

# Cervantes y su *Don Quijote* como modelo ejemplar en los albores de la narrativa francesa moderna: Sorel, Scarron y Furetière

## *Cervantes and his Don Quixote as an Exemplary Model in Early Modern French Narratives: Sorel, Scarron and Furetière*

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**Resumen:** En este artículo exploraré el rol de Cervantes como modelo ejemplar para la implantación en Francia de la estética realista propia de la novela moderna en el siglo XVII. A través de un análisis comparativo, resaltaré la influencia de *Don Quijote* de la Mancha en las obras de Charles Sorel y Paul Scarron (entre otros), cuyas obras, paródicas y satíricas a la manera cervantina, suponen una reacción crítica contra la novela heroica y sentimental de Madeleine de Scudéry y Honoré d'Urfé. Al mismo tiempo, los autores que aquí traigo a colación deben ser considerados precursores de la renovación de la picaresca iniciada por Lesage y los cuentos moralistas de Marivaux y Diderot.

**Palabras clave:** *Don Quijote*. Ejemplar. Influencia. Realismo francés. Novela.

**Abstract:** In this paper I shall explore Cervantes' role as an "exemplary" model for the establishment of the aesthetics of Realism in France, which characterizes the modern novel in the 17th century. Through a comparative analysis, I shall highlight the influence of *Don Quixote* on the works of Charles Sorel and Paul Scarron (among others). By deploying strategies of parody and satire which are similar to Cervantes', their novels implied a critical reaction against the heroic and sentimental works by Madeleine de Scudéry and Honoré d'Urfé. At the same time, the authors studied here should be regarded as forerunners to the renewal of the picaresque genre led by Lesage and the moral tales by Marivaux and Diderot.

**Keywords:** *Don Quijote*. Model. Influence. French Realism. The Novel.

According to the Dictionary of the Real Academia Española, “ejemplar” means ‘que da buen ejemplo, y, como tal, es digno de ser propuesto como modelo’. The second meaning comes as a consequence from that one: ‘original, prototipo, norma representativa’. The extent of the exemplary nature of Cervantes (and his works), has been surprisingly disregarded in France in spite of the fact that it led to the establishment of the novel as a modern literary genre.<sup>1</sup> The consideration of *Don Quixote* as “exemplary” implies that it was regarded as a work of high value which deserved to be imitated or followed in any sense. In this article I will deal with a particular aspect of Cervantine French reception which shows the impact of the exemplarity of his works: its influence on the first representatives of the Baroque French novel. I shall study this relation through a comparative method. My hypothesis is that the publication of *Don Quixote* and its international influence led to the rise of the modern novel in France as it did in England.<sup>2</sup> In the following paragraphs I shall summarize the arrival of *Don Quixote* in France and the spontaneous outburst of followers and imitators whose novels reproduce the themes and patterns created by Cervantes.

Before I get started, some necessary clarifications on the methodology employed should follow. I understand the comparative analysis not as a matter of dependence between the works involved in it (which was ascertained in the origins of the discipline and then criticized by René Wellek), but as a question of relation and influence. Each comparative fact should be considered as unique and specific and stand upon a relation of similarities and dissimilarities, or in the words of Pageaux, “rencontre” and “différence” (10). These should be not only enumerated but also interpreted in order to successfully accomplish a comparative analysis. Regarding influence, we should keep in mind that, in the sixteenth century, imitation was not condemned and that the sources of influence were often declared, as we will see in some of the works I shall be dealing with throughout this article.

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1. Lukács (117) identifies the realistic novel with the modern novel which, in his opinion, can be recognised through a series of characteristics: the hero is individual, the society depicted is flexible and the setting is realistic and described in detail. Cervantes and Rabelais are, according to him, the main writers of modern novels.

2. On the modernity of *Don Quixote* and its influence in England, see Martín Morán and Watt.

ON HOW *DON QUIJOTE* ARRIVED IN FRANCE AND THE DECADE OF 1610

The rise of the novel in France (as well as in England –in the sense of the modern novel and not the romance) should be dated shortly before 1610.<sup>3</sup> In those days Spain was no longer a dominant nation (see Morel-Fatio 31). Critical writers laughed at the defeated country and its inhabitants, who were seen at that time in highly stereotyped terms. However, the country still managed to keep some of its former military power and prestige, and, in consequence, it was still feared and respected.

Cervantes himself had written, in his *Persiles y Sigismunda*, that “en Francia, ni varón ni mujer deja de aprender la lengua castellana” (2003, 567). As a matter of fact, the marriages of Louis XIII and Anne of Austria, Elizabeth de Bourbon and Felipe IV, both of them in 1651, increased the reading public’s curiosity on Spanish language, traditions, and literature in France (see Cioranescu). But, contrarily to what is generally believed, the large-scale French importation of fictional narrative from Spain had started even before that. Indeed, the Spanish romances of chivalry were more popular in France than they were in Spain. Spanish sentimental and Byzantine romances were massively published in France, and many of them gave rise to numerous sequels and imitations. It is accurate to assume that the French reading public was familiar with the Spanish popular fiction of that time, such as *Lazarillo de Tormes*, *Guzmán de Alfarache* or *La Celestina*. In words of Chartier, “tal como lo muestran los inventarios de las bibliotecas aristocráticas, el conocimiento del castellano [...] estaba extendido entre las élites francesas de fines del siglo XVI y de principios del XVII” (81), and for those who did not know the Spanish tongue, translations of the main works came out almost immediately.<sup>4</sup>

Bardon ascertains that, among the Spanish authors of the time, Cervantes was “le plus connu et le plus aimé” (10). Canavaggio reckons that *Don Quixote*’s increasing popularity depended not only on the reading public, since most Europeans were illiterate, but on the presence of its two main characters in ballets, masquerades and paintings (58). Nevertheless, in France, *Don Quixote* became popular not only because of its protagonists, but also through its

3. For a comprehensive overview of all the narrative genres of the French Baroque see Grande.

4. Let me recall, among these translations, Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (Part 1, by César Oudin, 1614; Part 2, by François de Rosset, 1618) *The Exemplary Novels* (1615), *Persiles and Sigismunda* (1618), both by Rosset et Vital d’Audiguier, Mateo Alemán’s *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1615), by Cesar Chappuis, and *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1615), by Paul Baudouin.

concrete episodes and extracts, especially during the first decade of the century. This fact increased the reputation of secondary characters, particularly those in the interpolated stories from the First Part –which Losada Goya has brilliantly studied: Anselmo, Lotario, Cardenio, Grisóstomo, etc. All these characters, together with the two main ones, were regarded as extravagant and burlesque. Consequently, the first works produced in France following the example of Cervantes were merely based on the notions of “comedy”, “parody”, and “extravaganza”, which were at the core of the seventeenth-century interpretation of *Don Quixote*.

