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Laberinto An Electronic Journal of Early Modern Hispanic Literature and Cultures (ISSN: 1090-8714) is a peer-edited, electronic journal dedicated to the exploration of Hispanic literature and culture from the early modern period. In addition to occasional special-topic editions, Laberinto accepts unpublished academic article submissions on an ongoing basis. It is indexed by MLA International Bibliography, ITER, EBSCO, and the Open Journal System (hosted by the University of Toronto Libraries).

With a transoceanic perspective, *Laberinto* seeks interdisciplinary works that focus on a variety of literary and cultural texts and themes. Articles that center on marginalized authors and figures, world-wide cultural interactions, African Diaspora Studies, Indigenous Studies, Asian Studies, Women and Gender Studies, Queer Studies, and Colonial and Postcolonial Studies, among others, are especially welcome.

Laberinto also seeks submissions that analyze visual arts in relation to the early modern period. Areas of particular interest include painting, architecture, maps, book illustration and illumination, film, videos, gaming, photography, and websites. Pedagogical articles of substance are also welcome, especially regarding Digital Humanities, Digital Storytelling, and Artificial Intelligence. Submissions should be completely developed articles with works cited.

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Author submissions should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words, including Works Cited, in Spanish or English, and conform to the latest MLA format and the journal Style Guide (link below). To ensure blind peer review, the author's name should not appear anywhere in the document, including notes and Works Cited.

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For book review inquiries, please also email both Drs. Gil-Oslé and Holcombe.

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Cervantes in the Americas: A Cross-Cultural Approach to the Teaching of *Don Quixote*

Medardo Gabriel Rosario Florida International University

Introduction

The course titled "Cervantes in the Americas" was offered at the University of Chicago during the Winter quarter of 2018 and at Florida International University in the Fall semester of 2020. Taking a cross-cultural perspective, the literature course was structured into four units. Firstly, "Narrators and Readers of Don Quixote" delved into how the narrative structure of Don Quixote has left its imprint on Latin American literature. Secondly, "Rewriting Don Quixote" explored how the novel serves as a source of inspiration for stories and characters in diverse historical and political contexts, including Mexican immigration into the US, colonial political systems in the Hispanic Caribbean, and the Argentine dictatorship. Thirdly, "Don Quixote on the Big Screen" concentrated on US film adaptations of the character. The final unit, "Don Quixote and Academia," delved into the reception of *Don Quixote* in academic circles through short stories crafted by scholars inspired by Cervantes. Each text was paired with a section of Don Quixote to analyze how specific cultural materials are repurposed and recontextualized. This article endeavors to provide a descriptive and reflective overview of the course content.

Teaching *Don Quixote* poses a formidable challenge requiring an approach that not only delves into its historical context, but also furnishes the linguistic and literary tools essential for comprehension. However, this alone is often insufficient. Effectively teaching *Don Quixote* requires the development of methods that enable students to engage with the text in ways that resonate with their own experiences. This challenge is further compounded when the course is tailored for students learning Spanish as a second language and heritage speakers. Hence, the idea of structuring a course that explores *Don Quixote* through the lens of recent Latin American literary production aims to construct a reading framework that underscores the significance of Cervantes's masterpiece in the production of Latin American literature. This approach seeks to establish a dialogue that is not only imperative for their academic development, but also pertinent to the cultural context in which students are immersed.

This dialogue becomes possible because *Don Quixote* stands as a seminal reference text, evident in the literary works of prominent Latin American authors. The reflections of figures such as Jorge Luis Borges, Mario Vargas Llosa, Roberto

Bolaño, and Jorge Volpi echo through their engagement with the writings of the Alcalá-born author. Their explorations span from incorporating narrative techniques introduced by Cervantes to reinterpreting characters and themes within various historical and political frameworks.

This course meticulously examined notable instances of the cross-cultural dialogue born from the appropriation of *Don Quixote* as a foundational element for the creation of literary texts. It unfolded across four sections, each shedding light on different aspects of this dialogue. The initial part scrutinized how the narrative structure of *Don Quixote* serves as a blueprint for some of the most significant works in Latin American literature. The short stories "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote," by Jorge Luis Borges, and "Las mil caras de Max Mirebaleis," by Roberto Bolaño exemplified this exploration.

