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# Don Quixote in Russia in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: The Problem of Perception and Interpretation

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## *Don Quixote* in Russia in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: The Problem of Perception and Interpretation

*Slav N. Gratchev*

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This study examines the problem of the perception of *Don Quixote* in Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By using materials inaccessible to English-speaking scholars, I want to demonstrate that this process of appropriation was a long and a complex one, and there were specific reasons for that. The first modern novel, upon arrival in Russia, received minimal attention and was perceived as a simple, comical book; then, gradually, it started to gain significance. The majority of the materials that are used throughout this text are only available in Russian, are kept in the scientific libraries of Saint Petersburg and Moscow, and have never been translated into English. To facilitate reading this article, within the text I use the English translations that I generated myself, but, to preserve the authenticity of the text and give interested readers the opportunity to see or read the information in Russian, I included the original text in the endnotes.

The communication and interrelation between Spanish and Russian literature have lasted for several centuries. At times the connection has become weaker, at other times stronger, but never has it disappeared completely. Throughout this period, which extends roughly between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, there were single instances when the relationship between Spanish and Russian literatures was becoming very intense, and we can admit that these interactions were quite productive for both sides. The careful analysis of motives, forms, and all possible aspects of this communication, even if studied only in part, can be both revealing and productive for Spanish literary history as well as for Russian.

A historic overview of the Spanish-Russian literary relationship will give us abundant and interesting material for more concrete literary analysis and for theoretical generalization and conclusions. These materials will show us the significant similarities in the historical development of two countries that, despite being so far apart territorially and culturally, have much in common. In fact, the Spanish-Muslim cultural interrelations in the Middle Ages are in many ways reminiscent of the 'Mongol Yoke' that spread over Russia and lasted for almost three centuries. An understanding of these events then may help us explain later

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processes that took place in Russia and Spain once Arab and Mongol dominations came to an end, particularly regarding the role of the so-called *exotic color* in arts, in the transformation of literary genres, etc.

The history of Spanish-Russian literary connections also demonstrates the multiplicity of forms of mediation that both literatures have employed as they became acquainted with one another. Perhaps due to the fact that the popularity of the Spanish language developed in Russia relatively late and Spanish literature was known in Russia mainly through mediocre translations from French and German sources, it must be admitted that the history of the Spanish-Russian literary relationship has not been studied in depth up to the present day. Many aspects of the connections that are, in my opinion, of great importance for both literatures have not yet received significant scholarly attention. This could be one of the possible reasons why the deep and multi-faceted influence that was exercised by *Don Quixote* on classical Russian literature of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, and especially on Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *The Idiot*, has not been studied as extensively as it should have been.

This study will not attempt to exhaust all questions related to this matter, even within the limits of the more particular or specific questions that may arise while the study unfolds. Instead, what it does aim to accomplish is marking the possible routes that perhaps would lead us toward some generalizations and conclusions. At the very least, this study aims to arouse scholarly interest in some key topics related to Cervantes's reception in Russia and the gradual transformation or, more to the point, *re-accentuation*<sup>2</sup> of the image of *Don Quixote* during the Russian literary renaissance.

Like many other things, *Don Quixote* was brought to Russia from Europe by Peter the Great in 1716. It was brought not as a book but as a small painting on a piece of carton made in the famous manufactures of tapestry in Paris. That carton was created by Charles-Antoine Coypel,<sup>3</sup> and it was one of the twenty-eight small paintings that interpreted Cervantes's book. Peter the Great was not a connoisseur of literature but a collector of rarities, and he gladly took the interesting painting and brought it to Russia together with many other things. Although Peter the Great never got to read the book itself, he knew the plot in general terms, and it is certain that *Don Quixote* made an impression on the Russian tsar. While in the Netherlands, where Peter saw the great number of windmills, he commented to Count Yaguzinsky, the Russian diplomat: "There would be a lot of work for Don Kishot"<sup>4</sup> (Maykov 87).<sup>5</sup>

We know how the carton made it to Russia, but we do not know how the book itself came to the country in the early eighteenth cen-

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ture. Most probably, some of Peter's numerous servants (who, by the way, were very well-educated people even by the European standards), knowing that the tsar showed an interest in it, purchased the book and brought it to the country. In any case, after this longest trip, the doors between Russia and Europe came wide open, and this tremendously facilitated the cultural exchange. Of course, everything progressed very slowly.

For that reason, the first literary commentary about *Don Quixote* as a literary work appeared in Russia only in 1720 in an absolutely insignificant book that today nobody would know, with the exception of a few scholars who specialize in publications of early eighteenth-century Russia. That book, titled *Reasoning about the World*,<sup>6</sup> was translated from French.