Those excerpts often included the original text in Spanish and a double title (for instance, Baudoin’s *Le Curieux impertinent. El curioso impertinente*, 1608; *Le Meurtre de la Fidélité, et la Défense de l’Honneur*, 1609, [a translation of the episode of Marcela]). However, the translators would sometimes try to adapt their works to the widely admired pastoral genre, and this implied that proper names could be changed. For example, Gristóstomo became Philidon and Ambrose became Daphnis. In those works, Don Quixote became a secondary character and the plot was adapted to the literary preferences and local traditions of the reading public. In words of Bardou, “Cervantes a ainsi, tout d’abord, contribué à renforcer en France le succès de l’in vraisemblable et du faux” (22). The second and the third decades of the century marked the complete success of Cervantes’s novel in France. As Crooks explains, “of Cervantine personages Don Quijote is of greatest interest to Frenchmen. In the early part of the century the allusions to his cowardice and to his boastfulness show that he is considered a *miles gloriosus* and, therefore, he serves a comic character” (201). As we will see, the comic interpretation did not hamper its contribution to the rise of the modern novel.

The influence process includes intertextual allusions or references. One of the first instances appears in Agrippa D’Aubigné’s *Baron de Faeneste*, a satire of the comic and the burlesque published in four parts (between 1617 and 1630). In his book, D’Aubigné quotes “Dom Guichot” explicitly by drawing a comparison between his own hero and Cervantes’s. The Baron of Faeneste, whose life has been written down by historians, becomes a hypochondriac after many “meditations”:

Je vous promets un livret à quoi un de mes voisins travaille, qui vous fera baiser à la joue aux bonnes compagnies que vous fréquentez: c’est un traité qui n’a point encores de titre, on veut qu’il le nomme le Rabilleur,

les autres Esculape. Le corps est d'un Baron de ce pays, qui, comme Don Guichot voyagea pour remettre la Chevalerie errante, celui-ci court le pays pour rétablir l'honneur des Seigneurs et régler la menuë Noblesse, où il lui arrive des accidents qui ne vous lairront pas dormir. (199)

D'Aubigné's book follows the pattern of a dialogical novel with two main characters, Enay and Faeneste, each of which symbolizes two opposite ideas: being and pretending (truth and lies). Consequently, the two of them represent a wider set of differences: Huguenots (Enay) and Catholics (Faeneste), rustic men (Enay) and courtiers (Faeneste), etc. This leads to the formulation of various types of satire: the social satire of courtiers who are excessively worried about appearance (pretenders), the satire of the court traditions and the plots of social climbers, and the religious satire of the Christian, Catholic dogma. All these forms of parody are aimed at showing the degradation of the fundamental distinction between "être" and "paraître", that is to say, the crisis of essential values and the triumph of vanity.

Regarding its structure, the novel is heterogeneous: it merges a dialogical pattern and a narrative line, it mixes up different literary genres and the language used is a combination of dialects (Faeneste, who is Gascon, speaks the Gascon dialect; Enay, from Poitou, does not speak Potevin, but normative French). At the same time, it announces the burlesque literature of the eighteenth century in France. Bardon (62) even remarks a curious adaptation of the episode of Maritornes in D'Aubigné's work: Calopse wants to punish his doctor, who has given up Christian religion for Protestantism. For so doing, he enters the doctor's room disguised as a ghost in nightgown, where the man is sleeping with Riclet, the pharmacist. Calopse grabs the *Bible* and then hits them both in the head. However, they react quickly and fight the fake ghost away.

#### THE GOLDEN AGE OF CERVANTINE NARRATIVES (1620-1660)

The years between the kingdom of Louis XIII and the regency of Anne of Austria (1620-1660) would be crucial for Cervantes's influence on the development of the modern novel in France. Many of the most important writers of this period, such as Scarron, Corneille, or Marc-Antoine Girard de Saint-Amant, to name but a few, were familiar if not proficient in the Spanish tongue. Comments on Cervantes' works would come not only from scholars, but from any enthusiastic reader. Those days, Cervantine allusions would be

frequently found in the intellectuals' letters. Most of them, especially Tall-  
emant des Réaux, incorporated a general complaint that there should be a  
French Quixote. From 1620 onwards, burlesque rewritings of realistic novels  
would feature quixotic characters. The Spanish knight was then used as an  
implicit intertextual reference that conveyed the idea of comedy, the ridicule,  
and the claim for a thorough renewal of the narrative genre. I am referring to  
the works by Sorel (*Le Berger extravagant*), Scarron (*Le Roman comique*), and  
Furetière (*Le Roman bourgeois*). In France, those novels lead the first stones  
into modernity after Cervantes' example: they react against an outdated pat-  
tern and propose new literary forms and themes that would contribute to the  
establishment of the modern novel.<sup>5</sup> This was possible because Cervantes was  
then regarded by them not as the creator, but as the destructor of a narrative  
genre (Canavaggio 27).

