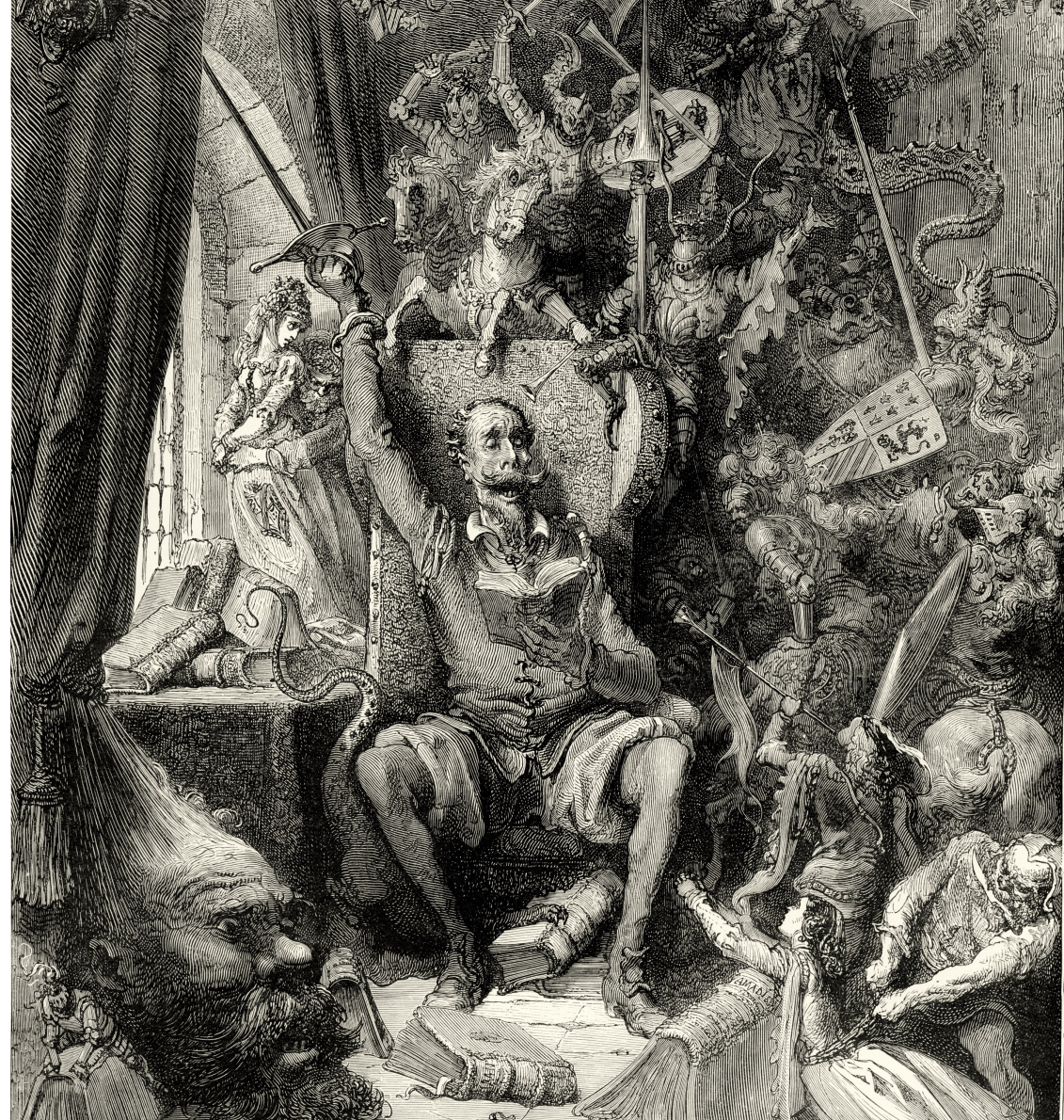


THE INGENIOUS GENTLEMAN, DON QUIXOTE OF LA MANCHA

Day One









SOME HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- The Middle Ages gives way to the Renaissance, led by Italian humanists, artists and printers—and a ton of money
- Banking, credit, corporations with limited liability — in short, capitalism (Medici family)
- Scientific revolution (Galileo, 1564-1642), empiricism, method
- The printing press, philology, expansion of knowledge and accessibility
- Modernity: things change, substantially, visibly, in your lifetime