In the book called *Donkishot* is described the fabled life of some Spanish gentleman called Donkishot who, by riding around the world, did many fantastic things worthy of laughter, and for every man who was humiliated or offended, always entered alone into the fight. (qtd. in Pekarskiy 2: 488-89)<sup>7</sup>

It is easy to see that the initial perception of *Don Quixote* in Russia was far from a serious one. The commentary that we read nicely exemplified that *Don Quixote* was "some Spanish gentleman who did many fantastic things worthy of laughter." The book was perceived as a purely comical one that lacked any serious or philosophical context. The protagonist, though, was given credit as a man who "entered alone into the fight" for everyone who was offended or humiliated. As it often happens, the initial perception is the most lasting one, and we have to admit that, unfortunately, for the next one hundred years in Russia, *Don Quixote* was never considered to be more than just a comical book, and the seriousness of the work was not acknowledged until Ivan Turgenev's famous speech "Hamlet and Don Quixote" in 1866. We will discuss this rather important speech in due time.

The "discovery" of *Don Quixote* in Russia, according to Mikhail Alekseev,<sup>8</sup> should be attributed to the Russian literary scholar Vasily Trediakovsky.<sup>9</sup> Trediakovsky, of course, was not the first Russian to read *Don Quixote*, but he was the first scholar who explicitly mentioned the novel of Cervantes in an academic monograph. The monograph, however, examined Russian orthography, and a discussion of the literary work of Cervantes was understandably outside of its scientific inquiry. Nevertheless, in this book titled *Conversations about Orthography*,<sup>10</sup> published in 1747, Trediakovsky draws our the attention to the unusual traits of the conversation that takes place between Don Quixote and

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Sancho Panza and claims that it should be viewed as a *model* of any natural conversation.

The conversation has to be natural; exactly that happened between the knight errant Don Quixote and his squire Sancho Panza. (Trediakovsky 3: 301)<sup>11</sup>

It is certainly interesting that Trediakovsky, while talking about *natural conversation* in the process of communication, attributed this phenomenon specifically to *Don Quixote*. It is certain that this severe classicist read the book of Cervantes with utmost attention, and there are reasons to suggest that, most likely, he read it in Spanish. As a brilliant linguist, Trediakovsky would never have passed such a judgment on Cervantes's unusual art of dialogue if he had read the book using a translation. By the way, the very first terribly abridged translation (The book contained only 27 chapters out of the 126 written by Cervantes!) appeared in Russia in 1769 when Trediakovsky was already dead. Thus, the probability of Trediakovsky reading Cervantes in Spanish is so high that it allows us to suggest that Trediakovsky was, in fact, the very first Russian to read *Don Quixote* in Spanish.

There must have been some specific tools or some literary device that was previously unknown in literature, which Cervantes consciously (or subconsciously) deployed in *Don Quixote* and which created the notion of the *natural conversation*. For Trediakovsky, that type of a conversation not only became a model but also ensured the *wholeness* of the main character that "guaranteed the inner connection of the constituent elements of the person" (Bakhtin 1). Nonetheless, as the main focus of Trediakovsky's book was still Russian orthography, any detailed commentary on Cervantes's work simply fell outside the scope of his academic inquiry.

Another Russian intellectual, writer, and poet, Alexander Sumarokov,<sup>12</sup> in his article *About reading novels*,<sup>13</sup> made an interesting comment about *Don Quixote* that revealed not only his familiarity with the novel but also a good understanding of its literary value.

In many novels that weigh one pud<sup>14</sup> there will be less than one pound of spirits, and the reading of them will consume lots of time and be useless, rather than useful. I rule out *Telemakus*<sup>15</sup> and *Donkishot* and the handful of other worthy novels. (Sumarokov 374-75)<sup>16</sup>

While reading the *Diary* of Katherine the Great's secretary, Aleksey Khrapovitsky,<sup>17</sup> we find that the Russian Empress, famous not only for

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her wide intelligence and keen interest in literature but also for her unprecedented correspondence with the brightest minds of the eighteenth century—Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot—expressed “not just a superficial interest to *Don Quixote* but ordered to make an extensive list of all proverbs and sayings by Sancho Panza” (Khrapovitsky 158). It is also possible to suggest that under the influence of reading *Don Quixote*, Katherine wrote the play “The Fairy Tale about Poor Knight Kosometovitch,” which was staged in Saint Petersburg’s Italian Opera Theatre in 1789 in the form of the *opera buffa*, or “comic opera.” It is also worth noting that the music to this opera was composed by the Spanish composer Vicente Martin Y Soler.<sup>18</sup>

Although we do not have any documented comments made by Katherine the Great about *Don Quixote*, we know for a fact that the Russian tsarina always was a keen reader and often wanted to imitate something that she especially liked, and the fact that she wrote a play that is reminiscent of much of the first six chapters of *Don Quixote* tells us that she read Cervantes with considerable attention.

As the eighteenth century was coming to an end, the perception of *Don Quixote* was changing, too, and the array of opinions is strikingly wide: some praise *Don Quixote*; others call him a “fool.” In one of the odes of the poet Gavrila Derzhavin,<sup>19</sup> *Don Quixote* is viewed as someone who wastes himself while trying to preserve something that is not worth preserving. In fact, in this ode Derzhavin introduced into Russian language a new word—*donkishotstvovat* (“live and act like *Don Quixote*”). In so doing, he, unfortunately, started a tradition that lasted a long time: *Don Quixote* was viewed as a funny guy who decided to spend his life traveling and doing unnecessary and funny things, like the fight with the windmills. Interestingly enough, even today, the Russian language conserves the initial meaning of the word *donkishotstvovat*, which has a separate life from its protagonist: while *Don Quixote* nowadays is treated more like a hero who would always be faithful to his high ideals, the word has a negative connotation and is normally applied to an unworthy person. Thus, thanks to Derzhavin, the verb *donkishotstvovat* in Russian language for a long time acquired quite a negative connotation.