The second section delved into how *Don Quixote* serves as a literary substrate for crafting stories and characters in distinct Latin American contexts. Themes such as Mexican immigration into the United States, portrayed in the Chicano novel *Las aventuras de don Chipote, o cuando los pericos mamen* (1928) by Daniel Venegas; the colonial relations of the Hispanic Caribbean depicted in the novel *Barataria* (2012) by Juan López Bauzá, and the Argentine dictatorship of the 1970s, employed as a backdrop in the play *La razón blindada* (2006) by Arístides Vargas, were explored.

The third part directed attention towards cinematic representations of *Don Quixote* in the United States, with a specific focus on the unfinished film version of Orson Welles' adaptation. The seminar concluded with a concise discussion and reflection on how Cervantes's text is reinterpreted within academic contexts. Works such as *Mentiras contagiosas* (2008) by Jorge Volpi and *Doce cuentos ejemplares y otros documentos* (2016), a compilation of stories by Hispanists drawing inspiration from Cervantine texts, were central to this final exploration. Key concepts such as transculturation, material culture, geopolitics, and literary genre guided the multifaceted discussion.

At the University of Chicago, the Winter 2018 course had eighteen undergraduate students. Spanish served as a second language for all of them, despite at least six being heritage speakers. The linguistic proficiency varied, but on the whole, it was advanced, enabling everyone to express their thoughts both orally and in writing. A third of the group had encountered the first part of *Don Quixote* in previous literature courses, while the rest were familiar with the work through references or representations in popular culture. The divergence in prior knowledge necessitated the establishment of a baseline to facilitate in-depth discussions of the text.

Meanwhile, at Florida International University, the Fall 2020 course had ten graduate students. The majority hailed from Latin America, were native Spanish speakers, and had already read at least a portion of the novel.

It was essential to introduce *Don Quixote* highlighting its main themes to guide the students' reading. The essay "Una novela para el siglo XXI," by Mario Vargas Llosa, published in the commemorative edition of the Royal Spanish Academy (2004), was discussed for this purpose. The Peruvian Nobel Prize winner traces how the tension between reality and fiction, freedom, the confrontation with authority, the articulation of a Spanish 'national' identity, and the manipulation of time in the novel, are some of the main themes of *Don Quixote*. Based on these themes, Vargas Llosa highlights the influence of the text on subsequent literary production. Consequently, the agenda derived from the essay guided the course's development.

At The University of Chicago, the course spanned ten weeks, with each week divided into two segments: Tuesdays were dedicated to discussing episodes of *Don Quixote*, while Thursdays focused on one of the mentioned Latin American texts. At Florida International University, the course extended over fifteen weeks, with a structured alternation between discussions on *Don Quixote* one week and a Latin American text the next. Students provided comments on the readings prior to the in-class meetings using the virtual platform Canvas. Here, group members inserted their comments and engaged with their classmates' interventions. These online discussions, coupled with their in-class counterparts, served as platforms for honing and evaluating both writing and oral communication skills.

Evaluation of students was conducted through an assessment of their contributions, class participation, a mid-term essay, and a final project. At The University of Chicago, the final project required the preparation of either a concise academic essay or a creative text. Conversely, at Florida International University, the final project involved the creation of a more extensive academic essay spanning 15 to 20 pages. This comprehensive approach to student work afforded opportunities to address aspects such as syntax, spelling, argument development, and language clarity.

Narrators and Readers of *Don Quixote*

The first unit focused its attention on the narrative structure of *Don Quixote*, delving into the intricate narrative apparatus that encompasses the primary author, the Moorish translator Cide Hamete de Benengeli, the secondary author, and so forth. We explored how the tale of the knight-errant seamlessly coexists with a meta-history of the text, gradually unveiled through its narration. This emphasis paved the way for introducing narratological concepts, such as extradiegetic, intradiegetic, heterodiegetic, and homodiegetic narrators, providing students with theoretical literary tools that can be applied to analyze various texts.²

As a preamble to the discussion, we analyzed the prologue of the first part. Our exploration delved into how Cervantes seemingly unfolds himself into the persona of the 'amigo,' contemplating the very act of writing. Additionally, we considered the implications of Cervantes referring to himself as the 'stepfather' of his own creation. Once the prologue had been thoroughly examined, we turned our attention to chapters I, VIII, IX, and LII. In this review, we scrutinized the narrative intricacies, identifying the first author, the Moorish translator, Cide Hamete de Benengeli, and the second author as potential Cervantine unfoldings that disrupt the temporal and spatial dimensions of the text. Furthermore, our discussion delved into the reliability of these narrators and how the narrative apparatus facilitates contemplation on the processes of writing and reading.

