery bases his translation on the Spanish text of three editions (the year in parentheses refers to the year Montgomery began to use the edition): Francisco Rodríguez Marín (1984); Vicente Gaos (1987); and Francisco Rico (1998). The Appendix of Montgomery's translation consists of *The Principal Works Consulted in the Preparation of This Translation*, an *Index of Selected Proverbs, Maxims, and Passages from Don Quixote*, and a list of sources that Montgomery recommends to the reader who wishes to learn more about the novel.

A difficult task that a translator of *Don Quijote* faces is how to translate the numerous proverbs and malapropisms. With respect to the proverbs, Montgomery substitutes a literal translation for the original when possible, but, in the absence of a translation that makes sense, he substitutes one that has "the appearance of a bona fide proverb" (xli). Examples of a literal translation (1 and 2) and one that closely resembles the original (3) appear in the same paragraph in II, 10, when Sancho, who is about to leave a frightened Don Quixote alone in the forest in order to search for Dulcinea, employs a series of proverbs to console him:

1. "y ensanche vuestra merced, señor mío, ese corazoncillo, que le debe de tener agora no mayor que una avellana" (II, 10; 104);² "but I hope your grace will shore up what little courage you have left, which is probably no bigger than a hazel nut." (458)
2. "buen corazón quebranta mala ventura" (II, 10; 104); "stout heart overcomes ill-fortune" (458)
3. "donde no hay tocinos no hay estacas" (II, 10; 104); "where's there's no smoke there's no fire" (458)

Two more examples of "the appearance of a bona fide proverb" can be found in I, 25. While riding in the Sierra Morena, Sancho informs Don Quijote that he understands the pitfalls of gossipping:

1. "Y muchos piensan que hay tocinos, y no hay estacas" (342); "Many expect to find birds where there aren't even nests." (171)
2. "¿quién puede poner puertas al campo?" (342); "it would be easier to chain the wind" (171)

2 Spanish passages are from John J. Allen's edition of the novel: *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. 25th ed. Madrid: Cátedra, 2005.

Montgomery translates a variation of the same proverb (“no hay tocinos no hay estacas” and “hay tocinos, y no hay estacas”) two different ways. This technique is quite effective in that his translations are not only relevant to the context of the dialogue, but they can also be understood easily by the reader. In II, 7, Montgomery translates one of Sancho Panza’s malapropisms in a creative and quite effective way:

- Señor, ya yo tengo relucida a mi mujer a que me deje ir con vuestra merced a donde quisiere llevarme.
 —*Reducida* has de decir, Sancho —dijo don Quijote—; que no relucida. (82)

“Master,” said Sancho to Don Quixote, “I’ve reduced my wife into letting me go wherever your grace wishes to take me.”
 “‘Induced’ you mean,” said Don Quixote, “not ‘reduced.’” (444)

It is evident from the quality of Montgomery’s translations of the proverbs and word-play humor throughout the novel that he values their literary function as well as the impact they have upon the reader’s appreciation of the novel.

There are several textual problems of the novel that a translator must decide how to resolve.³ Montgomery incorporates the I, 10 title adopted by the Spanish Real Academia in 1780, for example, and explains the controversy surrounding it in a lengthy footnote (63). In addition, he includes the title for I, 43, which does not appear in the first edition. Montgomery places the episode in which Ginés de Pasamonte steals Sancho’s donkey in Chapter 23, and he explains the source of the problem in a lengthy footnote in which he also addresses critics who believe that Cervantes omitted this episode deliberately and who assert that the interpolated passages are the work of someone other than Cervantes (155). The name of the soldier who served in Italy in I, 51 appears as “Vicente de la Rosa” the three times it appears, unlike the first edition of the novel, in which the name is “Vicente de la Roca” the third time it appears. The poems of the *princeps* edition that appear at the beginning and end of Part One are present in Montgomery’s edition. Furthermore, he includes the dedications and, prior to Part Two, the approbations by Valdivielso and Márquez Torres.