Not too fond of masquerades,  
And to the club will place your foot,  
You Keep the practices, the rituals,  
And do not *donkishotstvuesh* . . . .<sup>20</sup> (Derzhavin 19)<sup>21</sup>

Mikhail Lomonosov<sup>22</sup> instead read *Don Quixote* with a great deal of thought and scientific curiosity. Although Lomonosov was primar-

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ily a natural scientist, he was a polymath and had a natural interest in anything unusual or outstanding. For this reason, Lomonosov certainly read *Don Quixote* more like Trediakovsky. As Lomonosov was not able to read the novel in Spanish—he had no knowledge of this still quite exotic European language—he read it in German. We know that Lomonosov purchased this book while studying in Germany in 1761 when he was still a student, and *Don Quixote* remained in his personal library thereafter. It is unfortunate, but history has not preserved for us any of Lomonosov's reactions to the book; however, at approximately the same time (1761), Lomonosov decided to study the Spanish language. Whether the reading of Cervantes was a primary catalyst of this decision, or whether it was something else, we do not know with certainty, but Lomonosov in his *Grammar of the Russian Language* characterized the Spanish language as the most powerful of all European languages, and he compared Spanish to Russian in its richness of vocabulary and expressive power.<sup>23</sup>

The divergence of opinions about *Don Quixote* prevailed for the rest of the eighteenth century. It is interesting to see, after we analyze those opinions, that there is a certain tendency: in the eighteenth century, the century of the Enlightenment, the positive opinions about the book were always rendered by the scientists, or by scholars, while men of literature were not giving the book too much credit. I will not try to explain this phenomenon here; I simply want to bring it to the attention of my readers because there will be a series of articles that will talk about the perception of *Don Quixote* in Russia in the twentieth century and in the beginning of the twenty-first century, which was drastically different.

The poet Ivan Krylov,<sup>24</sup> after reading the book, immediately called *Don Quixote* a “fool” (Krylov 3: 335) and did it on numerous occasions, while the historian Nikolay Karamzin<sup>25</sup> described *Don Quixote* in very romantic terms. In fact, it is unusual to see what kind of sentimental memories *Don Quixote* was able to evoke in the old man and the official Historian of the Russian tsar. And it is even more unusual to read such a testimony from the scholar whose job is to record facts, not to be sentimental about the novel.

. . . and all these fairy tales in my childhood were making me a *Don Quixote*. . . I waved sword a few times through the black air and returned to my room, thinking that my feat was pretty important. Oh this sweet childhood! Who does not think of it without pleasure? (Karamzin 157)<sup>26</sup>

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At the end of the eighteenth century, Europe was living through serious turmoil; while some countries were going into decline (Spain), others were rising to dominance (France). No one yet knew that this dominance would cost French people hundreds of thousands of their own citizens (just enough to remember Maximilian Robespierre with his infamous “pity is treason”) and then would cost Europe another two million human lives. In response to these turbulent times, Nikolay Karamzin wrote the following in one of his letters:

I live, my dear friend, in the village with books and nature, but I am often extremely restless in my heart. Those terrible events in Europe concern my soul. Call me Don Quixote, but this glorious knight could not love his Dulcinea more passionately than I love Mankind! (Karamzin 157)<sup>27</sup>

The more the famous Russian historian spends time “with books and nature,” the more he finds himself fascinated with the book of Cervantes. It is somewhat symbolic that in Karamzin’s mind, the mind of the historian, the book of Cervantes is so tightly connected with the meaning of democracy and its successful establishment in Spain.

The history of Spain is very curious. I am afraid only of phrases and blood. The Constitution of Cortes is a pure democracy. If they arrange the state, then I promise to walk to Madrid, and on the way there I will take with me *Don Quixote*. (Karamzin 210)<sup>28</sup>

The nineteenth century in Russia started with the short and highly controversial ruling of Emperor Pavel I, the son of Katherine the Great. While the aristocracy was happy with the reign of Katherine, now the mood changed: Pavel was hated by all his subjects for his eccentric behavior and extremely strange ideas. For that reason, Pavel soon received a nickname—“the crowned Don Quixote”—that was intended to characterize his absurd nature.

He is a sort of Don Quixote, very inconsistent and very stubborn, who wants only to satisfy his own vanity. (Valishevsky 449)<sup>29</sup>

It is certainly reasonable to suggest that the perception of Don Quixote in Russia in the beginning of the nineteenth century was highly polarized, and it is interesting to see how quickly Don Quixote the “glorious knight” could become a “very inconsistent and very stub-

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born" gentleman who wanted "to satisfy his own vanity." What seems obvious is that the opinion of the Russian intelligentsia about Don Quixote was far from being definitely formed.