This dialogue marked the beginning of our exploration into Jorge Luis Borges' story, "Pierre Menard, author of *Don Quixote*," featured in *Ficciones* (1944). We delved into Borges' narrative strategy, where he playfully enters the storytelling realm by introducing Pierre Menard to the roster of *Don Quixote* authors. Menard, consumed by his obsession with Cervantes's text, makes the audacious decision to replicate it word for word in the 20th century. This discussion prompted a contemplation of the nuanced boundaries between terms like 'originality' and 'plagiarism.' As Borges did in several occasions, we pondered the extent to which the act of writing entails both appropriation and a dialogue with literary traditions. More significantly, we reflected on how the significance and interpretation of a text are intricately tied to the historical context in which it comes into being. Consequently, while Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and Menard's version may be identical in the story, they demand distinct readings, emphasizing the critical role of historical context in shaping meaning.

The latter portion of this unit directed its focus towards chapters II and III of the second part of the novel, where Don Quixote and Sancho take on the roles of readers and editors of their own narrative. In this episode, Sansón Carrasco presents the knight and his squire with a copy of the first part of the story, revealing how Cervantes intricately disrupts the narrative structure of the initial part of the novel (II, 4–7; 561–577). This disruption allows the characters

to question the truthfulness of the narrated episodes.

Subsequently, we delved into two episodes from the first part of *Don Quixote*: the burning of the library (I, 2–3; 60–74) and the episode of the galley slaves (I, 10–12; 90–103). The library incident prompted reflections on reading as a potentially perilous activity that requires regulation. Likewise, the episode of the galley slaves, featuring the introduction of Ginés de Pasamonte, provided a lens through which we explored the act of writing as a potentially criminal endeavor. These episodes facilitated a meaningful dialogue with the story "Las mil caras de Max Mirebalais," included in Roberto Bolaño's book *La literatura nazi en América* (1996). Employing an extradiegetic, unreliable narrator, Bolaño introduces Max Mirebalais, a Haitian writer who, akin to Cervantes, fragments

himself, creating numerous heteronyms to compose an extensive literary oeuvre, forming a veritable library of Haitian authors. Mirebalais, a criminal engaged in plagiarizing texts from the French, German, and Haitian literary traditions, conceives of the act of writing as a concealed form of violence, mirroring the character Ginés de Pasamonte.

Ultimately, our discussion explored how Bolaño, echoing Cervantes, reinterprets the notion that both reading and writing can potentially be hazardous practices.

Rewriting Don Quixote

The primary aim of the second unit is to illustrate to students how a piece from the Spanish Golden Age can serve as a counterpoint for approaching contemporary texts. The unit is centered on the overarching question: how do certain Latin American authors employ characters and themes from Cervantes,

situating them within novel historical and political contexts?⁴

To begin, we explored "La historia del cautivo" (I, 39–41; 399–439) in the first part of *Don Quixote* to scrutinize the concept of 'border,' viewing it as a liminal space that gives rise to novel realities. This is evident in the malleability of social structures or the emergence of new linguistic codes. Drawing a parallel, we compared the Mediterranean Sea, serving as the border between Spain and North Africa, the Christian and Muslim worlds, with the Mexican-American border—the threshold of the 'American dream' portrayed in *Las aventuras de don Chipote*, by Venegas. Recognized as the first Chicano novel, this text depicting Mexican immigration to the United States provided us with an opportunity to delve into language as a 'frontier' and the evolution of new communication codes resulting from cultural clashes. In a parallel to the fluctuation between Spanish and Arabic in "La historia del cuativo," characters in *Don Chipote* navigate between Spanish and English.

Ultimately, our discussion extended to exploring the nuanced boundaries between reality and fiction. The reception of *Don Chipote* was particularly positive, especially among students of Mexican descent, who highlighted that Venegas's

novel could easily have been written today.

