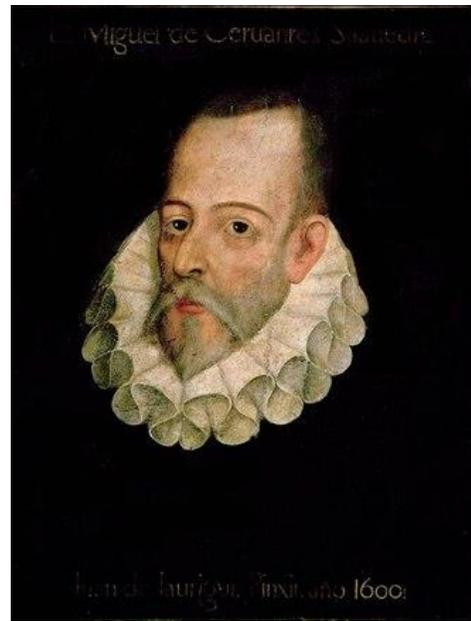


Shakespeare, Cervantes and Francis Bacon

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"William Shakespeare," attributed to John Taylor; possibly Cervantes, attributed to Juan Martínez de Jáuregui y Aguilar; the names of Cervantes and Jáuregui were added much later and the painting is lost.

With its preposterous inns full of belated characters from Italian storybooks and its preposterous mountains teeming with lovelorn poetasters disguised as Arcadian shepherds, the picture Cervantes paints of the country is about as true and typical of seventeenth-century Spain as Santa Claus is true and typical of the twentieth-century North Pole. Indeed, Cervantes seems to know Spain as little as Gogol did central Russia... throughout these adventures there is a mass of monstrous inaccuracies at every step. The author avoids descriptions that would be particular and might be verified. It is quite impossible to follow these rambles in central Spain across four of six provinces, in the course of which until we reach Barcelona in the northeast one does not meet with a single known town or cross a single river. Cervantes's ignorance of places is wholesale and absolute, even in respect of Argamasilla in the La Mancha district, which some consider the more or less definite starting point.

Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Don Quixote*

By common consent, the most important author in the English language is William Shakespeare (1564-1616); in Spanish, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547-1616). These twin colossi purportedly perished just days apart, traditionally both on St George's Day, 23 April – England and Spain were on different calendars – now designated World Book Day. Astonishingly, nothing was published in either country to mark the loss; no eulogy, no comment from contemporary writers, not a word is

found even in private correspondence. On the 400th anniversary of this momentous non-event, celebrated literary rebel Salman Rushdie [wrote the following](#):

We don't know if they were aware of each other, but they had a good deal in common, beginning right there in the "don't know" zone, because they are both men of mystery; there are missing years in the record and, even more tellingly, missing documents.

Of course Rushdie knows, or ought to, that Shakespeare cannot have been unaware of Cervantes; he is widely believed to have collaborated with John Fletcher on the lost play *Cardenio*, based on a story from *Don Quixote*. Even rejecting this as spurious or extracanonical, two of Shakespeare's other collaborators, Thomas Middleton and George Wilkins, as well as his friend Ben Jonson, alluded to or borrowed from *Quixote* long before the English translation appeared in 1612; Francis Beaumont's *Knight of the Burning Pestle* was first performed in 1607. But setting all this aside, Rushdie attaches special significance to unidentified "missing documents"; is he propounding a conspiracy theory based on their destruction? Assuredly not:

Neither man left behind much personal material. Very little to nothing in the way of letters, work diaries, abandoned drafts; just the colossal, completed oeuvres. "The rest is silence." Consequently, both men have been prey to the kind of idiot theories that seek to dispute their authorship.

This is unfair; in the case of Shakespeare, he left a will which provided his widow silver plate and famously "my second best bed." Some people wonder why he neglected to mention any books, nor the eighteen plays unpublished until the First Folio, seven years after his death; but that is hardly reason to call them idiots.

A cursory internet search "reveals", for example, that not only did Francis Bacon write Shakespeare's works, he wrote *Don Quixote* as well. (My favourite crazy Shakespeare theory is that his plays were not written by him but by someone else of the same name.)

This is standard procedure when defending established but tenuous narratives: ignore genuine problems and create an absurd straw man theory, then abuse the straw man in place of real argument. No one has seriously suggested there were two William Shakespeares or Shaksperes, it is only an old joke, but the biggest eyesore in English history is the fact that not one letter from him survives. For a man who purportedly wrote or co-wrote thirty-seven plays, 154 sonnets, and various other poems including two of insufferable length, this is an obvious absurdity, only one of many surrounding the Bard.