**FEAR
SURPRISE
RUTHLESS
EFFICIENCY
AN ALMOST
FANATICAL
DEVOTION
TO THE POPE
AND NICE
RED UNIFORMS**

SOME HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Rediscovery of Greek from the Spanish Moors; in 1492, Spain unified, Jews and Moors begin to be expelled or converted
- 1517, Luther's *95 Theses*; 1648, Treaty of Westphalia (mostly) ends more than a century of religious wars
- Counter-reformation; *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (1559-1966); Spanish Inquisition (1478-1834)

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra



Juan de Laurigui. Pinxit. año 1600.

CERVANTES: A LIFE

- Cervantes, aka Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, 1547-1616
- Father was a “barber,” mother was the 3rd daughter of poor nobleman
- may have studied at University of Salamanca
- left Spain (unclear why: duel?); went to Italy; soldier; captured and enslaved in Algiers; freed, returns to Spain and becomes writer
- Supports himself with accounting and secretarial work until 1610; writes full-time; dies *on the same day* as Shakespeare (probably; calendars are complicated)

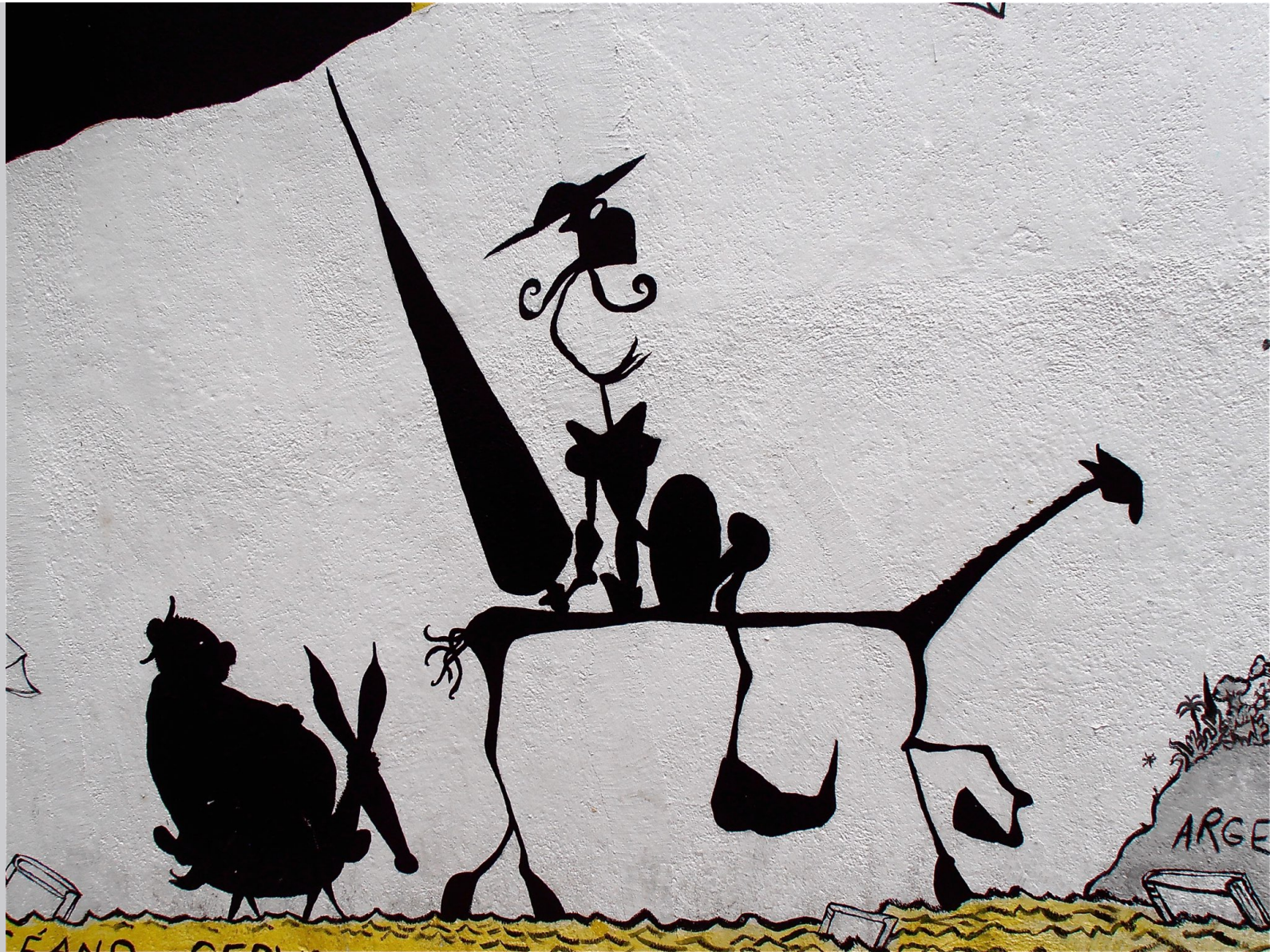


QUIXOTE: INFLUENCE

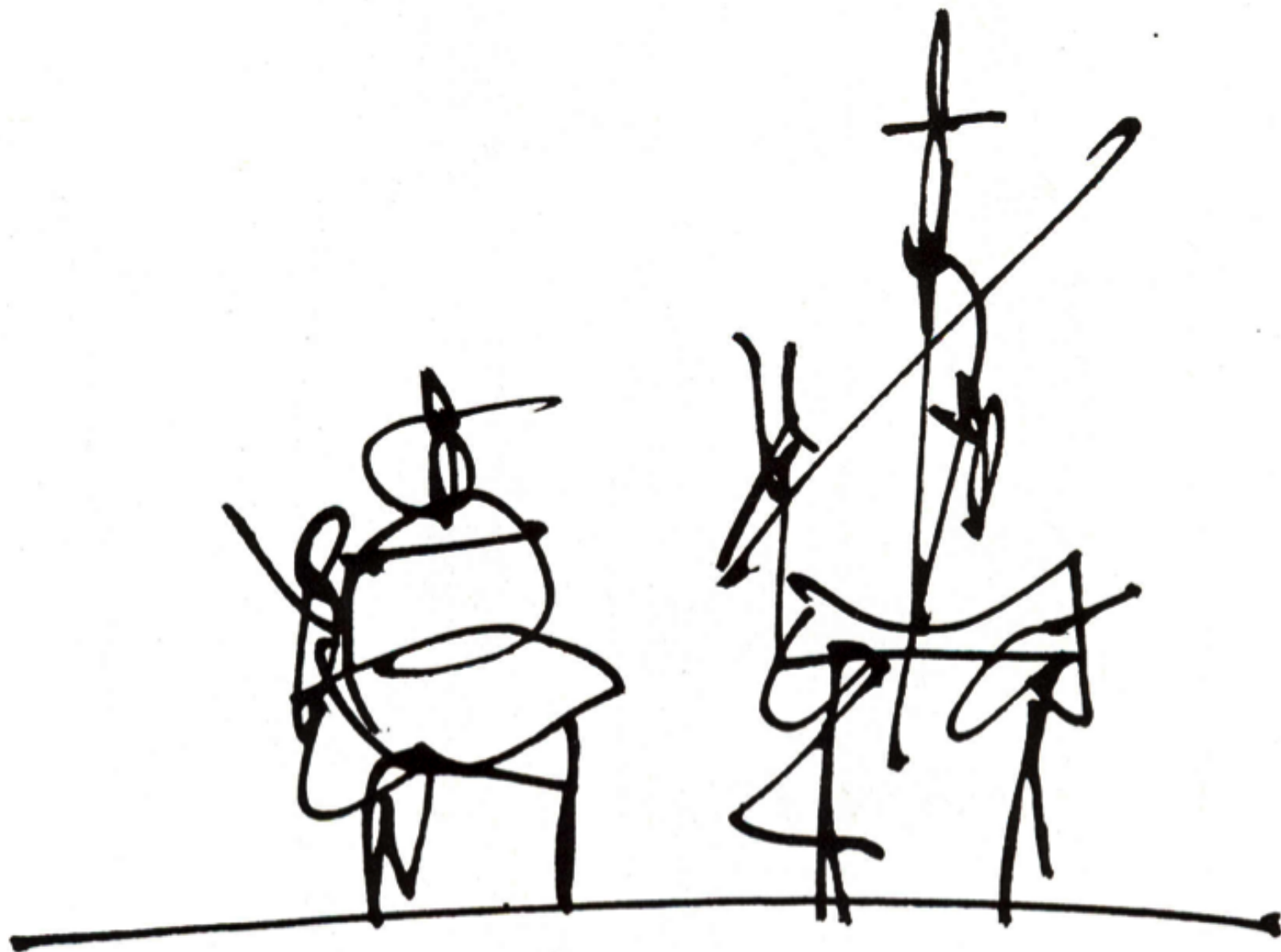
- National novel of Spain
- Consistently voted the greatest novel of all time
- Referenced everywhere by everyone
- Gave rise to the English word *quixotic* and to the proverbial phrase “tilting at windmills” —we’ll return to both later
- Iconic: literally, both in the iconographic images of Quixote and Panza, and as the inspiration for novels (including 17th-century fanfiction), operas, plays, musicals, over 25 films, and more