The second part of this unit focused on the novel *Barataria*, by Puerto Rican author Juan López Bauzá, aligning with the anticipated pairing with the Barataria episode narrated in the second part of *Don Quixote*. López Bauzá posits that both the island of Puerto Rico and Barataria are products of fiction. While the dukes crafted Barataria Island to manipulate and ridicule Sancho, the emergence of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico stems from its colonial relationship with the United States, driven by the exploitation of the natural and human resources of the Caribbean island. Consequently, our discussion centered

on the complex issues of colonization and governance. This dialogue provided an opportunity to share insights into the economic and political crisis afflicting Puerto Rico and disseminate critical works on Spanish Golden Age literature produced on the island.

The latter section of this unit centered on the theatrical production *La razón blindada* (2006) by Argentine playwright Arístides Vargas. Set against the backdrop of the Dirty War in Argentina, the play unfolds the experiences of two political prisoners, self-identifying as De la Mancha and Panza. Amidst the constraints of prison life, they devote their scant leisure time to reenacting memories of *Don Quixote*. Pairing the play with the episode from the concluding section of the first part of the novel, where the knight-errant is transported in a cage to his home (I, 46–51; 474–521), facilitated a meaningful dialogue between the two texts. This interchange allowed for an exploration of fiction as a vital condition enabling the pursuit of freedom.

To enhance their understanding, students viewed online clips of the play's staging, with a particular focus on how theater uniquely gives rise to body language as a communicative form. It is crucial to highlight the students' attention to this aspect. The ensuing discussion provided a platform for contemplation on how *Don Quixote* serves as a conceptual framework for delving into complex political issues.

Don Quixote on the Big Screen

Don Quixote has made a lasting imprint on popular culture, particularly through its cinematic adaptations. Many individuals have encountered the character on screen without delving into the original work. Recognizing the significance of this medium, our course dedicated its third unit to the exploration of cinematic representations of Don Quixote. Specifically, we delved into scenes filmed by Orson Welles, who intended to create a cinematic version of Cervantes's text. Our analysis of the film material drew inspiration from Jorge Volpi's essay, 'La voz de Orson Welles y el silencio de Don Quixote,' featured in the collection Mentiras Contagiosas.

Volpi's essay revolves around the iconic opening phrase of *Don Quixote*, "En un lugar de La Mancha de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme" ("In a village of La Mancha, the name of which I have no desire to call to mind"). Volpi highlights the significance of the phrase's concluding words, "[ese] no quiero acordarme," interpreting them as a manifestation of pain—a pain that refuses to be explicitly acknowledged but appears to be revisited through the act of writing (170). According to Volpi, this underlying pain propels and shapes the narrative of the text, generating a tension between reality and fiction.

Volpi employs Welles's filmed scenes to further develop this concept. Notably, one scene involves Don Quixote and Sancho in a movie theater, where the knight impulsively attacks the theater screen depicting a battle (186). This cinematic moment steered our discussion toward the episode of Master Pedro, narrated in chapters XXV and XVI of the second part of *Don Quixote*. In this episode, as we recall, Don Quixote disrupts *El retablo de Maese Pedro*, blurring the boundary between reality and fiction. Here, students were able to compare both scenes to closely examine how both Cervantes and Welles reflect upon the limits between reality and fiction.

The essay concludes by describing the never-filmed ending of Welles's movie. In this envisioned scene, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza ride in the opposite direction of a mushroom cloud—an allusion to an atomic bomb explosion (192). Welles and Volpi both assert the power of fiction, embodied by Don Quixote and Sancho, as a vantage point from which to articulate the future after catastrophe. The positive impact of Welles's representation on our students was evident as they noted how Orwellian images departed from prevalent representations of *Don Quixote* in popular culture, enriching their understanding of the text.

Don Quixote and Academia

The course also delved into the examination of the work's reception within the academic realm and its role as a regulator of meaning for the text. In the fourth and final unit, titled "Don Quixote and Academia," we scrutinized the short story collection Doce cuentos ejemplares y otros documentos, authored by a collective of Hispanists. This exploration was juxtaposed with the death of the knight at the end of the second part of Don Quixote and the poems crafted by the académicos de argamasilla at the close of the first part of the narrative. Our discussion revolved around comparing the novel's ending with the reinterpretation of the episode by the group of Hispanists, aiming to discern which elements of Don Quixote's ending persisted and which were suppressed. In this manner, we explored how the act of interpretation is unveiled through the textual reinterpretation.