Novels like the ones gathered here prove that the comic and the chiv-  
alric fiction were widely believed to be frivolous or prejudicial (Close 26).  
As Pavel pointed out, all major narrative genres of the time (Ancient Greek  
novels, medieval chivalric stories, and pastorals) "transported their readers  
into a realm quite different from everyday reality, and consequently required  
a drastic suspension of disbelief [...]. These novels were *meant* to offer a lofty,  
implausible view of the world" (4). Thus, by satirizing and parodying the pop-  
ular heroic, sentimental and pastoral books by Honoré d'Urfé (*L'Astrée*) and  
Madeleine de Scudéry (*Clélie*), they create new narrative patterns that stand  
as predecessors to the works of Lesage, Marivaux and Diderot. The example  
of *Don Quixote* started this "cauce de renovación y modernización narrativa"  
(Sánchez Tallafigo 190). In consequence, Cervantes' early influence in France  
(with *Don Quixote*'s main plot, its interrupted stories, and *The Exemplary Nov-  
els*) contributed to the establishment of narrative Realism.<sup>6</sup>

In order to attack heroic fiction, these works showed the adventures  
of common, anti-heroic characters in their daily lives (from a wide range of  
perspectives: satirical, critical, dissolute, etc.) in full detail.<sup>7</sup> The comical as-  
pects together with the protagonists' struggle for survival also linked these

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5. Madame de la Fayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* was the first psychological novel, but it was still  
focused on noble and courtly settings.

6. The kind of Realism I am referring to in these lines does not directly correspond to the nine-  
teenth-century prototype. Baroque Realism has to do with comic stories and parodic novels  
rather than with a harsh reality which is portrayed objectively. For a wider discussion on this  
topic see Serroy.

7. Don Quixote's initial description does not mention his heroic birth or his glorious background,  
but his humble, ordinary life and eating habits.

works with the picaresque tradition. Thus, they reacted against the educated, courtly ambiances or the exquisite settings of the pastoral and the allegorical series of *romans-fleuve* (sometimes in more than ten volumes) created by Honoré d'Urfé (*L'Astrée*, 1607-1627) or Madeleine de Scudéry's sophisticated and delicate novels (*Clélie, histoire romaine*, 1654-1660; *Almahide ou l'esclave reine*, 1660; *Matilde d'Aguilar, histoire espagnole*, 1667), which offer an idealized vision of love and a poetical depiction of a mundane society, as well as La Calprenède's long-winded heroic romances (*romans de longue haleine*) (*Cassandre*, 1642-1645; *Cléopâtre*, 1647-1658). The new literary works (either heroic or burlesque) stood as narrative manifestos since it was directly through writing that the authors explained or evoked their personal art of the novel (Close 25), something which adds to their intrinsic value.

The main novels of some of these writers, Sorel, Cramail, Du Verdier, Claireville, Scarron and Furetière, will be closely examined from a Cervantine perspective in the following lines to prove that Cervantes's example effectively shaped the narrative art of the French Baroque.

#### *Charles Sorel, or the Outburst of Bookish Follies*

The first author I shall be dealing with is Charles Sorel, who is generally considered an imitator of Cervantine themes and episodes (even though he denied this influence and declared openly his indebtedness to the Spanish picaresque tradition). Sorel is the author of *Francion* (1623), a picaresque novel about a man who loses his mind due to his addiction to books, and *Polyandre* (1648), whose female heroine goes crazy after reading *Don Quixote*. She quotes it constantly to such an extent that this becomes an obsession which impedes her correct understanding of the world surrounding her. As a consequence of this, her family gets worried about her sanity. Despite the explicit allusion, the rewriting remains quite conservative, since, in the prologue, Sorel praises the translations of Spanish works which faithfully represent local customs and he criticizes heroic romances. The choice of *Don Quixote* as the root of all evil gives Polyandre's bookish folly an irreversible, cyclic sense, but, at the same time, her downfall under the influence of the book stands as a tragic representation of the human penchant towards the imaginary. We could infer from this assertion that the author aimed to characterise *Don Quixote* as a deterrent against the readers' blind belief in mischievous fiction and as a narrative praise of the trustworthy.



The same idea pervades Sorel's *Le Berger extravagant* (1627),<sup>8</sup> significantly dubbed as an "anti-roman" and subtitled "où parmy des fantaisies amoureuses l'on voit les impertinences des Romans & de la poésie". In this work Sorel extends Cervantes' purpose. To Canavaggio, who includes Sorel among Cervantes' "émulos", this anti-roman is a pastoral version of *Don Quixote* (83-87)<sup>9</sup> (see also López Fanego). However, Sorel becomes a tough censor who addresses and criticizes not only the pastoral, the sentimental or the historical genre, he wants to demolish all kinds of mythology, poetry and whatever he considers to be a mere literary invention.

Reynier, who claimed (in allusion to *Le Berger extravagant*) that "pour le *Don Quichotte*, sa dette n'est pas contestable" (174), was convinced that Sorel knew the Cervantine novel through De Rosset's translation (1618), which gave rise to a conscious intertextuality: "Ne trouvait-il pas là tout adapté le thème de son roman comique?" (177). According to Pichova (8), the example of Cervantes in Sorel's works can be traced in three different directions: 1. The literary art of Sorel, characterized by the experimentation with narrative techniques. 2. The theory of the novel, in which he refuses all types of fiction, with the only exception of the comic genre, considered a *tableau de mœurs*. 3. His unjustified refusal of the influence of *Don Quixote*.

*Le Berger extravagant* tells the story of Louis, an orphan who has lost his mind after reading many books and accordingly adopts a different identity, the shepherd Lysis. Hinds, who asserts the quixotic background repeatedly (20, 33, 54), considers this novel a Cervantine narrative since "both of them organize their concepts of social reality according to literary models through imitation" (28). He argues that *Le Berger extravagant* is "a pastoral *Don Quixote* simplified and reduced to a bare literary parody of the shepherd theme, popular in those days" (166). Lysis is, indeed, as grotesque as Don Quixote. He goes to a prairie close to Saint-Cloud where he transforms his appearance and his diction (which gets tediously lyrical and absurd) in order to pretend he is a noble shepherd. He meets Anselme by chance, a man who becomes his supervisor and apparently helps him restore his mind. Far from being so, he just wants to laugh at him, while Adrian, his real tutor, feels relieved and delighted to quit him for a few days. However, Anselme regrets

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8. It should not be mistaken for Corneille's homonymous play from 1652.

