LOYOLA AND LA MANCHA

By PAUL EDWARDS

> All the doctors and surgeons . . . decided that the leg ought to be broken again and the bones re-set because they had been badly set the first time or had been broken on the road and were out of place and could not heal. This butchery was done again; during it as in all the others he suffered before or since, he never spoke a word or showed any sign of the pain other than to clench his fists (I p 22).[1]
>
> 'If I do not complain of the pain it is because a knight errant is not allowed to complain of any wounds, even though his entrails may be dropping through them (Q).'

The first statement, taut as his facial muscles must have been when the reset bones were systematically snapped, is from Ignatius Loyola's memoirs dictated by him towards the end of his life. The second, more startlingly expressed, is put by Cervantes into the mouth of Don Quixote. The two practitioners of the same stoic code had received their hurts in not dissimilar circumstances. Ignatius,

> when he was in a fortress that the French were attacking, although all the others saw clearly that they could not defend themselves and were of the opinion that they should surrender . . . gave so many reasons to the commander that he persuaded him at last to defend it; this was contrary to the view of all the knights (I p 21).

In the ensuing bombardment 'a shot hit him in the leg breaking it completely; since the ball passed through both legs, the other one was also badly damaged. When he fell, the defenders of the fortress surrendered immediately' (I p 21). The fictional Don had also come from his most celebrated engagement. Seeing thirty or forty windmills on the plain of Montiel and perceiving them as 'monstrous giants', he had dismissed Sancho Panza's common sense protests, as cavalierly as Loyola had disregarded the pro-

fessional calculations of his military colleagues. 'They are giants, and if you are afraid, go away and say your prayers, while I advance and engage them in fierce and unequal battle' (Q p 68). He had launched himself against the nearest windmill, thrusting his lance into the sail. 'But the wind turned it with such violence that it shivered his weapon in pieces, dragging the horse and his rider with it, and sent the knight rolling, badly injured, across the plain' (Q p 69).

I ask myself whose conduct was the more preposterous, that of the imaginary La Manchan or that of the historical Loyola? Quixote, with his delusions, is represented as seeing the windmills as giants. Ignatius, presumably, could in fact see the military superiority of the besiegers and had no business to sweep aside the views of colleagues, at least as experienced as himself, as though they were so many Sancho Panzas. However, his conduct was quite logical if you accept the premise that 'you should dismiss from your mind all thought of possible disasters, for the worst of them is death; and to die an honourable death is the best fortune of all' (Q p 628). But the quotation is from Don Quixote's exhortation to the young soldier. To vindicate the rationality of Loyola I have to appeal to the principles of La Mancha.

Lying immobile, and having suffered an additional martyrdom because he had insisted on his surgeons cutting away an unseemly protruding bone, the convalescent Ignatius, who 'was much given to reading worldly and fictitious books, usually called books of chivalry . . . asked to be given some of them to pass the time' (I p 23). It happened that as far as that brand of literature was concerned the ancestral cupboards were bare and so he fell back on his own imagination. He fantasized

> for two or three hours without realizing it; he imagined what he would do in the service of a certain lady, the means he would take to go to the country where she lived, the verses, the words he would say to her, the deeds he would do in her service. He became so conceited with this that he did not consider how impossible it would be because the lady was not of the lower nobility nor a countess nor a duchess, but her situation was higher than any of these (I p 23).

Again Ignatius was conforming to a pattern which would later be expounded by Quixote, 'It is impossible that there could be a

knight errant without a lady in any history whatever'. The Don also believed himself devoted to a lady of royal rank: 'her name is Dulcinea, (Q p 99) her country El Toboso, a village in La Mancha, her degree at least that of Princess' (Q p 100).