QUIXOTE: CHARACTERS

- ▶ Names: “Doña Enchilada de la Toyota,” “Lord Ralph of Schaumburg”
- ▶ Don Quixote and Sancho Panza: doubling, the invention of the sidekick
- ▶ Don Quixote: the dreamer, the (sometimes wise) fool, the bachelor
- ▶ Sancho Panza: practical, greedy, simple, stupid, married
- ▶ Cide Hamete Benegeli (something like “Sir Hamid of Eggplant”)
- ▶ Dulcinea del Taboso (Lady Sweetness of Peoria)
- ▶ Rocinante (*rocín* + *antes*, “Nag Before”)

THE RIGHT
BOOK
Will
ALWAYS
keep you
COMPANY

STEIMATZKY
SINCE 1915





QUIXOTE: STRUCTURE

- ▶ Episodic
- ▶ Picaresque
- ▶ Complex
 - ▶ Two Books
 - ▶ Book I divided into four parts, Book II undivided
 - ▶ Book I structurally interrupted across the boundary between chapters 8 and 9 (parts 1 & 2)
- ▶ All these divisions hinge on questions of truth and fiction, dream and reality, truth and falsehood (don't align perfectly)

“As has been said, Don Quixote was charging the wary Basque with his sword on high, determined to cut him in half, and the Basque, well protected by his pillow, was waiting for him, his sword also raised, and all the onlookers were filled with fear...