9. Although he devotes some of the pages of his book to Sorel, he just mentions Scarron (69) and Furetière (87) without any in-depth analysis.



having exposed himself to such a blatant case of contagious melancholy: “Si je n’eusse bien pris garde à moy, et si je ne me fusse tousjours esloigné de luy, il m’alloit aussi faire prendre le grand chemin de la folie. J’ay de bons tesmoins qui vous prouveront qu’il m’a cent fois voulu persuader de me faire berger” (1627b, 829).

Dulcinea’s role is represented by Charite, Lysis’s mistress, for whom he makes a fire (an allusion to the auto dafé in Cervantes’ *donoso escrutinio*). Nevertheless, she also remains a merely imaginative being, since her real identity is Catherine, a chambermaid. Pretending that he has fallen in love for Catherine’s daughter, Anselme manages to introduce himself and Lysis into their home. Later on, Lysis undertakes a pilgrimage to Forez Land. Once there, his romantic imagination reaches its height, since he mistakes all the places for those in D’Urfé’s novels. As a result of this, Lysis becomes the object of the village’s mockeries. The jealous enchanters who annoy Don Quixote find their equivalent in Sorel’s fiction. One of them, Hircan, persuades Lysis to believing that he has been turned into a woman. By becoming a chambermaid, he is able to get closer to Charite. When he apparently recovers his masculinity and is rejected by his beloved, he prepares to show up in his supposedly real condition: he buys a flock of sheep and takes on a companion, Carmelin, to be his servant. This counterpart role, together with his pragmatic, pacific character and his repeated use of proverbs, approaches Carmelin to Sancho Panza.<sup>10</sup> The metafictional staging of the idealized fiction that the duke and the duchess play in Cervantes’ novel is present in Sorel’s work through the treacherous scenes performed by Anselme, Hircan and his friends. These episodes, “recréent un monde fabuleux et artificiel, dans lequel tout est mis en scène et où seuls les deux héros croient véritablement être le rôle qu’ils jouent” (Poulet 26). However, Anselme’s final forgiveness of malicious books differs from Cervantes’ final condemnation:

Après avoir tout mesurement examiné, nous ordonnons que puisque tous ces ouvrages fabuleux ne sont faits que pour donner du plaisir, & que le

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10. However, Poulet establishes a clear difference between these two characters: “Tandis que Sancho était un paysan rustre et analphabète, qui suivait son maître, au moins dans la première partie de l’œuvre, en lui vouant une confiance naïve, Carmelin appartient quant à lui au type comique du pédant qui a étudié, mais qui, au contact de mauvais maîtres (l’hypocondriaque Lancelot, un Docteur, un faiseur d’almanachs, etc.) et d’œuvres de piètre valeur, n’est devenu capable que de répéter sans les comprendre des fragments embrouillés des textes lus” (16).

dessein des Escrivains reüssit assez bien quand ils peuvent recréer les lecteurs, il sera toujours permis au peuple de chercher son contentement dans tous les livres où il le pourra trouver (1646, 74).

Sorel includes some specific Cervantine episodes rewritten from similar perspectives. Carmelin is handed in a letter for Charite that never reaches her. He blames the enchanters –although it is Hicarn’s wife who steals it from him. Lysis spends the night alone in the forest, and, when his friends finally find him, he is lying on top of a willow, shouting and mourning his love sickness. This way he emulates both Don Quixote, who similarly imposed on himself a love penance in Sierra Morena, and the desperate lover in *L’Astrée*, who used a tree as a letter box. Lysis puts a box on his head which resembles the yelmo de Mambrino, and, in his delirium, he even believes he has become a tree. He alludes to his beloved books to support his beliefs: “Le bras des Dieux est il racourcy depuis le temps de ces anciens grecs qui ont escrit d’eux tant de rares choses? Si autrefois on a veu des hommes changez en arbres, pourquoy n’en peut-on pas voir encore maintenant?” (1627a, 303). He stands up all straight and refuses to move from there, until a group of nymphs and forest creatures show up and serenade all night. Lysis does not even notice that the real tree has disappeared when the creatures cut it. He only gives up his beliefs when he is led to believe that the magician, Hircan, has disenchanting him.

In the same way as Don Quixote exposes his firm belief in the need for the restoration of the order of chivalry in his speeches, Lysis stands up for a pastoral state where he would be the Prince. In consequence, many of his subjects come to him in demand for help (to set free a captive princess captured by a dragon). This mission characterizes him as a righter of wrongs. In the end, when the tutor, Adrian, comes to pick up his supposedly restored pupil and finds him still unchanged, Lysis is forced to listen to a wise man who warns him about the dangers of reading. He runs to his room all in tears, and, after some minutes of reflection, he manages to see the world as it is. His love story ends happily, since Lysis recognizes Catherina, the chambermaid, whom he still finds attractive in her real condition, and marries her. This way, the extravagant shepherd reaches the most stereotypically bourgeois and realistic ending, which is, marriage.

Apart from the intertextual allusions and rewritings that I have mentioned, other quixotic adventures are represented in Sorel’s novel: the wind-mills, Clavileño (Lysis believes he is travelling through the skies in a chariot),

the cave of Montesinos and the fight against the windmills (in order to set the captive princess free Lysis fights some giants which are, in fact, toys). Carmelin, like Sancho, is badly treated. Instead of being tossed on a blanket, he is thrown into the water with his clothes on and then tied to a tree and beaten. He expresses himself through abundant proverbs. Like his predecessor, his pacifism hides his cowardice (he only shows courage when the enemies have been defeated); he is also pragmatic (he cares about food and sleep excessively) and realistic (he refuses to believe that his master has become a tree).