A successful translation does not consist of stilted phrases and anachronistic vocabulary that remind the reader that he or she is not reading

3 For a comprehensive analysis of these problems in different translations, see Daniel Eisenberg, “The Text of *Don Quixote* as Seen by its Modern English Translators,” *Cervantes* 26.1 (2008): 103-26.

the original version of the text. In the Translator's Preface, Montgomery states that his goal was "to produce a translation that will evoke a response analogous to one a reader would have in reading *Don Quixote* in the original—and by this I mean that I have done my best to make readers forget they are reading a translation" (xl). One example of Montgomery's keen ability to recreate the style of Cervantes' prose is from the Prologue to Part One in which Cervantes speaks of the eloquence and ingenuity of writers who precede him:

“¡Pues qué, cuando citan la Divina Escritura! No dirán sino que son unos santos Tomases y otros doctores de la Iglesia; guardando en esto un decoro tan ingenioso que en un renglón han pintado un enamorado destraído y en otro hacen un sermoncico cristiano, que es un contento y un regalo oïlle o leelle.” (96-97)

Montgomery's translation captures beautifully the essence of this passage:

“And when these same authors quote the Holy Scriptures, they are perceived as so many Saint Thomases and other Church fathers, for they are so clever and decorous that in one line they depict a wanton lover and in the very next deliver a devout little sermon that is a delight to hear and a treat to read.” (4)

In II, 59, Montgomery skillfully avoids possible pitfalls of syntax and vocabulary with a faithful translation of Sancho's reaction upon learning how he is depicted in the apocryphal novel:

“Que me maten, señores, si el autor deste libro que vuestas mercedes tienen [no] quiere que no comamos buenas migas juntos; yo querría que ya que me llama comilón, como vuestas [mercedes] dicen, no me llamase también borracho.” (523)

“I'll be darned, noble sirs, if the author of that book is trying very hard to make me like him. He may call me a glutton, as your graces have said, but I hope he doesn't also call me a drunkard.” (747)

In spite of the quality of the aforementioned passages, there are other translations, though not many, which are problematic. For example, the

vocabulary of Montgomery's translation of "pero esto todo fueron tortas y pan pintado para lo que ahora diré" (II, 63; 558) may remind the reader, even so slightly, that he or she is reading a translation: "But all this was bread and honey compared to what I shall now describe" (771). In addition, there are instances in which Montgomery uses vocabulary that may appear foreign to today's readers: *whit* (7), *caitiffs* (36), *poultices* (99), and *bolt* (103).

Montgomery is very careful not to produce a translation that sounds as if it were based upon a twenty-first century text. He does not translate the names of monetary units: "[. . .] for it is all the same to me whether they give me eight one-*real* coins or a single piece of eight" (I, 2; 26). In addition to retaining the Spanish name, he provides a footnote for the reader, explaining the value of a *real*. With respect to titles, Montgomery translates them in such a way that they sound neither too modern nor anachronistic. For example, he translates *tú* as "you"; *vuesa merced* as "your grace"; and *vos* as "you" or "your grace." With the exception of *Quijote*, which Montgomery changes to *Quixote*, proper names appear in their Spanish form, including the names mentioned in the poems by the Academicians of Argamasilla.

A translation of a text from another time period, especially one separated from the present day by four hundred years, should endeavor to elucidate as much as possible the numerous historical and literary references. Without this knowledge, it is difficult for a reader truly to appreciate a work of literature such as *Don Quijote*. While Montgomery's translation includes nearly three hundred footnotes, more annotations are needed for the more than eight hundred literary, legendary and biblical characters, historical figures, books, and geographic locations that Cervantes cites. In I, 30, for example, Princess Micomicona states that she is searching for "don Azote, o don Gigote" (421). Montgomery translates these malapropisms as "Don Azote or Don Jigote" (225), but he fails to note the connection between the English translation of *azote*, or whiplash, and Don Quijote's numerous physical beatings. Likewise, the reader also might appreciate a footnote that informs him or her that *gigote* is a meat stew that was popular during Cervantes' day. In I, 49, for example, a footnote would help the reader understand and appreciate why the canon, who wants Don Quijote to read about real people and events, suggests that he read about the following historical persons: "Un Viriato tuvo Lusitania; un César, Roma; un Aníbal, Cartago; un Alejandro, Grecia; un conde Fernán González, Castilla; un Cid, Valencia; un Gonzalo Fernández, Andalucía; un Diego García de Paredes, Extremadura; un Garci Pérez de Vargas, Jerez; un Garcilaso, Toledo, un don

Manuel de León, Sevilla, cuya lección de sus valerosos hechos puede entretener, enseñar, deleitar y admirar a los más altos ingenios que los leyeren” (634-635). A reader who is not familiar with these names cannot appreciate why the canon equates their heroic exploits with those of the knights about whom Don Quijote reads in his books of chivalry. While not a substitution for specific terms and proper names, David Quint’s fine introduction does provide the reader with a comprehensive literary and historical orientation to the novel that compensates to a certain extent for the dearth of footnotes.