—*Don Quixote, I: VIII*

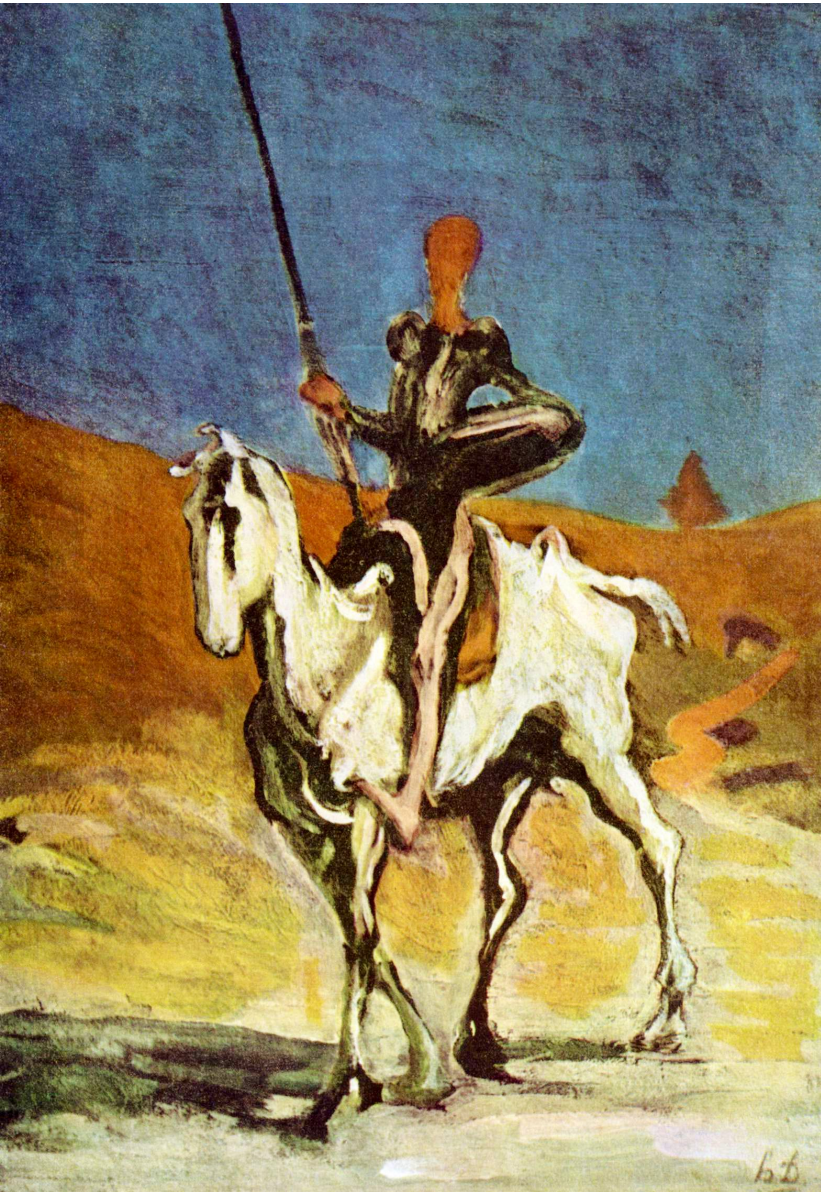


In the first notebook there was a very realistic depiction of the battle of Don Quixote and the Basque, both in the postures recounted in the history, their swords raised...

“

At the mule's feet there was a caption that read: *Don Sancho de Azpeitia*, and at the feet of Rocinante there was another that said: *Don Quixote*. Rocinante was wonderfully depicted, so long and lank, so skinny and lean. Next to him was Sancho Panza, holding the halter of his donkey and at its feet was another caption that said: *Sancho Zancas*. A few other details were worthy of notice, but they are of little importance and relevance to the true account of this history, for no history is bad if it is true.

—*Don Quixote, I: IX*



QUIXOTE: THEMES

- Truth or falsehood?
- Unreliable narrator who promises a truthful account. Will it be truth or a lie?
- Prologue: a simple honest account, or the mere *appearance* of authority via meaningless apparatus? Like: prologue, sayings in Latin, introductory poems...
- A choice between self-deception (the dream, illusion, fantasy) and cold, hard reality: Quixote or Sancho Panza?
- Fiction mediates this divide

“

Idle reader: Without my swearing to it, you can believe that I would like this book, the child of my understanding, to be the most beautiful, brilliant and discreet. But I have not been able to contravene the natural order: like begets like.

“

Desocupado lector: sin juramento me podrás creer que quisiera que este libro, como hijo del entendimiento, fuera el más hermoso, el más gallardo y más discreto que pudiera imaginarse. Pero no he podido yo contravenir al orden de naturaleza; que en ella cada cosa engendra su semejante.

“

I wanted only to offer it to you plain and bare, unadorned by a prologue or the endless catalogue of sonnets, epigrams, and laudatory poems that are usually placed at the beginnings of books.