We concluded the course with an in-depth examination of Jorge Volpi's narrative "Conjetura sobre Cid Hamete," also featured in *Mentiras contagiosas*. In this piece, the author skillfully appropriates the academic essay genre to establish a familial connection between *Don Quixote* and the Americas. Volpi, like Cervantes in the prologue of the first part, splits up, this time into three researchers, each unveiling a manuscript that reveals how both Cide Hamete and Don Quixote have historical referents. Similar to Borges, Volpi fabricates bibliographical quotes, intertwining them with real ones to blur the boundaries between truth and fiction, prompting a reflection on the impact of a historical approach to

literature on the texts' literary value. For example, according to Volpi's narrative/essay, Don Quixote's historical referent is a figure named Torrijos de Almagro, who played a role alongside Hernán Cortés in the downfall of Tenochtitlán. Returning to Spain, Torrijos de Almagro later sought to conquer the territories of Castile and La Mancha.

Volpi concludes his essay with a poignant statement that served as the culminating point of our course: "don Quijote no podría existir sin América, y América no podría existir sin don Quijote. A fin de cuentas, ambos son producto de ese ardiente diálogo entre imaginación y realidad que algunos confunden con locura" ["Don Quixote could not exist without America, and America could not exist without Don Quixote. After all, both are products of that fervent dialogue between imagination and reality that some confuse with madness"] (13). Students reflected on how the conception of the Americas, after its encounter with the Europeans, is linked to a utopian ideal. The tension between the desired utopia and tangible reality is responsible for the emergence of the American continent.

Conclusion

The course "Cervantes in the Americas" represented a multifaceted challenge. It required not only immersing students in its historical context and providing linguistic and literary tools but also necessitated bridging the gap to their lived experiences. This challenge intensified when instructing students learning Spanish as a second language or heritage speakers. Consequently, the course was designed to examine *Don Quixote* through the lens of recent Latin American literary production in order to create a framework for interpretation closer to students' experiences. This approach sought to underscore *Don Quixote's* significance in shaping Latin American literature while fostering a dialogue crucial for an academic growth attuned to the cultural fabric in which they are immersed.

The course was distinguished by the dynamic involvement of students in class discussions. They enthusiastically embraced the challenges posed by the course content. While many initially found it challenging to grapple with *Don Quixote* on a linguistic level, their comprehension of the text deepened over the weeks. Beyond offering diverse perspectives on *Don Quixote*, the course affirmed the narrative's capacity to inspire fresh literary creations and stimulate critical discourse on contemporary issues directly relevant to the students' lives.

Notes

¹ Kim Potowski (2005) defines a heritage speaker as "an individual who has been exposed to the language, usually at home only, and has some receptive and possibly productive

capacity in it. However, linguistic abilities can vary greatly between individuals..." (17). To examine the different preselectives around the topic, see Van Deusen Scholl (2003) and Carreira (2004).

² See C. Alan Soons, "Cide Hamete Benengeli, his Significance for *Don Quijote*," *Modern Language Review* 54 (1959): Edward C. Riley, "The Fictitious Authorship Device," *Cervante's Theory of the Novel*, Clarendon P, 1962; ; Américo Castro, "El cómo y el por qué de Cide Hamete Benengeli," *Hacia Cervantes*, Taurus, 1967; Ruth El-Saffar, Ruth, "The Function of the Fictional Narrator in *Don Ouijote*," *Modern Languages Notes* 83 (1968): 164-177; Maurice Molho, "Instancias narradoras en *Don Quijote*," *Modern Language Notes* 104 (1989): 273-285; James A. Parr, *Don Quixote: An Anatomy of Subversive* Discourse, Newark: Juan de la Cuesta, 1988; Ruth Fine, *Una lectura semiótico-narratológica del Quijote*, Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2003; Luce López-Baralt, "Una invitación a la locura: las instancias narrativas del *Quijote*," *Primer Congreso Internacional de Lengua, Literatura y Educación*, Depto. de Educación, 2005, pp. 64-81; Georges Güntert, *Cervantes: narrador de un mundo desintegrado*, Academia del hispanismo, 2007.