Surprisingly sustained as Ignatius's fantasies were, it was not to be expected that they could entertain him throughout the entire tedious day, and he was driven to reading, in the place of the unavailable books of knight errantry, a '*Life of Christ* and a book of the lives of the saints in Spanish'. From this point he dates his conversion. The substitution of these works of piety, it is widely known, led to his martial and romantic aspirations being replaced by pious desires of equal intensity. What frequently goes unrealised is the extent to which these new thoughts and imaginings continued to be influenced by the 'wordly and fictitious books' which he had ceased to read. Pondering the exploits of the saints he said to himself, 'St Dominic did this, therefore I have to do it. St Francis did this, therefore I have to do it' (I p 23) and, 'when he remembered some penance that the saints had done, he determined to do the same and more' (I p 30). This is the same mood of emulation which Cervantes ascribes to Don Quixote. 'He thought it fit and proper to turn knight errant and travel . . . following in every way the practice of the knights errant he had read of . . .' (Q p 33) and, 'It is for me to eclipse the most famous deeds they ever performed' (Q p 149).

The reformed Ignatius's projects and practices coincide remarkably in their details with those of the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance. One such detail is that saints and knights errant apparently use much the same diet sheet. 'He thought of going to Jerusalem, barefoot and eating nothing but herbs' (I p 24) and, 'he decided to ask to enter the Carthusian house in Seville . . . and there he would eat nothing but herbs' (I p 25). As for the knights, 'I do not say', replied Don Quixote, 'that knights errant are obliged to eat nothing but the fruit you mention, only that it and certain herbs they used to find in the field were their ordinary fare' (Q p 83). Sancho Panza understandably took a poor view of 'his ideas and rules about the knights errant keeping body and soul together on nothing but dry fruits and the herbs of the field' (Q p 548).

That Ignatius's attitudes still owed as much to the fiction of chivalry as, say, to the example of St Francis of Assisi, is evident

in his reaction to the Moor whom he met on the way to Montserrat. The Moor accepted the virginal conception of Christ, but he could not believe that Mary remained a virgin after giving birth. Ignatius, having argued with him in vain, reproached himself for having used only words. 'A desire came over him to go in search of the Moor and strike him with his dagger for what he had said' (I p 30). Cervantes's hero flares up, not on behalf of the Virgin Mary, but in defence of the reputation of the Queen Madasima, when young Cardenio declares that the 'arch-scoundrel, Master Elizabat, was Queen Madasima's lover'.

> 'That is false, I swear', replied Don Quixote in great wrath . . . 'and a most malicious, or rather villainous calumny . . . whoever says otherwise lies like an arrant scoundrel, and I will make him acknowledge it, on foot or horse, armed or unarmed, by night or day, or however he will' (Q p 198).

Fortunately for the Moor, and perhaps for Ignatius himself, the chivalric code had sufficiently relaxed its grip on his mind as to leave him uncertain of his obligations in this particular situation.

> Tired of examining what would be best to do and not finding any guiding principle, he decided as follows, to let the mule go with the reins slack as far as the place where the road separated. If the mule took the village road, he would seek out the Moor and strike him: if the mule did not go to the village but kept on the highway, he would let him be . . . the mule took the highway (I p 30).

This particular device for resolving an enigma is itself taken from the chivalrous romances, and we find Don Quixote using it (Q p 50).

Leaving the Moor unmolested, Ignatius proceeded to Montserrat to carry out a ritual, the inspiration for which he himself explicitly ascribes to his fictional models.

> As his mind was full of ideas from Amadis of Gaul and such books, some things similar to those came to mind. Thus he decided to watch over his arms all one night, without sitting down or going to bed, but standing a while and kneeling a while before the altar of Our Lady of Montserrat where he decided to leave his clothing and dress himself in the armour of Christ (I p 31-2).

Don Quixote launched his career with a similar ritual. He asked the innkeeper, whom he deludedly imagined to be the castellan of a great fortress, to permit him to watch his arms in the chapel and then raise him to the order of knighthood (Q p 41). The inn, of course, had no chapel, so the new recruit to the order of chivalry had to be content with

> keeping watch over his armour in a great yard which lay on one side of the inn. He gathered all the pieces together and laid them on a stone trough which stood beside a well. Then buckling on his shield, he seized his lance and began to pace jauntily up and down before the trough (Q p 43).

It is worth noting that the one romance which Ignatius mentions by name is that of Amadis of Gaul; Quixote makes the same selection (Q p 202).