Cervantes and Shakespeare almost certainly never met, but the closer you look at the pages they left behind the more echoes you hear.

Ah, now we are getting somewhere. Rushdie only discusses parallels in the most general sense, but the following, so far as I can determine, have not been remarked previously.

DQ II: [T]o speak wittily and write conceits belongs only to good wits: the cunningest part in a play is the fool's, because he must not be a fool that would well counterfeit to seem so.

Twelfth Night:

Fool. Are you not mad indeed? Or do you but counterfeit?

DQII: Hunger is the best sauce in the world
Two Noble Kinsmen: Your hunger needs no sauce
Macbeth: my more-having would be as a sauce
To make me hunger more
Julius Caesar: Rudeness is a sauce to his good wit,
Which gives men stomach to digest his words
With greater appetite

DQ: 'I'll hold a wager,' quoth Sancho, 'the dog-bolt hath made a gallimaufry.'

Merry Wives of Windsor:

He wooes both high and low, both rich and poor,
Both young and old, one with another, Ford;
He loves the gallimaufry...

Winter's Tale:

Master, there is three carters, three shepherds,
three neat-herds, three swine-herds, that have made
themselves all men of hair, they call themselves
Saltiers, and they have a dance which the wenches
say is a gallimaufry of gambols

These are fairly commonplace, but the following parallels in Bacon are more complex; one of the earliest English allusions to Cervantes is found in *The Advancement of Learning*, registered in September 1605, eight months after *DQ I* went on sale in Madrid. Cervantes wrote *la Epica tambien puede escrebirse en prosa, como en verso*; "epics can also be written in prose, as in verse." Bacon's *Advancement*: "feigned history... may be styled as well in prose as in verse." Bacon's *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (1623) again echoes Cervantes on poetry:

[Narrative poetry] raises the mind and carries it aloft, accommodating the shows of things to the desires of the mind, not (like reason and history) buckling and bowing down the mind to the nature of things.

DQII: [I]t is one thing to write like a poet, and another like an historian: the poet may say or sing things not as they were, but as they ought to have been; and the historian must write things, not as they ought to be, but as they have been, without adding or taking away aught from the truth.

Another parallel in *De Augmentis* alludes to the statement, going back to Aristotle's *Physics*, that "art perfects nature":

[Poetry] is not art, but abuse of art, when instead of perfecting nature it perverts her.

DQ II: [A]rt goes not beyond nature, but only perfects it; so that nature and art mixed together, and art with nature, make an excellent poet.

DQ: I'll tell you, Sancho, this desire of honour is an itching thing. What dost thou think cast Horatius from the bridge all armed into deep Tiber? What egged Curtius to launch himself into the lake? What made Mutius burn his hand? What forced Caesar against all the soothsayers to pass the Rubicon? And, to give

you more modern examples, what was it bored those ships, and left those valorous Spaniards on ground, guided by the most courteous Cortez in the New World? All these and other great and several exploits are, have been, and shall be the works of fame, which mortals desire as a reward and part of the immortality which their famous acts deserve...

Bacon, "Of Fame": Fame is of that force, as there is scarcely any great action, wherein it hath not a great part...

Bacon's *Wisdom of the Ancients* (1609) anticipates *DQ II*:

the path of virtue lies straight between excess on the one side, and defect on the other. And no wonder that excess should prove the bane of Icarus, exulting in juvenile strength and vigour; for excess is the natural vice of youth, as defect is that of old age; and if a man must perish by either, Icarus chose the better of the two; for all defects are justly esteemed more depraved than excesses. There is some magnanimity in excess, that, like a bird, claims kindred with the heavens; but defect is a reptile, that basely crawls upon the earth.

DQII:

[V]alour is a virtue betwixt two vicious extremes, as cowardice and rashness; but it is less dangerous for him that is valiant to rise to a point of rashness than to fall or touch upon the coward. For, as it is more easy for a prodigal man to be liberal than a covetous, so it is easier for a rash man to be truly valiant than a coward to come to true valour . . . for it sounds better in the hearer's ears, "Such a knight is rash and hardy," than "Such a knight is fearful and cowardly." "I say, signior," answered Don Diego [...] "if the statutes and ordinances of knight-errantry were lost, they might be found again in your breast, as in their own storehouse and register."