As we have seen, the allusion to enchanters and the world of magic and superstition is dominant in Lysis' mind together with the mysticism associated to the beloved one. For example, he picks up all the leaves that Charite has touched because they have become magical to him. Even a *bocal de verre* which she has used as a urinal becomes to him *de l'eau d'ange*. Like Don Quixote, he transforms people, objects, and places into idyllic settings to his damaged imagination. The credibility attributed to fictional stories is another common feature: Don Quixote believes in the truth of romances since they have been published "con licencia de los reyes" (Cervantes 2007, 509). Lysis believes that the books written by good and prestigious authors (namely Ovide's *Métamorphoses* and D'Urfé's *L'Astrée*) are totally true to life. Nonetheless, they have led him to believe all sorts of incongruities, such as that the sun literally sleeps on the sea. However, his madness is not as reckless as Don Quixote's, since it does not prevent him from hiding when he is being lapidated.

As it happens in *Don Quixote*, his expression is totally pedantic. His rhetoric falls in direct confrontation with Carmelin's common language. Erudition and vanity are the only original features that Bardou sees in Lysis (133). While Don Quixote is nicknamed by Sancho "The Knight of the Sad Countenance", it is Lysis himself who claims he is the saddest and the most disgraced of lovers. The only difference comes from Don Quixote's deep moral convictions, which are not to be found in Lysis, because his character is merely grotesque, satirical and ironical. There is no hidden sublime truth beyond his folly. In spite of this, a character like Lysis corresponds to what Levin has called the quixotic principle, since he loses his mind due to the influence of books, tries to impose his view on an adverse environment and is fooled by others until he recovers sanity. Poulet reckons that neither Cervantes nor Sorel denounce the dangers of imagination, but those of incorrect reading (24). Further on (28), she explores the implications of this bookish madness. The character of the extravagant reader eventually leads the authors into a debate on the aims

of literature, and the final plead for the superiority of imagination supports the Romantic interpretation of *Don Quixote*. Let us remember two details that Sorel probably had in mind: Don Quixote had a first impulse to become a shepherd which Sancho remembers at the end, and his niece wanted to hide the *Diana de Montemayor* for the fear that he did so.

It was a general tendency among French novelists to deny the Cervantine influence, contrarily to the English baroque writers such as Henry Fielding, who confirmed that *Joseph Andrews* was written “in imitation of the manner of Cervantes”. However, the ties were so evident that Sorel made his characters plead against this influence:

“[...] ie pense que vous estes le successeur de Dom Quixote de la Manche, & que vous auez herité de sa folie”, says Fontenay.

“Vous auez menty, s’écria Lysis, ie ne fay rien que de mon inuention propre, [...] c’estoit un fou, [...] il n’entendoit rien à chercher la souveraine felicité” (1627a, 267).

A similar statement of independence appears at the end of the novel, when Clarimond tells Lysis: “Il y en aura beaucoup qui croiront que vous l’imitez, et quand vous avantures seroient plus belles que les siennes” (1646, 101). Sorel insists on this idea in his *Remarques sur Le Berger extravagant*, where he claims that he had read Cervantes’ novel twelve years before and that it had not raised much interest or enthusiasm in him. He laughs at the abundance of proverbs and rustic sayings, the mockeries perpetrated by the duke and the duchess on Don Quixote and Sancho, and depreciates the interpolated stories, which he considers “des choses inutiles” (1646, 545). Nonetheless, he himself would include some in his own production. The main plot is sometimes interrupted by short stories, each of them representing a literary genre in an excessive and hyperbolic tone: *Histoire de Fontenay*, *Histoire de Philiris*, *Amours de Polidor et de Rhodogine*, *Aventures de Meliante* and *Histoire de Carmelin*, which criticize, respectively, *le roman à l’antique*, *le roman sentimental*, *la fable italienne* and *le roman guerrier ou chevaleresque* (Bardon 148).

Sorel’s indebtedness to Cervantes also concerns *The Exemplary Novels*, which can be considered an intertextual reference in *Les Nouvelles françoises* (1623). These short stories were aimed mainly at a female audience and fol-

lowed the example of the Italian *novelle* instead of the *romans-fabliaux*<sup>11</sup> typical from the Renaissance. They oppose directly the heroic genre: they are not set in a remote or imaginary land but in concrete places, like Tours or Paris; the characters speak in plain language rather than in a haughty style. The themes and titles are also similar: *Les Mal mariez*, *L'Amant liberal* (literally adapted from Cervantes), *La Reconnaissance d'un fils* (which comes from "La illustre fregona"), etc. According to Merino, verisimilitude and morality are the two main features coming from Cervantes's exemplary novels (2005, 10) to which Sorel added laugh and mockery.

*Sorel's followers: Cramail, Du Verdier and Claireville*

Cervantes's example, spread into French literature by Charles Sorel, would be also found in other comic novels such as *Le Dom Quixote Gascon* (1630), by the Count of Cramail, *Le Chevalier hypocondriaque* (1632), by Du Verdier, *Le Gascon extravagant* (1637), by Claireville, and, probably the most important of them all, *Le Roman bourgeois* (1666), by Antoine Furetière (that I will analyse below).

*Le Dom Quixote Gascon* is a short novel of about sixty pages dealing with the adventures of Matamore, an old count who leaves his castle and buys a new home to give shelter to knights errant. Matamore displays all kinds of souvenirs from when he himself was a chevalier. He tells the stories of his glorious past to those who stay in his castle, and is therefore taken for a fool with a double personality: "D'un costé il fendoit avec un seul revers un homme armé de toutes pieces, son cheval & sa selle de fer. De l'autre, en esternuant il mettoit en deroute huit cens chevaux qui venoient à la charge droit à luiz" (51). The Count of Cramail would pay further attention to Sancho in his piece *La Comedie de proverbes* (1633).