It is rather symbolic that Pavel, while traveling throughout Western Europe in 1782, received the exact same present from the French court as did his great-grandfather, Peter the Great, sixty years before: four tapestries from the series "The History of *Don Quixote*" by Coypel. Pavel brought them to Russia and placed them in his favorite summer residence, where visitors can still see them today. It is reasonable to make the same kind of suggestion of Pavel, that he was certainly closely familiar with the story of Don Quixote since he made an effort to bring those sizable tapestries to Russia. The fact that Pavel placed them in his own residence, where he tended to spend a considerable amount of time reading and contemplating, leaves us with the impression that he definitely valued the idea of the knight who alone dared to challenge the entire world order. Perhaps Pavel was even comparing himself with Don Quixote, as he also decided to challenge the order that was established by his mother, Katherine the Great. What we know for a fact is that Pavel was not naïve and knew perfectly well that he was hated by Russian aristocrats and that they were preparing to overthrow him. Nonetheless, he continued to do what he had decided to do until he was brutally murdered in his own room in 1801.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the perception of *Don Quixote* continued to develop, but, as before, this viewpoint could not be considered fully formed. I see that as a very good sign: the name of Don Quixote, although it still experienced the fate of transformation *del nome proprio al nome comune*, was already widely known in Russia, and his fame was comparable with that of Don Juan, the only Spaniard who enjoyed major popularity in Russia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Another interesting Russian intellectual, Nikolay Turgenev<sup>30</sup> (not to be confused with Ivan Turgenev, the famous novelist of the mid-nineteenth century), noted in his diary about Don Quixote:

And I live all alone, do not go anywhere, and do not get bored any more . . . It is 10:30. It's time to read Donkishota, whom the writer makes so crazy that sometimes he seems unnatural to me and, therefore, I do not like him. (245)<sup>31</sup>

Nikolay Turgenev is certainly puzzled by Don Quixote; passing quiet time in the country, away from the madding crowd, Turgenev feels that there is much more in the personality of the hero who is written to appear 'so crazy' that he is unlikeable. Nevertheless, a few lines down,

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we read just the opposite; yes, it seems that Don Quixote is still quite foreign to his Russian soul, but he certainly enjoys reading Cervantes.

It was not a small pleasure when I, at twelve o'clock, lit a cigarette and lay down in bed to read *Don Quixote*. (265)<sup>32</sup>

Without a doubt, the deepest understanding and appreciation of Don Quixote as a literary character, and of the novel's place and paramount importance in Russia, comes from Vissarion Belinsky,<sup>33</sup> by far the most prominent literary critic on the literary horizon of the early nineteenth century and a contemporary of Alexander Pushkin,<sup>34</sup> Nikolay Gogol,<sup>35</sup> and Mikhail Lermontov.<sup>36</sup> Long before Bakhtin wrote his theory of a novel, Belinsky wrote:

The infancy of the ancient world was over; belief in gods and miracles died; the spirit of heroism disappeared; the age of real life had come when a poem could turn into a novel. (Belinsky 1: 265)<sup>37</sup>

The attention of the most influential and the most Westernized literary critic was, of course, not so much on the novel as on *Don Quixote*, which, because of Belinsky, acquired a new literary life in Russia:

Finally, in the fifteenth century the final reform of the art was perfected: Cervantes killed by his incomparable Don Quixote the pseudo-ideal poetry. (Belinsky 3: 481)<sup>38</sup>

One hundred and fifty years later, Mikhail Bakhtin wrote in his *Novelistic Discourse*:

And there arrived on the scene, at least, the great Renaissance novel—the novels of Rabelais and Cervantes. It is precisely in these two works that the novelistic word . . . revealed its full potential and began to play such a titanic role in the formulation of a new literary and linguistic consciousness (*Dialogic Imagination* 80).

It is the phrase "at last" that makes it clear, notes Mancing in his "*Don Quixote and Bakhtin's Two Stylistic Lines of the Novel*," that up to that point everything had been just a preparation for the novel to appear and that this novel had finally "arrived."

In the meantime, Belinsky, at the dawn of the nineteenth century, continued to influence the opinions of Russia's literary circles about

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the importance of the great novel. Slowly but surely, the perception and interpretation was beginning to change: "Now I finish *Don Quixote* of Cervantes. It is a work of genius!" (Belinsky 6: 33).<sup>39</sup> This is a letter to Mikhail Bakunin<sup>40</sup> in which, among other things, the theme of Cervantes occupies a significant place:

I am funnier than Don Quixote: He at least sincerely believed that he was a knight that he was fighting with giants and not with windmills; that his ugly and fat Dulcinea was a beauty; but I know that I'm not a knight but crazy—and I am still chivalrous in that I fight with windmills, and I am still fighting; in that my Dulcinea (life) is ugly and vile, and I still love her, in spite of common sense and all the evidence. (Belinsky 6: 35)<sup>41</sup>

No one, probably even up to the present day, understood and explained the idea of Cervantes better than Belinsky. His wide knowledge of world literature enabled him to compare and contrast things that others would not even think to evaluate, such as *Don Quixote* and the tradition of the English historical novel, the father of which is traditionally considered to be Sir Walter Scott. In his letter to Mikhail Zagoskin,<sup>42</sup> Belinsky was characteristically exhaustive in the depth and scholarly intuition of his treatment of the novel.