David Quint’s introduction to the translation consists of a comprehensive and insightful orientation to the socio-historical milieu of the novel and its literary complexities that specialists and non-specialists alike will appreciate. Quint divides the Introduction into subheadings: *Spain, Cervantes, and Chivalry*; *Don Quixote, the Novel, and Sancho Panza*; *Narrative Structures and Techniques*; *Part One: From Feudalism to Capitalism (From the Dulcinea Fantasy to the Princess Micomicona Fantasy and From the Tale of Unreasonable Curiosity to the Captive’s Tale)*; and *Part Two: From Capitalism to Feudalism (Metafiction, Disillusionment, and Inversion, The Duke and the Duchess: Nobility without Chivalry, and Saving Fictions)*. Several topics about which Quint writes in the Introduction are of particular note. In *Don Quixote, the Novel, and Sancho Panza*, for example, Quint informs the reader of the novel’s picaresque characteristics:

Don Quixote—with its hero journeying through a decidedly nonheroic landscape of everyday life; with the abundant cruelty that Don Quixote encounters; with the resilience with which he picks himself up after defeats and drubbings and continues to his next adventure that seems at first glance only loosely connected to what has come before—is itself heavily indebted to the picaresque narrative. (xxvii)

In addition, Quint ascribes the *pícaro*’s Everyman embodiment to Sancho Panza, who “brings to the novel the *pícaro*’s realistic insistence on the needs of the body” and “shares the *pícaro*’s hunger for money” (xxviii). In the same section, Quint notes how Cervantes develops Don Quijote’s and Sancho Panza’s characters through their dialogue, which “produces not only the book’s realism, but also the distinctly new kind of literary characters that Cervantes invents for the genre of the novel, characters who develop and deepen, as opposed to the largely static characters of previous fiction” (xxix). In *Narrative Structures and Techniques*, Quint discusses

the manner in which Cervantes employs narrative interlace in Part One with respect to the interpolated stories, which Quint believes Cervantes arranged in such a way that they “mirror and comment upon one another” (xxx), much like the narrative technique of the chivalric romances. In the final section of the Introduction, *Part Two: From Capitalism to Feudalism*, Quint attributes the decline of Spain during Cervantes’ day to a lifestyle that the duke and duchess personify in the novel: “The decline of Spain has started at the top, the novel suggests, and it accentuates the idleness, disease, and cruelty of the duke and duchess by contrasting it to the hard work, health, and good nature of Teresa Panza and the other inhabitants of Don Quixote’s rural village” (xxxvi). Quint’s introduction provides the reader with the background knowledge to discover and to appreciate how the novel is “capable of human transformation” (xxxvii).

In the Translator’s Preface, Montgomery shares with the reader a technique he employed while working on his translation:

To have the text read as naturally as possible, I made it a practice to read aloud as I translated, taking my cue from Cervantes himself, who read aloud as he wrote, knowing that most of his readers would in fact be *listeners*; widespread among his fellow countrymen meant that the majority would have become acquainted with *Don Quixote* only by listening to an oral “performance” of it by someone who could read. I hope that my translation, when read aloud, will convey some of the musicality and cadence of Cervantes’ prose. (xlii)

The passion with which Montgomery translated the novel, as evidenced by the passage cited above, shines through in a translation that is faithful to the language, style, and spirit of the original. The overall quality of Montgomery’s translation is excellent, as I often found myself engrossed in the novel as if the original language were English, and only when I stopped reading did I realize that I was still reading a translation. Notwithstanding the minor deficiencies I noted, Montgomery’s translation merits consideration as one of the most noteworthy English translations of *Don Quijote*, and I recommend it highly.

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