> 'Amadis was the pole star, the morning star, the sun of all valiant knights and lovers, and all of us who ride beneath the banner of love and chivalry should imitate him' (Q p 202).

This is not the last resemblance which I might quote between the Knight of Loyola and the Knight of La Mancha. I prefer to leave the two novice heroes to set out on their parallel quests in their newly dedicated accoutrements; the one in his antique armour, the other with his pilgrim staff and a sack robe of his own design.

Once, after I had addressed a protestant group on the subject of 'The Spiritual Exercises' and stressed the similarities between the early Ignatius and Don Quixote, the chairperson commented that I had made Ignatius something of a 'figure of fun'. With that remark in mind, I diffidently wonder whether my present readers will also think that, by itemizing the resemblances between Ignatius and Cervantes's comic creation, I have done little service to either Ignatius or themselves. My comparison between the two will have served some purpose if it helps to dispose of the common misconception of the 'soldier saint', a phrase much used to qualify Loyola.

The wars of the nineteenth century were conducted very differently from the minor clashes in the Pyrenees in which Ignatius had his brief spell of 'action'. The industrialized nations were able to put some huge armies in the field, move them on their new

railway systems and furnish them with highly destructive weaponry from ever-expanding factories. Such armies had to be led, or rather managed, by highly trained professionals who had been schooled in military academies and then required to prove themselves in a long apprenticeship of junior command. Even the lowliest ranker needed to be meticulously drilled in the use and care of his weapons, in basic manoeuvres and conditioned to become what was almost a variant form of human life. Many countries imposed a period of military service even in peacetime upon every male citizen, so that in time of war he could be called to the colours already an effective fighting man. The ambitious young soldier needed to study Clausewitz, training manuals and his country's equivalent of the Queen's Regulations, not spend his time mooning over Amadis of Gaul. He needed to become an efficient, entirely dependable minor piece in a great machine. Individual recklessness was a liability; imagination and originality were qualities to be employed with great circumspection. Unfortunately, for some generations some people have seen the term 'soldier saint' in terms of the military academy and the barrack square, of masses of men moving with the precision of a well maintained machine. Ignatius, able to handle his weapons, but otherwise untrained, foolhardy and fanciful, flagrantly egotistical, whose notion of discipline allowed him to hector his commander into compliance, would have fitted onto the parade ground or into the Officer Corps about as well as an Iroquois brave.

The suggestion that I had made Ignatius a figure of fun still niggles, as I take him very seriously indeed. There must have been something wrong with my exposition. Is the comparison with Don Quixote demeaning to St Ignatius? Certainly the Don is a figure of fun, for Cervantes was writing an extended funny story and doing so with the felicity of genius. There is a magnificent incongruity in the aging gentleman of very slender means, with his ancient armour, a barber's brass basin for a helmet, mounted on a very sorry nag, believing it to be his mission to 'revive the Order of the Round Table, the Twelve Peers of France and The Nine Worthies and surpass them all with his perils, mighty feats and valorous exploits' (Q p 149). It was a brilliant stroke of Cervantes to offset his Don with the splendid earthiness of Sancho Panza, the high flown rhetoric of the over-literate gentleman with the racy gabble of the peasant, whose pithy rustic proverbs, relevant

and irrelevant, tumble out inexhaustibly. Equally inexhaustible is the author's ability to embroil the grotesque pair in farcical situations, the slapstick humour of which is not always to our taste. To have associated Ignatius of Loyola with the hero of such a chronicle is perhaps to have belittled a spiritual genius.

Reassurance comes as I gaze across my desk at Picasso's print with Don Quixote and his squire debouching onto the sun-baked plain of Montiel, where the great windmills turn. Kind friends sometimes give one a picture or ornament for one's room, and when the intermittent nomadism of a Jesuit's life calls for me to pack and move, most of them have to be left behind. Picasso's Don Quixote always goes with me. Because it makes me laugh? I have never laughed at it and I have never known anyone else to do so. Why did Picasso depict the scene? Because it is uproariously funny? If you know the print, I think that you will agree that his treatment is without any touch of farce. Why would Picasso, very much an artist of the twentieth century, the painter of 'Guernica', have found inspiration in a comic story written three hundred and fifty years before? Why does Tennessee Williams, an equally modern dramatist, produce the same venerable anachronism on the stage at the conclusion of *Camino real*? Certainly not to get a laugh.