Antoine du Verdier, a minor author, intended his *Roman des romans* (1626-1629) to be the definite sequel to the adventures of Amadís, Belianís and the Knight of the Sun. Three years later (1632), he wrote *Le Chevalier hypocrondriaque*, a parody of knightly romances with a distinctive Cervantine background<sup>12</sup> (Canavaggio 87) which he also rejected in his "Avis au lecteur". The book follows the story of don Clarezet de Gontarnos, a hero born in

11. The *fabliaux* are brief narrative poems with stereotypical characters (insolent women, miserly clergymen, poor or miserable characters who rely on tricks to survive) and a moral at the end.

12. Poulet studies both *Le Berger extravagant* and *Le Chevalier hypocondriaque* as examples of the melancholic character, according to the Renaissance theory of humours (18).

Mallorca who, after being rejected by the woman he loves, Sylviane, becomes a knight errant in order to win back her love. He adopts this decision motivated by a dream in which “Urganda the Unknown” urges him to do so. The series of adventures he lives are not thematically linked to Don Quixote’s, but they show similarly the follies of the fanciful hero. The main difference lies in the active role of female protagonist in Du Verdier’s tale. It is she who, after a sudden change of mind, disguises herself as a soldier and sets out in order to fetch him back home. The author then interrupts the narration of don Clarezel’s adventures to focus on Sylviane’s wanderings. The strategy adopted is similar to the narrator of Cervantes when he divides his attentions between Sancho and Don Quixote during their individual adventures –for example, after Altisidora’s episode, which is followed by Sancho’s arrival in Barataria: “[...] le dejaremos por ahora, porque nos está llamando el gran Sancho Panza” (887). The disguise is not as important as in Cervantes’ novel, where it is used to represent an alternative version of reality, which Canavaggio calls “ser y parecer” (87).

Literary criticism on the dangers of chivalric romances provokes several discussions where don Clarezel always takes part for the love of literature. One of his dialectic opponents, who considers romances to be the enemies of virtue, is a monk, whose words rekindle the wise message that the canon of Toledo tries to transmit to Don Quixote. But his attempts are all in vain because the source of Don Clarezel’s folly is not love, as it may seem. Right above his attraction towards Sylviane stands his idealization of *Amadis*, which he believes to be true: “Son esprit devint si malade que prenant l’ombre pour le corps il se forgea mille chimères qu’il creut estre des verités & se rendit le plus plaisant hypocondriaque que l’on vist jamais” (38). In order to imitate him, he becomes the hermit of the *Mont d’Or*, the place where he goes off to do a penance, and where he gets the nickname of *le beau désolé*. He fights against a mastiff, which he considers a monster. This battle rekindles Amadis’s glorious fight against the giant Endriago or Don Quixote’s imaginary enemies, Malambruno, Morgante, Caraculiambro, Briareo, Brocabruno or the cross-eyed Pandafileando de la Fosca Vista.

Whereas Don Quixote is “the Knight of the Sad Countenance”, Clarezel starts to be known as “the Knight of the Sad Thoughts”. He takes on a squire and their induction ceremony is ridiculous. As in the Cervantine model, noble characters (the Count of Oran, the Marquis of La Tour and the Governor of Lyon) make laugh at them. The main difference lies on the physical ap-

pearance of the two protagonists: Don Quixote's outfit, his old age and his characteristic slimness are part of the parody. On the contrary, don Clarezal is handsome and his beauty makes a duchess, Madame d'Arcail, feel attracted to him. The final quixotic elements which are missing in Du Verdier's tale, as in Sorel's, are the noble feelings and the good heart of the hero.

Claireville's *Le Gascon extravagant* (1637) (previously attributed to De Bail) is closer to the novel by Cramail (*Le Dom Quixote Gascon*) than to Cervantes' original. Don Quixote's emulator is here a Gascon who arrives at the door of a *gentilhomme* with a mysterious woman who shouts desperately because she is possessed by a diabolic force. After making their way into the castle, he tells his story: he is the abandoned son of a nobleman who was raised by a winegrower. He was banished from his land after having declared his love for Marguerite, who became a female Sancho. They managed to survive by abusing every one they found on their way until he was sentenced to jail. He succeeded in escaping but, after Marguerite's death, he flew away to Bretagne, where he opened a school. His plans to get reintegrated into society were aborted, since he became the object of a conspiracy and was taken to prison again. After a second escape, he got physically weaker, but he tried to regain strength and fight for a new life by joining a cast of comedians who made him their first actor. He instantly fell in love with the main actress, but lost the feeling when he saw her without any make up. He ran away and finally arrived at the initial point, the castle of the *gentilhomme*.

The desperate struggle for survival through a series of alternative lives seems to relate this story to the picaresque rather than to the mock heroic genre. This is not completely true, because neither the Gascon nor Don Quixote recognize themselves in their real identities. They both correspond to the category of the *enfant trouvé*<sup>13</sup> (Robert 43). As we can infer from the title chosen by Claireville, extravaganza stands a kind of madness, and the Gascon believes he has become King Arthur after drinking wine. Furthermore, his gestures, clothes, and appearance are typically chivalric: "armé de Bourguignotte, de Corselet, et de Tassettes" (7). The Gascon puts on a *pat-tisière de cuivre* on his head, which rekindles the *yelmo de Mambrino*. Last but not least, the Gascon's moral dignity does not decrease with the subsequent defeats and failures, as it happens with Don Quixote –this is possible because

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13. The *enfant trouvé* is a psychological complex ingrained into a child who does not recognise himself in his real family and therefore sets out in order to find his real origins, which he believes to be noble.



their dignity lies more on their heads than on their bodies and for both of them encyclopaedic knowledge stands above knightly virtues: “J’etois parfaitement bien versé en toutes les Langues: Toutes les parties de la Philosophie m’estoient familières comme le grand Chemin de Cande, et j’avois les Aphorismes d’Hypocrate à la bouche, comme le Verre à la main” (195-96).