**TWO
READINGS:
TRAGEDY, OR
COMEDY?**

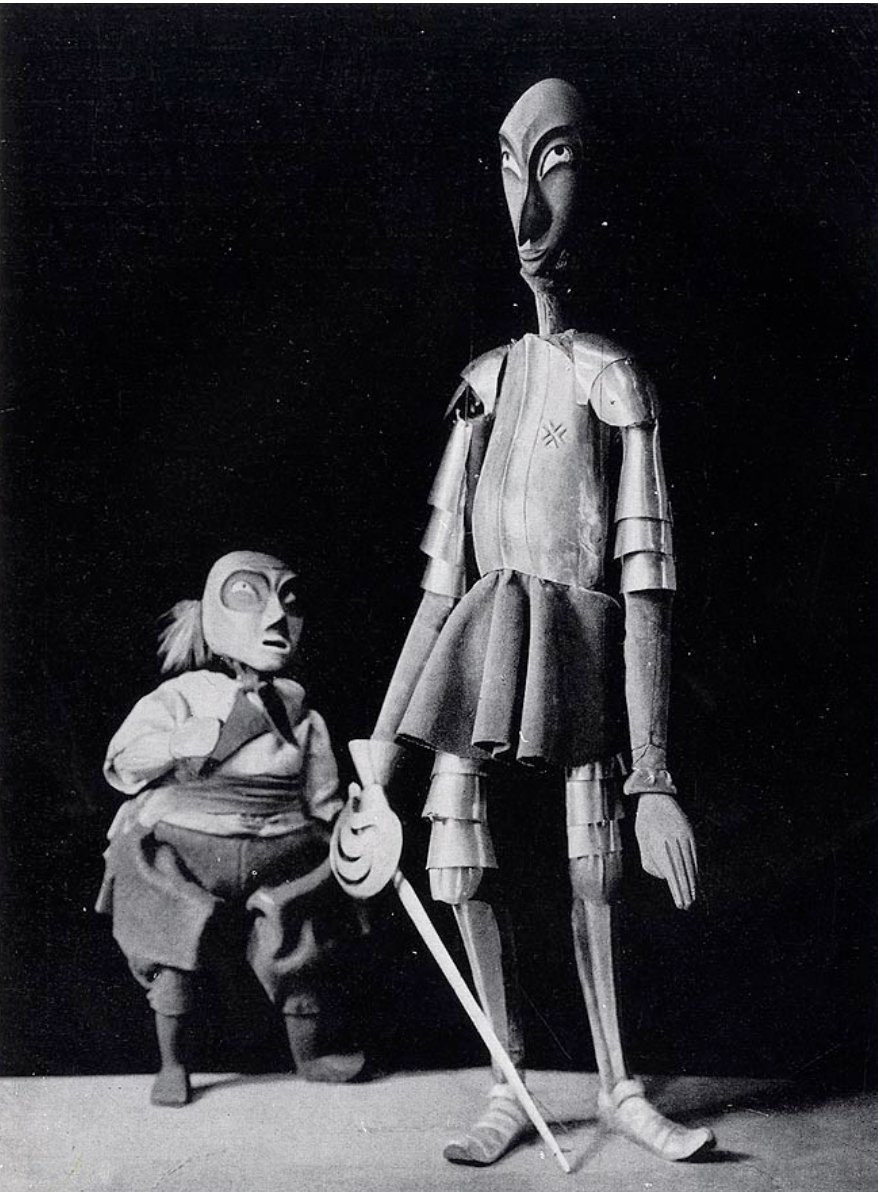
I think it's comedy



TRAGEDY

- ▶ Begins well—Quixote a simple bachelor who loves to read—but things take a turn for the worse: madness, beatings, vagabond wandering
- ▶ Tragedy imparts a moral lesson: literature is dangerous because it is false; it offers a seductive and idealistic fantasy that prevents us from seeing the hard, pragmatic truth
- ▶ Those seduced by “honor” and “chivalry” spend their lives “tilting at windmills,” pointlessly fighting battles that can’t be won
- ▶ We may laugh when we read, but we shouldn’t mistake the work’s purpose: a satire of the foolishness of those who *believe*





COMEDY

- ▶ We begin badly—Quixote is a poor bachelor with nothing and no one in his life—but things take a turn for the interesting
- ▶ Comedy liberates us from “moral lessons”: literature is *dangerous* because it is not reality, but rather hints at *what could be*
- ▶ Those seduced by literature are *quixotic*: quirky, idiosyncratic, idealistic, unpredictable — and possibly omens of the future
- ▶ The mismatch between the real La Mancha and Quixote’s vision is like the difference between Kansas and the Land of Oz

“If I were to show her [Dulcinea] to you,” replied Don Quixote, “where would the virtue be in your confessing so obvious a truth? The significance lies in *not* seeing and [yet] believing that truth.”

—*Don Quixote, I: IV*



IRONY AND MODERNITY

- The *Quixote* is modern in many ways, but perhaps most in its irony
- Like dramatic irony, author and reader are presumed to know while characters do not (see prologue); unlike Sophocles, the knowledge presupposed is worldly, cosmopolitan; it presumes detachment, amusement
- Opposed to cosmic irony, which presumes the world ought to be good and right; modern irony is cynical

Is this a new kind of irony? Self-referential irony, in which fiction acknowledges its fictive status, and we consciously allow ourselves to be tricked? We know that the “virtues” of the past (honor) are social/political constructions, but still love them. So we “believe at a distance.” This appears to be a distinctively modern consciousness: aware of its own deception, and delighted by it.