Cervantes long before Walter Scott wrote a historical novel. . . the creative, artistic element of his spirit was so strong that it won over rationality. . . . His *Don Quixote* is not a caricature but a character, full of truth and alien to any exaggeration. He is not abstract but absolutely alive. The idea of *Don Quixote* does not belong to the time of Cervantes; it is the eternal idea. . . . *Don Quixote* was possible since both were human societies, and will be possible as long as people do not flee to the forests. (Belinsky 9: 79–80)<sup>43</sup>

In his analysis of *Don Quixote*, Belinsky goes as far as to ascertain what made Cervantes's novel eternal; it was novel without national boundaries and time:

Everyone has a little *Don Quixote* inside; but most of all, people who become *Don Quixotes* are people with a flaming imagination, a loving soul, and a noble heart. . . . True, *Don Quixote* can be found only among remarkable people. But the important thing is that they have always been, they are, and they will be. This is an eternal type, this is an idea that always

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embodies in itself thousands of different types and forms, according to the spirit and the character of a century, or the country. (Belinsky1: 137)<sup>44</sup>

The word "idea" makes it clear that Belinsky reads, perceives, and interprets *Don Quixote* differently from the majority of literary critics of his time who could see in *Don Quixote* no more than a comic character, or some kind of a buffoon:

A Spanish gentleman called Don Quixote, who by going through many lands was able to do many deeds worthy of laughter and many fantastic things, stood up and fought alone for every man, who, in his opinion, was offended." (Pekarsky, 488)<sup>45</sup>

What was it that Belinsky saw in the novel that others were not able to see? The presence of the "idea" is what, in Belinsky's opinion, makes this novel so different from others, and makes it universally international. Eight hundred pages where the "idea" breathes and lives is, in fact, off limits. This novel is the entire continent, the entire globe, and all our civilization; this is the novel's real stage, and if "the world were to come to an end, and the man were asked: 'Did you understand your life on earth, and what conclusion have you drawn from it?' And the man could silently hand over *Don Quixote*. Such is my inference from life.—Can you condemn me for it?" (Dostoevsky, *Diary of a Writer*, vol. 1 260)

So the dignity of Cervantes's novel—the idea: the idea made this poetic work an eternal masterpiece that will never die and never age. This idea is why, despite its Spanish names and customs, people of all nations and all ages now read and will continue to read *Don Quixote*. (Belinsky 12: 76)<sup>46</sup>

The prestige of Belinsky in the Russian literary world at the beginning of nineteenth century was so high that popular opinion about Cervantes's novel and its character gradually started to change. Of course, it was not just for Belinsky: the people of Russian literary society were becoming more and more sophisticated. They started to travel, and quality translations of *Don Quixote* started to become available in Russia.

The first adequate translation of *Don Quixote* into Russian was completed by Konstantin Masalsky in 1838. It is interesting to note that the translation appeared almost simultaneously with Belinsky's notes

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on *Don Quixote*, although Masalsky could have been acquainted with many of these notes via private correspondence with Belinsky. But it was Masalsky, scholar and translator at the same time, who wrote the first literary study about *Don Quixote*. His book, *The Don Quixote of the Nineteenth Century*,<sup>47</sup> continued influencing the new perception of Cervantes's novel and certainly played a role in its interpretation. As Mancing indicates, "It is the earliest indication of what constitutes Bakhtin's concept of the novel and suggests how and why *Don Quixote* might have begun to acquire particular significance" (151).

It is worth noting that Masalsky's translation was for the first time made directly from Spanish rather than from German or French. Although it was far superior to all previous translations, it was still quite incomplete, and the reasons for the abridgements made by Masalsky remain unknown to us.

It is not then so surprising that many educated and well-travelled Russian writers, including Ivan Turgenev, were not happy with reading the available translation and were planning to make another, better one:

And this winter I will start the translation of *Don Quixote*, for which I have been preparing a long time; I have continually read and re-read this immortal novel. Cervantes became for me what is, probably, Pushkin for you.<sup>48</sup> (2: 243)<sup>49</sup>

Thus, from Belinsky who initiated the tradition in Russian literary criticism of interpreting *Don Quixote* primarily as a knight of *the idea*, it has become customary for Russian literary critics to refer to *Don Quixote* as such. Of course, the development of the perception of Cervantes's hero acquired new, sometimes positive and sometimes negative connotations. In the ideological and literary clashes, the words "Don Quixote" or "Donkishotstvo" were used as a political metaphor, often to debunk the opponents' credibility. While one critic called "Don Quixote" the champion of social reform in Russia, another one put the same sticker on all Slavophiles; while some reflected on "Don Quixotes of the revolution," seeing in them the tragic image of people who are ready to die for the ideal, others saw in *Don Quixote* a noble robber whose main principle was simple: destroy the rich; bestow to the poor.