Checking on the life of Cervantes in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1974 edition) I found *Don Quixote* described as 'after the bible, the world's most widely translated book'. Even to a fan like myself the statement came as a total surprise, as I should have expected that particular distinction to have been won by the works of Marx or Shakespeare. It is very significant that *Don Quixote* should even be a contender for the top of that particular international chart. Then, going from the *Encyclopedia Britannica* to the polyglot dictionaries, I discovered that an adjective, or adjectival phrase, based on the name 'Quixote' exists not only in the romance languages, but in teutonic and slav languages, and even in modern Greek.

'The Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance' has established himself in the language, mind and imagination of Europe, and therefore surfaces in the work of its artists—Picasso is by no means the only artist to illustrate the Don's adventures—and its writers. I ask once again whether this wide and enduring appeal is to be explained merely in terms of the work's farcical element, for humour does not translate easily from language to language, and

even less well from generation to generation. I think that I find the important clue in this whole matter in the text itself and in a most unexpected quarter, from the mouth of Sancho Panza. Sancho, an illiterate yokel, always careful of his skin and mindful of his belly, not too nice about the appropriation of cash, is the deliberately drawn antithesis of his master. The knight's mind is forever soaring into the high orbit of his imaginings, utterly beyond material considerations and common-sense expostulations; that of the squire is entirely earthbound and correspondingly immune, apparently, to romantic visions and high-minded prompting. Nevertheless, quite late in the book, in the course of his interrogation by the Duchess, he blurts out the following avowal:

> '. . . I should have left my master days ago if I had been wise. But that was my lot, and my ill-luck. I can do nothing else; I have to follow him; we are of the same village: I've eaten his bread; I love him dearly; I am grateful to him. He gave me his ass colts, and what is more I am faithful: and it's impossible for anything to part us except the man with the pick and shovel' (Q p 687)

The key words are 'I am faithful'. Here we have the root concept of feudalism, the commitment of a man to his lord, the pledge of fealty. Material considerations are present: 'I've eaten his bread . . . he gave me his ass colts', but the obligation which Sancho now feels quite transcends them. Self-interest is irrelevant: 'I should have left my master days ago'. The commitment is absolute and life-long: 'It's impossible for anything to part us except the man with the pick and shovel'. Don Quixote would have used more exalted languge, but he could not have bound himself more straitly. Intimate association with the knight has recruited even Sancho to the chivalric code.

Also of great significance is the phrase 'I love him'. Such is the response which Quixote has, in the end, been able to conjure from this very unpromising material. The Don has also, I would suggest, had much the same effect on generations of readers. The sorry figure, originally meant by his creator merely to amuse them, is able to evoke their compassion, their affection, their admiration, and even perhaps their wistful regret. We, or some of us, from finding the Knight's delusions farcical and even tiresome, pass to honouring him for his highmindedness, his noble eloquence, his

invariable courtesy, his perfect dedication, his intrepidity, his unhesitating response in the imagined presence of a wrong to be redressed, or of an evil force—no matter how formidable—to be challenged.

I think that we begin to regret that his pinnacled tower is only a sordid inn, the highborn maidens but serving wenches—and trollops to boot—that Mambrino's helmet is in fact a barber's brass basin. Our regret, I suspect, is not on behalf of the fictitious Quixote, but on behalf of the world and for ourselves who must pass a lifetime in it. A world where evils are not eliminated in a short bout of sword-play, where the champion of the wronged and the weak has no magic sword to assure him of victory, no precious balsam to heal his wounds in the twinkling of an eye. As I contemplate the fascination that Quixote has exercised over european minds throughout more than three centuries, I remember a phrase in a novel of Charles Morgan. A man, trying to convey to his sister the devotion he had felt as a schoolboy for a woman now dead, reverts to the language of the nursery: 'She worked my deep magics'. I suggest that, often against our will, perhaps only intermittently and partially, Don Quixote 'works our deep magics'. The stature of Ignatius Loyola is in no way diminished by associating him with a figure of such considerable and persistent evocative power.