This has another parallel in the *Advancement of Learning*: "certain critics are used to say hyperbolically, that if all sciences were lost, they might be found in Virgil." Yet another is in the fact that Bacon's notebook (or register) of proverbs and phrases, forty-seven in Spanish and two found in *Quixote*, he called his *Promus*, or storehouse. It is hard to believe these parallels pass unnoticed by academic scholars; another overlooked anticipation of *Quixote* is found in Ben Jonson's *Poetaster* (1601), said to portray Francis Bacon in the character of Ovid Junior:

Ovid Sr. Are these the fruits of all my travail and expenses? Is this the scope and aim of thy studies? Are these the hopeful courses wherewith I have so long flattered my expectation from thee? Verses? Poetry? Ovid, whom I thought to see the pleader [lawyer], become Ovid the play-maker?

Ovid Jr. No, sir.

Ovid Sr. Yes, sir; I hear of a tragedy of yours coming forth for the common players there, call'd Medea . . . What? shall I have my son a stager now?

Likewise, *DQ* portrays a father who is upset because his son, instead of studying law, spends all his time studying poetry:

'I, Sir Don Quixote,' answered the gentleman, 'have a son, whom if I had not, perhaps you would judge me more happy than I am, — not that he is so bad, but because not so good as I would have him. He is about eighteen years of age, six of which he hath spent in Salamanca, learning the tongues, Greek and Latin: and, when I had a purpose that he should fall to other sciences, I found him so besotted with poesy, and that science, if so it may be called, that it is not possible to make him look upon the law, which I would have him study, nor divinity, the queen of all sciences [...] All the day long he spends in his criticisms,

whether Homer said well or ill in such a verse of his Iliads, whether Martial were bawdy or no in such an epigram, whether such or such a verse in Virgil ought to be understood this way or that way. Indeed, all his delight is in these aforesaid poets, and in Horace, Persius, Juvenal, and Tibullus...

The case for Bacon's involvement in *DQ* was first made by a lawyer and MP, Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence, whose substantial library included a 1612 English *Quixote* with corrections in what is alleged to be Bacon's handwriting (the book is still held at the University of London and should be published in facsimile). Durning-Lawrence believed that the English version is really the original, and the Spanish edition published seven years earlier is a translation. Anomalies in translation suggest that this may be the case; for example the title, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quixote de la Mancha* (The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of the Mancha), is bombastically inflated to *The History of the Valorous and Wittie Knight-Errant Don Quixote of the Mancha*. Of course *Quixote*, the first part of which was published just after the first printing of *Hamlet*, purports to be a translation from the Arabic of Cid Hamet Ben Engeli; in the famous prologue, Cervantes says he is "in show a father, yet in truth but a step-father to Don Quixote." This is a playful device, an early example of what today is called metafiction, but in 1613, between the two parts of *Quixote*, Cervantes published his *Novelas emplejares* (Exemplary Novels), in which he describes himself as

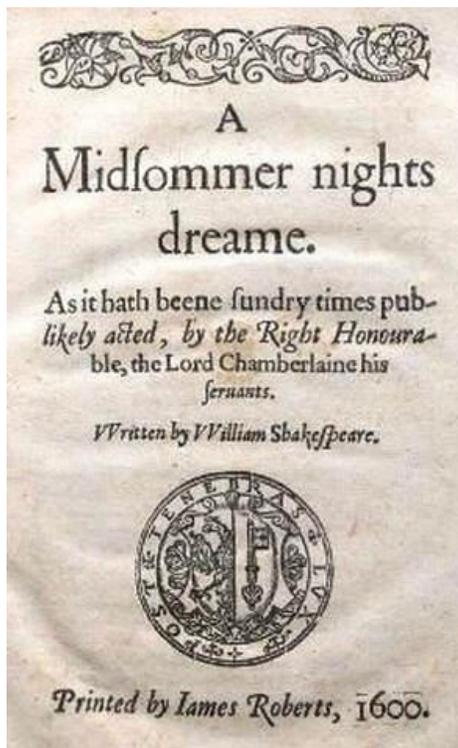
"the author of *Galatea*, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, *The Journey to Parnassus*, which he wrote in imitation of Cesare Caporali Perusino, and other works which are current among the public, and perhaps without the author's name."

Cervantes is not credited with any pseudonymous publications, and it is strange that, being poor (as he died), after the first part of *Quixote*, an international success, he should have spent time of this much inferior work *Novelas emplajares*. Indeed, *Quixote* stands in sharp contrast, or rather towers over the other works of Cervantes, which are seldom read and generally acknowledged as failures – some have not even been translated into English. In *Attributing Authorship*, Harold Love cites Saint Jerome on determining the canonicity of scripture: "if among several books attributed to an author one is inferior to the others, it must be withdrawn from the list of the author's works." The case of *Quixote* represents the inverse of this rule. As with William Shakspere of Stratford, what we know of the life of Cervantes stands in sharp contrast to his masterpiece of serene wisdom; and as with Shakespeare, he had an unusually good grasp of history, specifically English history.