If Herzen's<sup>50</sup> *Don Quixote* belonged to the past, then Turgenev's knight from La Mancha is looking to the future. *Don Quixote* for Turgenev is a man of action, the ideal of selfless service to justice, goodness, and truth. That is why, in his famous article, Turgenev argued that people like *Quixote* were morally superior to those who were

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like Hamlet in their egoism, skepticism, and reflection. Life, argued Turgenev in his article, is being moved by Don Quixotes, creators of all good things and deeds. The impact of Turgenev's article on Russian literary circles was noticeable, and the famous antithesis "Hamlet vs. Don Quixote" spurred a controversy that continued for several decades.

The pure and noble knight, naive as a child but, at the same time, discerning and wise, was dear and close to another famous Russian writer, Fyodor Dostoevsky. It was under the influence of *Don Quixote* that one of the most "quixotic" novels, *The Idiot*, was conceived and produced.

Once upon a time Don Quixote, the well-known knight of the doleful image, the most magnanimous of all knights on earth, the simplest in soul and one of the greatest men in heart, while roaming in the company of his faithful armor-bearer Sancho in pursuit of adventures, was suddenly struck by a perplexity which made him ponder for a long while. (Dostoevsky, *Diary of a Writer* 2: 835)

Dostoevsky immediately recognized the importance of the *idea* that "made this poetic work an eternal masterpiece that will never die"; the *idea* that will elevate its bearer, Don Quixote, and bring him to the cosmic vision of things; and the *idea* that will enlighten him, enable him to remove the boundaries between the illusion and reality until they both, the *idea* and the hero, finally become one.

Dostoevsky came closest to Don Quixote while working on *The Idiot*. We can read in one of his letters where Dostoevsky ponders the new novel, which was as yet non-existent.

The idea of the novel is an old and favorite one of mine, but such a hard one that for a long time I did not dare to take up, and if I have taken it up now, then it is absolutely because I was in a nearly desperate situation. The main idea of the novel is to portray a positively beautiful person. There is nothing more difficult than that in the world, and especially now. All the writers, and not just ours, but even all the European writers, whoever undertook this depiction of the *positively* beautiful person, always had to pass. Because it's a measureless task. The beautiful is an ideal, and the ideal—both ours or that of civilized Europe—is far from having been achieved. There's only one positively beautiful person in the world—Christ—so that the appearance of this measurelessly, infinitely beautiful person is in fact of course an infinite miracle. [. . .] Of the

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beautiful people in Christian literature, Don Quixote stands as the most complete. But he is only beautiful because he's ridiculous at the same time. [. . .] and effective in fact of that. [. . .] I have nothing like that, absolutely nothing, and therefore I'm terribly afraid that it will be an absolute failure. (Dostoevsky, *Letters* 3: 17)

Even though the hero of Dostoevsky, in contrast to that of Cervantes, was never conceived as a comic figure but rather as a "serious presentation of an ethical ideal" (Hingley 11); for Dostoevsky, *Don Quixote* always remained a "commentary on life and a revelation of the human mind and heart" (Buketoff-Turkevich 115).

It is undeniable that the penetration of Cervantes's aesthetic and philosophical values into Russia and his significant presence on the literary horizons of nineteenth-century Russia make it possible to inquire in depth about his undeniable influence on Dostoevsky. This influence is so significant that Dostoevsky, consciously or subconsciously, wrote a novel whose reminiscences and connections with Cervantes are so intense and suggestive that it seems surprising that, up to now, we have not seen any *magnum opus* written about this important literary phenomenon.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that this variety of opinions, judgments, and interpretations of *Don Quixote* was, of course, tightly linked to the historical events that were taking place in Russia during the second half of the nineteenth century; however, at the same time, this variety indicated that the literary hero created by Cervantes was, and continued to be, important and relevant for all the enlightened Russian intelligentsia. As Yakov Malkiel rightfully put it:

Among Spain's literary celebrities, hazily made out at the outset, Cervantes's figure became in time the most firmly delineated and most engaging. Russian taste has changed profoundly at several momentous junctures, and preferences for given facets of Cervantes's art and "philosophy" (traditionally dear to Russian critics) have shifted a good deal since Belinsky. But the esteem for his work among the intellectual elite and its impact on writers able to set new standards, and on a broadening group of ambitious readers, show the demand for steadily improved translations, abridgements, and commentaries. (313)