I left Ignatius on the road from Montserrat to Manresa. He was also on the way to sloughing off his naive imitation of his models, knightly or saintly. At Manresa he decided to include meat in his diet; he resumed the cutting of his nails and the trimming of his hair. This process continued until, in externals, he became so sober and unremarkable that someone ignorant of his past might well ascribe his demeanour to a prosaic and unimaginative disposition. Four hundred years later, as a jesuit novice, I did *not* have to spend the eve of my vow-taking in vigil in the Lady Chapel, the symbols of my life in the world (my school prefect's cap? my Higher School Certificates?) lying on the altar. We were all meekly and routinely abed at the normal 'lights out'. The Society of Jesus not only abstains in its domestic life from the dramatic gesture and romantic symbol; it can give the impression of never having heard of such things.

The gradual adoption of an entirely unremarkable exterior is the least important aspect of Ignatius's maturing. Far more import-

ant is the painstaking reflection which precedes so many of his decisions. Quixote's disordered mind spontaneously wrenches every situation into the shape of some knightly adventure in the romances, and at once dictates the appropriate knightly response. Ignatius ponders, observes, prays at length, humbly seeks counsel. The next decade is one of revision of behaviour, of modification of immediate objectives and methods, of adjustments to experience and to the necessities of his situation. How extraordinarily willing Ignatius was to learn is shown by his spending eleven years studying at Barcelona, Alcalá and Paris, beginning in his thirty-third year. That is a considerable slice out of a man's most active years, especially when the contemporary life span was, on average, brief; Ignatius actually had twenty-one years in which to employ the results of those eleven years' study.

At this stage there is a great gap between the studious reflective Loyola and Don Quixote, with his fixed delusions and instantaneous reactions: yet the influence of Amadis of Gaul and his peers has by no means been sloughed off with the fine gear and the gallant day-dreams of past years. At the end of his studies in Paris, Ignatius with his group of disciples decided that they would go 'to Jerusalem to spend our lives in the service of souls' (I p 80). This, of course, is a spiritualized version of medieval chivalry's most honoured quest, the crusade. We also see the older, shrewder, more flexible Ignatius, in that they have a fall-back plan: to offer themselves to the pope.

Even here we would be justified in seeing a band of spiritual knights errant trooping into the court to offer the sword of their preaching in combat against the ogres of sin, heresy and ignorance which were laying waste the fair realm of Christendom. When the companions, who had never been able to set sail for Jerusalem, put together a summary statement of their proposed organization it began: 'Whoever wishes to soldier under the standard of the cross . . .' Again, this is the language of high chivalry, the call to the crusade, containing distant echoes of the horn of Roland in the Pass of Roncesvalles.

When 'the companions' so expressed their common aims, Ignatius was in his forty-eighth year. He was still expressing himself in the idiom of the books of chivalry. More importantly, the thoughts and feelings behind the words were still being shaped and coloured by the same literature. This is very evident in some

parts of the Spiritual Exercises, especially the meditation entitled the Kingdom of Christ. The expression 'the Kingdom' has good scriptural warrant, but it is neither from scripture nor from actual history that Ignatius draws his model:

> First Point: This will be to place before my mind a human king chosen by God our Lord himself, to whom all christian princes and people pay homage and obedience.
> Second Point: This will be to consider the address this king makes to all his subjects with the words 'It is my will to conquer all the lands of the infidel. Therefore, whoever wishes to join me in this enterprise must be content with the same food, drink, clothing, etc., as mine. So, too, he must work with me by day, and watch with me by night, etc., that as he has a share in the toil with me, afterwards he may share in the victory with me' (Exx 92,93).