³ For an in-depth discussion of narrative techniques in *Don Quijote*, see Geoffrey Stagg's foundational study on the role of Cide Hamete Benengeli (1956), followed by C. Alan Soons's discussion of the character's significance (1959), Edward C. Riley's analysis of Cervantes's fictitious authorship device (1962), and George Haley's study of the narrator's role using Maese Pedro's puppet show as a case study (1965). Américo Castro's study of the origins of Cide Hamete Benengeli (1967) remains central to understanding narrative layers, while Ruth El-Saffar (1968) examines the fictional narrator's function, and Frederick W. Locke (1969) interprets the figure of the "sabio encantador" as the author of *Don Quijote*. Ileana Viqueira (1972) focuses on Cervantes as a storyteller, and Carmen Rita Rabell (1993) offers a dialogical perspectivism analysis in the episode of Don Quijote and the Vizcaíno (87-103). Ruth Fine (2003) provides a semiotic-narratological reading, while Luis Iglesias Feijóo (2005) gives a detailed exploration of the "manuscrito encontrado en Toledo" (375-395). Luce López-Baralt (2005) explores the narrative instances of madness in the work (64-81), and Georges Güntert (2007) examines Cervantes as a chronicler of a fragmented world. Maurice Molho's study of the novel's narrative instances (1989) and Alan Burch's analysis of the "segundo autor" as an extradiegetic narrator (1996) further enrich the discussion of *Don Quijote*'s narrative complexity.

⁴ For an exploration of how Latin American authors reinterpret characters and themes from *Don Quijote* within novel historical and political contexts, see *Reescrituras latinoamericanas del Quijote* by Ruth Fine, Clea Gerber, and Ofek Kehila (Editorial Biblos, 2024). This volume, inspired by the presentations at the International Conference "Reescrituras latinoamericanas del Quijote" (Jerusalem, December 1–2, 2021), examines the dynamic reimagining of Cervantes's masterpiece in Latin American literature. It features eleven essays by scholars and students from the Departments of Letters at Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento, Argentina, and the Hebrew University of

Jerusalem, Israel. Additionally, for a broader understanding of *Don Quijote's* reception in Latin America, see *El Quijote en América*, edited by Friedhelm Schmidt-Welle and Ingrid Simson (Foro Hispánico, Volume 40, Ediciones Rodopi B.V., 1994). This volume compiles work from specialists across Europe and the Americas, addressing the reception of *Don Quijote* from colonial texts to the most recent literature and cinema. It reflects the current state of research on the classic's impact in Latin America, showcasing how the work continues to influence cultural production across the region.

⁵ For Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson a border "[...] serves at once to make divisions and establish connections, the border ia an epistemological device, which is at work whenever a distinction between subject and object is established." (16).

⁶ The wide array of adaptations of Cervantes' novel includes numerous films, starting with the early French productions, such as Don Quichotte (1898) and Les aventures de Don Quichotte de La Mancha (1902-1903). The first Spanish film adaptation appeared in 1910, El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de La Mancha, created by Narcis Cuyas. The first American version followed in 1909, titled *Don Quixote*, and was followed by numerous French and Italian adaptations, along with a significant 50-minute American version in 1915 by Edward Dillon. In Latin America, the first known adaptation was a Brazilian production in 1954, Aventuras de Don Quixote, made for television. While other Brazilian adaptations, like Dom Quixote (1930), exist, doubts remain about their actual production. Argentina also made a 1936 film, Don Quijote del altillo, and Mexico contributed several versions, including *El huésped del sevillano* (1939), which includes Cervantes himself. One notable Mexican film, La rebelión de los fantasmas (1946), reimagines the Quixote story with the protagonist as a ghost. Perhaps the most famous modern Mexican adaptation is *Un Quijote sin mancha* (1969), a comedic take starring Cantinflas as a lawyer fighting "lost causes," drawing a metaphorical parallel to Don Quixote's own battles (Simson 283-84).

These films highlight the enduring power of Don Quixote, demonstrating the diverse ways the story has been interpreted across time and cultures.

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