“ I wanted only to offer it to you plain and bare, unadorned by a prologue or the endless catalogue of sonnets, epigrams, and laudatory poems that are usually placed at the beginnings of books.

“Somewhere in La Mancha, in a place whose name I do not care to remember, a gentleman lived not long ago...

—*Don Quixote, I: I*

“

“I think, therefore I am.”

[*Cogito, ergo sum*]

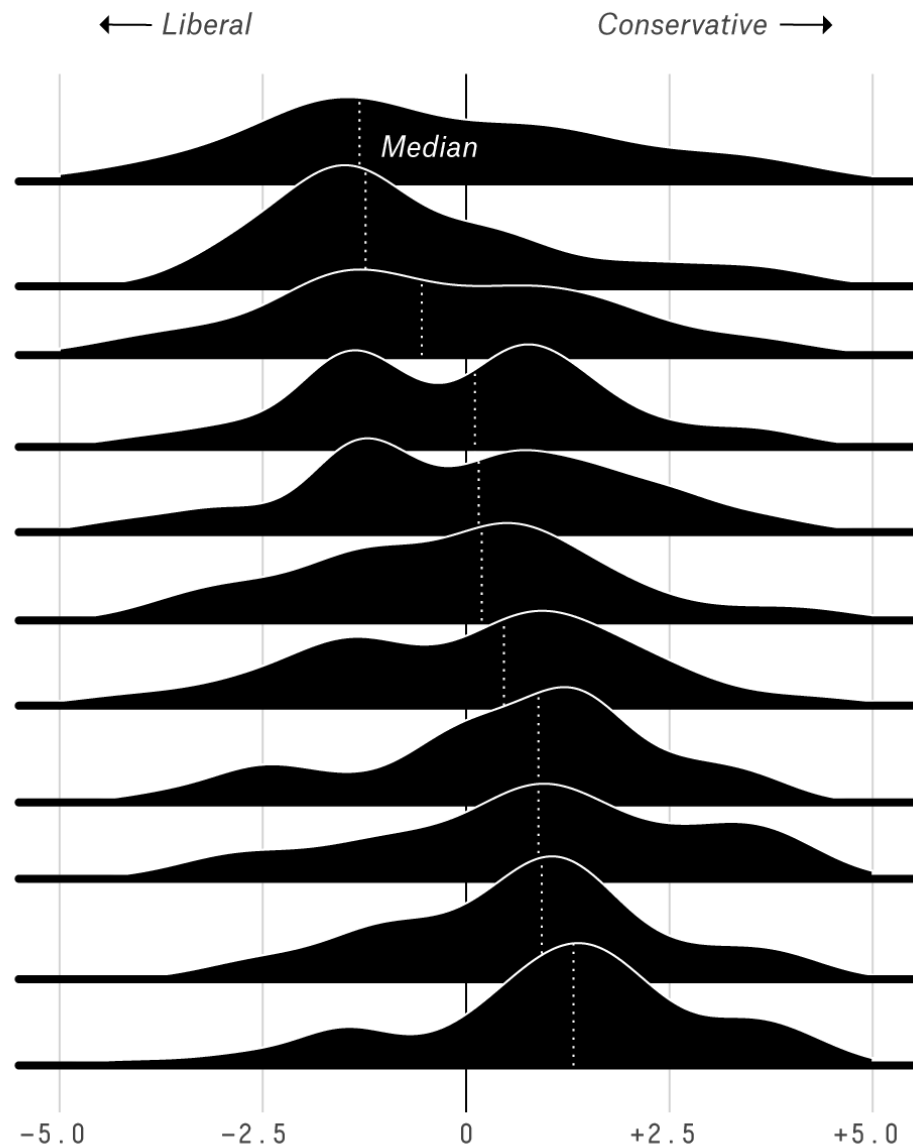
—Descartes, *Meditations*, 1641

“Moreover, I think, and therefore it is true, that the same Frestón the Wise who stole my books has turned these giants into windmills.”