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### Notes

1. The Mongol invasion that is also known as the “Mongol Yoke” on Russia was heralded in 1223. This invasion lasted until 1480 and had incalculable ramifications for the history of Europe, including the division of the East Slavic People into three different nations.
2. The concept of re-accentuation is one of the most interesting concepts of Mikhail Bakhtin. The detailed explanation of the nature of re-accentuation can be found in Bakhtin's book *The Dialogic Imagination*.
3. Charles-Antoine Coypel (1694–1752) was a French painter and an excellent tapestry designer. He became the First Painter of the King and Director of the Royal Academy. His most famous tapestries were created from a series illustrating *Don Quixote*.
4. “То-то бы для Донкишотов было здесь работы!”
5. Майков. Л. Н. Рассказы Нартова о Петре Великом. ЦПБ, Типография Императорской Академии Наук, 1891.
6. Рассуждения о оказательствах к миру
7. “В книге, называемой Донкишот, описано фабульное житие гишпанского кавалера, Донкишотом называемого, который, езда по свету, многие достойные смеху фантастические дела делал и за всякого человека, которого он обижен быть почитал, вступался и один воевал.”
8. Mikhail Alekseev is considered to be one of the most prominent Soviet scholars of Romance literatures and their relations with Russia. Although he lived and worked during the Stalin era when, even for the most innocent remark, any person could be thrown to jail for 10–15 years, Alekseev made remarkable contributions to the literary scholarship. His views hold scholarly value up to the present day.
9. Vasily Trediakovsky (1703–1768) was a Russian poet, literary theoretician, and interesting playwright who, together with another Russian poet and scientist, Mikhail Lomonosov, helped to lay the foundation of classic Russian literature. He was the first Russian citizen who, not belonging to the nobility, received his education abroad at the Sorbonne, Paris.
10. Разговор о правописании
11. “Разговору должно быть натуральному, а именно такому, какой был при всех удивительных похождениях между скитающимся рыцарем Донкишотом и стремянным его Саншею Пансою.”
12. Alexander Sumarokov (1717–1777) was a Russian poet and playwright who is considered to be a creator of the classical theatre in Russia. He assisted Mikhail Lomonosov in inaugurating classicism in early Russian literature.
13. О чтении романов
14. One “pud” is an old Russian measure of weight that is equal to about forty pounds.

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15. *The adventures of Telemachus* is a didactic novel by Fenelon, published in 1699. The novel recounts the educational travels of Telemachus, son of Ulysses, with his tutor, Mentor. This book gained enormous popularity in Russian throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

16. "Из многих романов в пуд весом спирту одного фунта не выйдет, и чтением оного больше употребится времени на бесполезное, нежели на полезное. Я исключаю Телемака и Донкишота, и еще самое малое число достойных романов."

17. Aleksey Khrapovitsky was for many years a personal secretary of Katherine the Great; it was he who supervised the preparation of the extensive list of proverbs and sayings by Sancho Panza and presented it to the Russian Imperatriz.

18. Vicente Martin y Soler (1754–1806), often called by his contemporaries *the Valencian Mozart*, now is relatively obscure. For a long time he worked at the court of Katherine the Great, the Russian Imperatriz, as a composer and a chief conductor of the Italian Opera Theatre in Saint Petersburg.

19. Gavril Derzhavin (1743–1816) was one of the greatest Russian poets before Alexander Pushkin, as well as an important statesman.

20. For the first time in Russian literature, the verb *donkishotstvovat*, which was synthesized by Derzhavin from the name of the Spanish knight-errant, Don Quixote, appears; in the context of the ode, this verb means "to start doing something unusual, strange."

21. "Не слишком любишь маскарады,

А в клуб не ступишь и ногой,

Храня обычай, обряды,

Не донкишотствуешь собой. . . ."

22. Mikhail Lomonosov (1711–1765) was a Russian polymath, scientist, and writer who made important contributions to literature, education, and science. For instance, among his discoveries was the atmosphere of Venus. Lomonosov was also a prominent poet who created the basis of the modern Russian literary language.

23. This fact is based on the study conducted by Yuri Lotman and commented on in his article "К вопросу о том, какими языками владел Ломоносов." The article was published in the journal titled *XVIII vek*. 3 (1958): 445–64.

24. Ivan Krylov (1769–1844) is Russia's best known fabulist. He is also known for his exceptional epigrams.

25. Nikolay Karamzin (1766–1826) was a Russian writer, poet and, without a doubt, the most famous Russian historian. He is remembered for his capital twelve-volume work *History of the Russian State*.

26. " . . . и все сказки делали меня в ребячестве маленьким Дон-Кишотом. . . махнул саблю несколько раз по черному воздуху и возвратился в свою

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комнату, думая, что подвиг мой был довольно важен. Лета младенчества! Кто помышляет о вас без удовольствия?"

27. "Я живу, любезный друг, в деревне, с книгами и природой, но часто бываю очень беспокоен в моем сердце. Ужасные происшествия Европы волнуют всю мою душу. Назови меня Дон-Кишотом, но сей славный рыцарь не мог любить свою Дульсинею так же страстно, как я люблю— Человечество!"

28. "История Испании очень любопытна. Боюсь только фраз и крови. Конституция Кортесов есть чистая демократия. Если они устроят государство, то обещаюсь идти пешком в Мадрид, а на дорогу возьму Дон Кишота."

29. "Он нечто вроде Дон Кихота, очень непоследовательный и очень упрямый, который хочет только удовлетворять своему тщеславию."

30. Nikolay Turgenev (1789–1871), a relative of the famous novelist Ivan Turgenev, was one of the first Russian economists and democrats, and co-founder of a few reformist societies. After the Rebellion of 1825 he was tried in absentia and sentenced to *Siberian katorga* for life. As a result, he never returned to his homeland.