*Paul Scarron, or the Trivialization of the Novel*

Scarron’s works *Typhon, ou la Gigantomachie* (1644) and *Virgile travesti* (1668-1652), both of them in verse, are comical rewritings of mythical tales. They make use of parody in order to criticize the irrational and the unreal and to praise the logical and the reasonable.<sup>14</sup> Although the abundance of proverbs in these works shows a Sanchean resemblance, it is in *Le Roman comique* (1651-1657, published in two parts), where the example of Cervantes is more clearly noticeable. The title itself stands upon an oxymoron, since *roman* (novel) was used to describe a grandiloquent genre and *comique* meant that it was a parody (Merino García 2005, 14). In fact, the renewal of the narrative genre implied the incursion of the vulgar instead of the noble and the substitution of the poetical, the sentimental and the heroic for the absurd, the foolish and the trivial. *Le Roman comique* features both common characters and everyday subjects, which stand against the grandeur of Scudéry’s historical novels. Although Cervantes’s criticism of fiction regarding historical truth is more complex, the attempt to show the prevalence of the logical over the imaginary remains common to both works. However, the Quixotic background is evident even in the most idealistic excerpts: “Scarron ne lutte pas, ou lutte mal, contre la littérature idéaliste, car la moitié idéaliste de son roman prouve plutôt le contraire” (Cioranescu 210).

*Le Roman comique* offers an alternative to the historical subjects by following both the picaresque tradition and the Cervantine model of the *Exemplary novels*. The plot follows the adventures of a group of itinerant actors, but this unifying thread is continuously interrupted by four interpolated stories (in the manner of Cervantes) which adapt Spanish short stories (they are consequently named *les nouvelles espagnoles*).<sup>15</sup> Destin and Mlle de l’Étoile may be considered the protagonists since their unfortunate love and the need

14. Merry’s approach to Scarron’s writings as examples of Menippean satires also include occasional allusions to *Don Quixote*.

15. On the influence of the Spanish short story in the French *nouvelles* see Merino and Hautcoeur.

for money leads them to become artists. They are accompanied –and complemented– by two comical types, Bouvillon and Ragotin, They represent, on their turn, two physical opposites, the big and the small. By placing in the middle of the narration some stereotyped, grotesque characters and by narrating futile events, Scarron is parodying the historical narrative genre, as Cervantes did with knightly romances. Ragotin, a dwarf lawyer who also wants to become an actor, is probably the most quixotic character, since he is the object of all sorts of mockeries (Paulson 103). Don Quixote also appears as a metafictional allusion in a literary debate between a chancellor, who praises the virtues of the Cervantine text, and Roquebrune, who prefers historic novels.

Apart from that, Scarron makes a Cervantine use of irony by praising the virtues of the parodied genre. Destin considers *L'Astrée* and other historical works instances of the greatest French genius and imagination. However, Scarron disseminates some critical comments on the inaccuracies of that genre. He pays attention to the exact facts of the life of the characters instead of portraying their affections, and he does not include in his narration the bizarre and the inexplicable. He also parodies the Cervantine device of the “true story”, entitles the chapters with humorous epigraphs and includes secondary narrations, with an explicit reformulation of chapters 16 and 17 from *Don Quixote's* First Part. Our hero is directly compared to Destin: “S’il eût été de l’humeur de Dom Quixote, il eût trouvé à de quoi s’en donner jusqu’aux gardes, & il se fût cru pour le moins Esplandian, ou Amadís” (63). Later on, a debate arises between Destin and his counsellor on the literary merits of Cervantes’ story. Scarron’s protagonist takes part for the Spanish comical romance instead of for the historical and sentimental long novels by Scudéry, Gomberville and La Calprenède, as we can see in the following dialogue (258):

—C’est le plus sot livre que j’aie jamais vu, reprit Roquebrune, quoiqu’il plaise à quantité de gens d’esprit.

—Prenez garde, dit le Destin, qu’il ne vous déplaise par votre faute plutôt que par la sienne.

Further on, a direct allusion praises the Spanish author: “Si l’on faisoit des Nouvelles en François aussi-bien faites que quelques-unes de celles de Michel de Cervantes, elles auroient cours autant que les Romans héroïques” (257). Overall,

Mancing considers that Scarron's Cervantine assumptions could have influenced Fielding and states that this reading of *Don Quixote* is highly representative of his own century (659). But the link goes beyond parody and the explicit laudatory allusions. Cervantes' book served Scarron as a model for the interrupted stories: *L'Amante invisible*, *A trompeur, trompeur et demi*, *Les deux frères rivaux*, *Le juge de sa propre cause*,<sup>16</sup> etc. In spite of their Spanish background, these novels were adapted to the French ambiance and aimed at a French public.

The influence of Cervantes in Scarron's theatrical series about *Les Jodelets* (1645-1646) has been highlighted by De Armas (58). The main character, a delightful type of Sancho Panza, is a grotesque opponent to the epic Julius Caesar, Brutus or Achille, because his main features are cowardice, egoism and gluttony. Cervantes' trail is also perceptible in Scarron's comedies (1647), especially in his *Boutades du Capitaine Matamore*, and in *Le Faux Alexandre* (1663), a fragmentary comedy about a man called Alexander who believes he is Alexander the Great. Overall, through his parody of the historical genre, Scarron is also criticizing the pompous speeches of drama and the fantastic settings of the epic. Scarron mistreats his character and forces him to face great challenges with a disastrous result. For all these reasons I agree with Bardon's view that Scarron's approach to literature "continue en France celui de Cervantes en Espagne. Il est, chez nous, comme son disciple le plus gai, le plus divertissant, le plus brillant" (105).