—*Don Quixote, I: VIII*

POLITICS: LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE?

Maybe both?





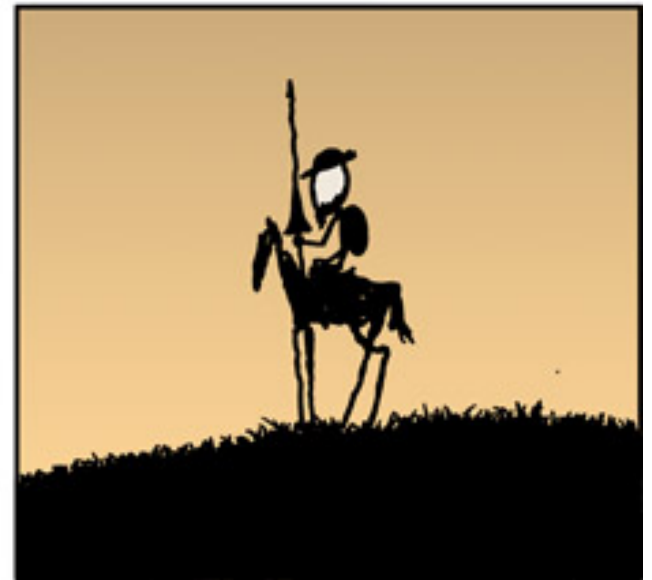
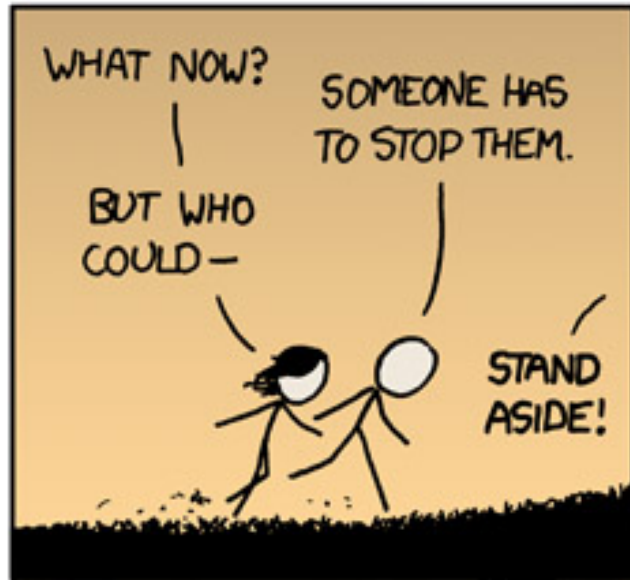
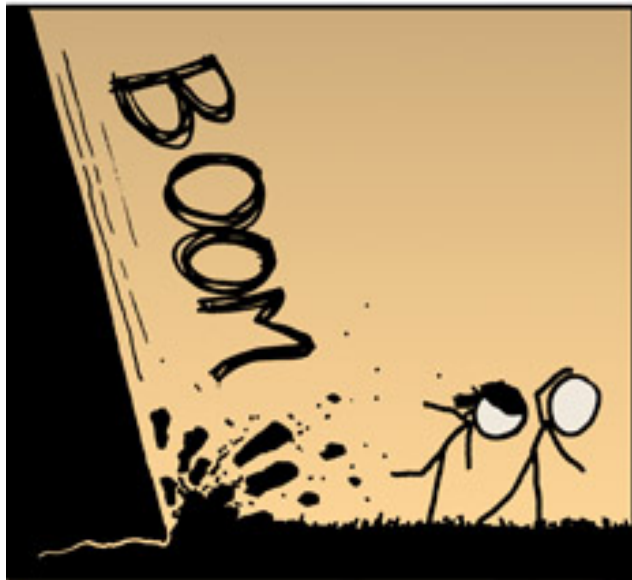


I'M ALL FOR GREEN ENERGY, BUT THOSE TURBINES CREEP ME OUT. THEY REMIND ME OF WAR OF THE WORLDS, OR THE TRIPOD BOOKS.

THEY ARE UNNERVING. I CAN'T SHAKE THE FEELING THAT AT ANY MOMENT THEY'LL —

{FRUMBLE}







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KIRK



DON QUIXOTE

TRUMP