31. "И живу совершенно один, никуда не хожу и не скучаю более . . . Бьет 10.30. Пора читать Донкишота, которого представляет сочинитель уж слишком сумасшедшим, что мне кажется ненатуральным, и потому не нравится."

32. "...это не малое удовольствие, как в 12 часу закуришь и ляжешь в постель читать Донкишота."

33. Vissarion Belinsky (1811–1848) is one of the most prominent Russian literary critics of the nineteenth century. He played an instrumental role in the careers of Nikolay Nekrasov, Russian poet, and Nikolay Gogol.

34. Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837) is considered by many to be the greatest Russian poet and the founder of the modern Russian Literature.

35. Nikolai Gogol (1809–1852) was dramatist, novelist, and short story writer. Gogol was considered by his contemporaries to be one of the preeminent literary figures of Russian realism, second after Pushkin. His works, at the same time, possess a fundamental romantic sensibility with strains of Surrealism.

36. Mikhail Lermontov (1814–1841) was a Russian Romantic writer, poet, and painter; the most important Russian poet after Alexander Pushkin; and the greatest figure in Russian Romanticism. His influence on later Russian literature is enormous and felt even in modern days, not only through his poetry but also through his prose that founded the tradition of the Russian psychological novel.

37. "Младенчество древнего мира кончилось; вера в богов и чудеса умерла; дух героизма исчез; настал век жизни действительной . . . родилась идея человека . . . поэма превратилась в роман."

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38. "Наконец в веке совершилась окончательная реформа в искусстве: Сервантес убил своим несравненным Дон Кихотом ложно-идеальное направление поэзии."

39. "Теперь оканчиваю Сервантесова Дон Кихота. Гениальное произведение!"

40. Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876) was a founder of collectivist anarchism. Bakunin's enormous prestige as an activist made him one of the most famous ideologues in Europe, and he gained substantial influence among radicals throughout Russia and Europe.

41. "Я смешнее Дон Кихота: тот, по крайней мере, от души верил, что он рыцарь то он сражается с великанами а не с мельницами, и что его безобразная и толстая Дульсинея—красавица; а я знаю, что я не рыцарь, а сумасшедший—и все-таки рыцарствую; что я сражаюсь с мельницами—и все-таки сражаюсь; чо Дульсиня моя (жизнь) безобразна и гнусна, а все-таки люблю ее, назло здравому смыслу и очевидности."

42. Mikhail Zagoskin (1789–1852) was the first Russian writer of historical novels, the Russian Sir Walter Scott. His historical novel *Yury Miloslavsky*, which was published in 1829, became the first Russian bestseller.

43. "Сервантес задолго до Вальтера Скотта написал исторический роман. . . творческий, художественный элемент его духа был так силен, что победил рассудочное направление . . . Его Дон Кихот есть не карикатура, а характер, полный истины и чуждый всякого преувеличения, не отвлеченный но живой и действительный. Идея Дон Кихота не принадлежит времени Сервантеса: она общечеловеческая, вечная идея . . . Дон Кихоты была возможны с тех пор, как явились человеческие общества, и будут возможны, пока люди не разбегутся по лесам."

44. "Каждый человек есть немножко Дон Кихот; но более всего бывают Дон Кихотами люди с пламенным сердцем, любящею душою, благородным сердцем. . . Истинных Дон Кихотов можно найти только между недюжинными людьми. Но главное, что они всегда были, есть и будут. Это тип вечный, это единая идея, всегда воплощающаяся в тысяче разных видов и форм, сообразно с духом и характером века или страны."

45. "гишпанский кавалер, дон Кишотом называемый, который будто ездя по свету, многие смеху достойные и фантастические дела делал и за всякого человека, которого он обиженным быть почитал, вступался и один воевал."

46. "Итак, достоинство Сервантесовского романа—в идее: идея сделала его вечным, никогда не умирающим и никогда не стареющим поэтическим произведением. В идее заключена причина того, что, несмотря на испанские имена, обычаи, частности,—люди всех наций и всех веков читают и будут читать Дон Кихота."

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47. This book was inaccessible to me, but it is mentioned and discussed in great detail in the book of Professor A. Umikyan, titled *Cervantes: Statyi i materiali* (Leningrad: 1948).

48. This intention of Turgenev is connected with his abiding interest in Spanish literature, an admiration that he expressed innumerable times in his private letters, especially to his life-long lover and friend, Polina Viardo. This intention, however, Turgenev never was able to fulfill because of his deteriorating health.

49. "А эту зиму примусь за перевод Дон Кихота, к которому я давно готовлюсь и беспрестанно перечитываю этот бессмертный роман. Сервантес стал для меня тем, чем, вероятно, стал для вас Пушкин."

50. Alexander Herzen (1812–1870) was a Russian philosopher known as the "father of Russian socialism" and who enjoyed tremendous popularity in the West, where he spent most of his life. His literary observations, although sometimes very political, were often keen and penetrating.

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