#### *Furetière or the Demystification of the Novel*

Further on in the century, another burlesque imitator of *Le Berger extravagant*, Antoine de Furetière, mocked Sorel under the nickname of "Charoselles" (whose pronunciation sarcastically rekindles the author's surname) in *Le Roman bourgeois* (1666):<sup>17</sup>

Ce nez, qu'on pouvoit à bon droit appeler Son Éminence, et qui étoit toujours vêtu de rouge, avoit été fait en apparence pour un colossi; néanmoins, il avoit été donné à un homme de taille assez courte. Ce n'est

16. The first three ones from a novel called *Los alivios de Cassandra* (1640), by Alonso Castillo Solorzano, while the fourth comes from *Novelas amorosas y exemplares* (1634), by María de Zayas y Sotomayor (Morillot 364; see also Merino García and Hautcoeur)

17. Parr undertook a comparative study of *Don Quixote* and *Le Roman bourgeois* on the grounds of satire.

pas que la nature eût rien fait perdre à ce petit homme; car ce qu'elle lui avoit ôté en hauteur, en lui avoit rendu en diametre [...]. Sa chevelure étoit la plus désagréable du monde [...]. Aussi ne se peignoit-il jamais qu'avec ses doigts, et dans toutes les compagnies c'étoit sa contenance ordinaire [...]. En général, il avoit une vraie mine de satyre [...]. Ses yeux, gros et bouffis, avoient quelque chose de plus que d'être à fleur de tête. Il y en a qui ont cru que, comme on se met sur des balcons en saillie pour découvrir de plus loin, ainsi la nature lui avoit mis des yeux en dehors, pour découvrir ce qui se faisoit de mal chez ses voisins [...]. Jamais il n'y eut un homme plus médisant ni pus envieux (194-95).

In his book, Furetière endeavoured to criticise the Parisian bourgeois society, especially lawyers and literary figures such as Sorel himself. The story cannot be considered a novel in itself, but an eclectic mixture of several portrayals of traditions and lifestyles (a “*tableau de mœurs*”) taking place in urban settings, which satirizes Sorel’s rural environment. According to Reynier, *Le Roman bourgeois* “n’est pas seulement la satire des Cléopâtres ou des Artamènes, il en est aussi la contre-partie” (334). The first part focuses on the depiction of psychological traits such as egoism, stupidity and vanity. It deals with the downfall of Javotte, a young woman who, being rejected by two men, Nicodème and Bedout, makes her way into *le beau monde* of the *salons* accompanied by Pancrace. Javotte is a quixotic woman whose mind is completely infatuated by books and therefore could be considered a predecessor to Emma Bovary. Her passionate reading of *L’Astrée* rekindles Don Quixote’s sleepless nights: “Elle courut à sa chambre, s’enferma au verrou, & se mit à lire jour & nuit avec tant d’ardeur, qu’elle en perdoit le boire & le manger” (160). This section also features the story of Lucrece, who, after being seduced, pregnant, and abandoned by a marquis, has to find her own means of survival. The second part involves a satire of justice. The action shifts to a trial involving grotesque characters: Collantine, the victim, Belastre, a stupid man who spontaneously becomes a judge, and Charoselles, an occasional litigant. The last episode deals with Mytophilacte, a forgotten author who dies in misery without publishing his works, which leads Furetière into a satire of the world of writing.

Overall, the narrative structure is similar to *Don Quixote*’s, and Furetière makes use of the Cervantine devices of the false narrator and the lost and found manuscript. Furetière’s portrayal of the bourgeois lifestyle is probably more

poignant than in other contemporary tales. For this reason, his book could be considered a predecessor to the *histoires galantes*<sup>18</sup> as well as “una apuesta narrativa moderna, que comprende en gran medida las novedades del *Quijote* y las aplica produciendo una narración evolucionada, no continuada inmediatamente pero que el tiempo demostró ser la vía de la modernización definitiva de la novela europea” (Sánchez Tallafigo 212). *Le Roman bourgeois* subverts the schemes, caricaturizes the main characters and deconstructs the events narrated to destruct all the pillars of fiction, thus becoming an anti-novel.

## CONCLUSION

As the above analysis has shown, the pastoral and the realistic genres of the French Baroque satirical novels shared a Cervantine background. The conscious use of Cervantes’s novel as a model (although deliberately rejected by the authors) resulted in a narrative focus on authenticity and realism with a plain language in a simple style. As Sorel (1622) claimed: “Je me suis éloigné du tout de ces histoires monstrueuses qui n’ont aucune vraisemblance [...]. Je ne raconte que des histoires qui se peuvent faire selon le temps”. By so doing, these works would directly oppose old literary forms (mainly the heroic, sentimental novels by D’Urfé and Scudéry) and start the modern renovation of the narrative genre.

Cervantes’s earliest influence in French literature started with the translations of excerpts from the secondary stories adapted into pastoral ambiances. It was not until the decade of the 1630s that Cervantes’s novel would become an end in itself. The general approach involved the criticism of knightly romances, the marvellous and the imaginary. But, at the same time, as we have seen in Sorel’s works, *Don Quixote* became a model on the art of the novel (diction and purpose), and many characters and episodes were adapted into burlesque tales with satirical aims –denouncing the dangers of fiction. These works which criticized the old literary forms in a Cervantine manner marked the coming of the classic age. As Merino García points out, authors such as Scarron and Sorel have been “los intermediarios culturales que hicieron posible la recepción de esta novela [...] española, cuya influencia sería decisiva en la formación de la novela moderna” (17).

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18. The *romans gallants* are short novels dealing with common people in their everyday lives set in a historical past. Written in a formal style, they offered an alternative to the baroque novels and also foreshadowed narrative modernity.

Briefly, Cervantes's example gave as a result the rise of a brand new type of narrative that we could label as Realism, which implied that the novels would be full of physical detail and that they would show common characters in their ordinary lives (from different perspectives: satirical, critical, liberal, etc.). This new approach, which is observable in the satires above analysed, involved a rupture with courtly novels dealing with the pastoral, the precious and the allegorical. These writers made a Cervantine use of parody that helped them criticise indirectly the idealistic worlds depicted by Honoré d'Urfé or Madeleine de Scudéry. To sum up, even though the ideological and artistic modernity in France is generally dated in the nineteenth century, preceded by Diderot, Choderlos de Laclos and Crebillon fils, we should set as forerunners Sorel, Cramail, Du Verdier, Claireville, Scarron and Furetière, whose satires led the way towards the popularization of the narrative genre and the assumption of a realistic orientation which ultimately came from Cervantes.

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