Charlemagne and his successors may have aspired to the leadership of all Christendom; they never wielded it. The intimate comradeship offered by Ignatius's king does have historical precedent, although I have never read of its being on general offer from any emperor. Such comradeship is at the very origins of feudalism. It consisted in the total commitment, the complete personal adherence of a band of fighting men to their leader; it was a species of social symbiosis such that they shared the same air, the same food, the same dangers, the same good fortune and the same death. The *thegn*, or *gesith*, or knight who lived by the highest traditions of his code, never survived his lord in battle, but fought to the death by his fallen master. This relationship is theoretically at the roots of our own peerage, whose members were originally conceived as having something of such a personal bond with the sovereign. Ignatius, needless to say, had read of the institution not in early teutonic history but in the romanticized versions linked with King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table and Charlemagne and his Paladins. It had so saturated his mind that he inevitably expresses his most characteristic meditations in that particular idiom.

I have already pointed out that in Cervantes's novel Sancho Panza finds himself drawn into exactly the traditional, personal, feudal relationship which St Ignatius is appealing to here. I drew attention to the phrases: 'I love him dearly', and 'I'm faithful', 'so it's impossible for anything to part us . . .' They sum up very well the dispositions towards Christ which St Ignatius would like

to see in the exercitant at the conclusion of this particular meditation. But perhaps I am compounding the *faux pas* of comparing Loyola with the La Manchan, with the graver impertinence of asking the exercitant to associate himself with Sancho Panza.

Another meditation, characteristically ignatian, is the one called 'On Two Standards' which is also imbued with the language of chivalry. It asks the exercitant to imagine 'a great plain, comprising the whole region about Jerusalem, where the sovereign Commander-in Chief of all the good is Christ, our Lord, and another plain, about the region of Babylon, where the chief of the enemy is Lucifer'. 'Babylon' at least has a decent biblical ring about it and one might think that Ignatius has in mind here the cosmic battles of the Book of Revelation, did one not know that he had mooned over the legends of chivalry for many years before he began to study the scriptures. Ignatius's exemplar is much more likely to be Charlemagne in *The song of Roland*, assembling his host to avenge Roland and Oliver, or even—though this is more arcane—the epic clash between the moslem emperor Alifanfaron and the christian king Pentaplis, which promptly sprang to the mind of Don Quixote when he misinterpreted the dust clouds raised by two flocks of sheep as 'churned up by a prodigious army of various and innumerable nations' (Q p 134).

I would also like to suggest that the influence of the chivalrous romances over the later Ignatius was not limited to providing him with a handful of phrases or a few stereotyped situations, but that his prolonged reading of the books of chivalry confirmed certain facets of his character and outlook, even where it did not originate them. One such characteristic was his fearlessness: 'he never had any kind of fear' (I p 71). This may have been innate. It was surely confirmed by his admiration for so many 'fearless' heroes. Another such characteristic was his tenacity of purpose. The mature Ignatius is capable of modifying his objectives, and even more so his means, but in pursuit of his ultimate objective he never flags. A knight errant must follow his quest, no matter how difficult, no matter what the hardships and dangers and despite the most alluring inducements to abandon it. How else but through such adversities could his status as a hero be established? So that apprentice knight errant of God, the exercitant, prays to imitate Christ 'in bearing all wrong and all abuse and all poverty'. Three times the word 'all'. How totally exigent he is! Of course the hero of the romances had commonly set his heart upon the king's

daughter, had offered to confront in arms the greatest menace to the realm, had shown himself entirely courageous. So Ignatius, still unweaned from these romances, aspired to serve a king's daughter, would not hear of surrender and when in agony would not allow himself the slightest sound of pain. His standards were of the highest, were absolute, and it is to those same standards in the spiritual order that the second and subsequent weeks of the Exercises invite the exercitant.

Ignatius does not suggest that we attack windmills imagining them to be giants. He wants us to engage real giants in lifelong battle, having first meditated on just how powerful, ugly and malevolent they are. He asks us to be Quixotes without the illusions. What a formula with which to work our 'deep magics'. It has often succeeded.

NOTES

[1] In the bracketed page references in this article, (I) refers to *The autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola* trans. Joseph O'Callaghan (Harper Torchbooks, 1974), and (Q) refers to *The adventures of Don Quixote* trans. J. M. Cohen (Penguin Books, 1950).