Let us consider for a moment what would happen if it were proved, or rather admitted, that Francis Bacon was in fact responsible, at least in part, for Shakespeare and *Quixote*. These contributions would be added to his already remarkable achievements, including the inventions of scientific method and binary code (were you taught that in school? I wasn't either). The educated world would find that it is ignorant of its greatest genius, embarrassment would be acute and widespread, and substantial parts of today's academic and literary establishments would never recover—as one example, the most famous philosophers of science in the twentieth century, Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn, plagiarized Bacon liberally while pretending to reject him ([Urbach 1987](#), [Desroches 2006](#)). This would be a Great Reset for those who deserve it most; perhaps they can learn to code, but they would still be relying on Bacon's invention.

Francis Carr's *Who Wrote Don Quixote?* (2005) has a chapter on parallels between Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Bacon (reproduced here with the permission of Philip Carr).



Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream* (title page, 1619 "False Folio" falsely dated 1600): *Post tenebras lux*: "After darkness, light"

DQ (title page, first edition Spanish 1605): *Post tenebras spero lucem*: "After darkness I hope for light."

Merchant of Venice: All that glisters is not gold.

DQ: All is not gold that glisters.

Bacon, *Promus*: All is not gold that glisters.

DQ: He that gives quickly, gives twice.

Bacon, *Promus*: He who gives quickly, gives twice.

DQ: Look not a given horse in the mouth.

Bacon, *Promus*: To look a given horse in the mouth.

DQ: Might overcomes right.

Bacon, *Promus*: Might overcomes right.

Shakespeare, *Henry IV Part II*: O God, that right should overcome this might

DQ: The nearer the Church, the further from God

Bacon, *Promus*: The nearer the church, the further from God

Shakespeare, *Richard III*: And thus I clothe my naked villainy, and seem a saint when most I play the devil.

DQ: One swallow makes not a summer.

Bacon, *Promus*: One swallow maketh no summer.

Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*: The swallow follows not the summer.

DQ: Everyone is the son of his own works.

Every man is the Artificer of his own fortune.

Bacon, "Of Fortune": But chiefly the mould of a man's fortune is in his own hands.

Shakespeare, *King Lear*: When we are sick in Fortune – often the surfeit of our own behavior.

DQ: Statutes not kept are the same as if they were not made.

Bacon, Note to Queen Elizabeth: The cessation and abstinence to execute these unnecessary laws do mortify the execution of such as are wholesome.

Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*: In time the rod becomes more mocked than feared.

DQ: He who does not rise with the sun does not enjoy the day.

Bacon, *Promus*: To rise early is very healthy. *Diliculo surgere saluberrimum est.*

Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*: *Diliculo surgere*, thou knowest.

DQ: God's help is better than early rising.

Bacon, *Promus*: It is better to have God's help than to keep getting up early. (in Spanish)

DQ: He that is warned is half armed.

Bacon, *Promus*: Warned and half armed. (Also occurs in Spanish)

DQ: I know where my shoe wrings me.

Bacon, *Promus*: Myself can tell best where my shoe wrings me.

Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*: Revealing day through every cranny spies.

Bacon, Northumberland MS: Revealing day through every cranny peepes

DQ: Through narrow chinkes and cranyes

Shakespeare, *Merry Wives of Windsor*: As good luck would have it (first occurrence)

DQ: As Sancho's ill luck would have it

DQ: Without a wink of sleep

Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*: I have not slept one wink. (first occurrence)

DQ: What put you in this pickle?

Shakespeare, *The Tempest*: How cam'st thou in this pickle?

Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*: If you desire the spleen, and will laugh yourself into stitches, follow me. (first occurrence, "in stitches")

DQ: Ready to split his sides with laughing.

DQ: Ill luck seldom comes alone.

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*: When sorrows come, they come not single spies, but in battalions.

DQ: You are as like the Knight I conquered, as one egg is to another.

The Devil take me (thought Sancho to himself at this instant) if this Master of mine be not a Divine; or if not, as like one as one egg is to another.

Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*: We are almost as like as eggs

DQ: Sweet meat must have sour sauce.

Shakespeare, Sonnet 118: Being full of your nere cloying sweetness

To bitter sauces did I frame my feeding.

DQ: Time out of mind

Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*: Time out of mind

DQ: I was so free with him as not to mince the matter

Shakespeare, *Othello*: Thy honesty and love doth mince this matter

DQ: Walls have ears.

Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*: No remedy when walls hear without warning.

DQ: The weakest go to the walls.

Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*: The weakest goes to the wall.

DQ: Murder will out.

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*: Murder will speak

Shakespeare, *1 Henry VI*, *3 Henry VI*: God and Saint George!

DQ: God and Saint George!

DQ: comparisons are odious.

Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*: Comparisons are odorous: palabras, neighbor Verges. (palabras = Spanish, words)

DQ: A good name is better than riches.

Shakespeare, *Othello*: He that filches from me my good name robs me of that which not enriches him and makes me poor indeed.

DQ: It is such, as is able to make marble relent.

Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*: For stone at rain relenteth.

DQ: They can expect nothing but their labour for their pains.

Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*: I had my labour for my travail.

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*: anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature

DQ: Seeing the comedy, as Tully affirms, ought to be a mirror of man's life, a pattern of manners, and an image of truth

DQ: Dulcinea of Tobosa, the subject on which the extremities of all commendations may rightly be conferred, how hyperbolically soever it may be.

Bacon, "Of Love": The speaking in a perpetual hyperbole is comely in nothing but in love.

DQ: An untruth is so much the more pleasing, by how much nearer it resembles the truth.

Bacon, "Of Truth": A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure...

DQ: He's a muddled fool, full of lucid intervals.

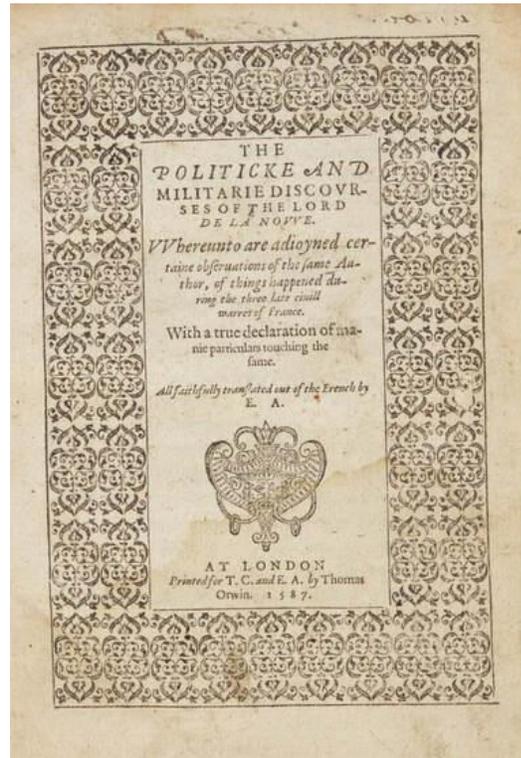
Bacon, *History of Henry VII*: Lucid intervals and happy pauses.

DQ: Here my exploits suffer'd a total Eclipse.

Bacon, *History of Henry VII*: She hath indeed endured strange eclipse.

Shakespeare, *Sonnet 107*: The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured

And the sad augurs mock their own presage...



Discours politiques et militaires, 1587, Basel; English translation, 1587

Further parallels are found in the *Discours politiques et militaires* (Political and Military Discourses), purportedly written by François de la Noue and published in both French and English in 1578. This is a large book, and its near-simultaneous publication in two languages raises questions. The dedication to the 1612 *DQ* begins:

Having translated some five or six years ago, the History of Don Quixote, out of the Spanish tongue into English, in the space of forty days—being thereunto more than half enforced through the importunity of a very dear friend that was desirous to understand the subject—after I had given him once a view thereof, I cast it aside, where it lay long time neglected in a corner, and so little regarded by me, as I never once set hand to review or correct the same. Since when, at the entreaty of others my friends, I was content to let it come to light, conditionally that someone or other would peruse and amend the errors escaped, my many affairs hindering me from undergoing that labour...

The dedication to the *Discours politiques et militaires* sounds remarkably similar to Shelton's:

I chanced to lay my hand upon a heap of papers thrown aside in a corner, as things not regarded, and finding that they deserved to be more diligently gathered together, I began very gladly to read them over; but he would not suffer me, saying they were but scribblings whereon he had employed the most tedious hours of his leisure during his long and straight imprisonment; likewise that among them there was nothing worth the sight, because his continual exercise in warfare wherein he had employed himself had denied him all opportunity to endite well, as also that in these discourses especially (as never meaning other than to pass away the time) he had taken no pains with the polishing or filing of them, and that he was determined never to take them in hand again: so as at that instant I could not obtain anything of him. But the taste that I had then gotten did so set me on edge that all his denial and despising of them did the more confirm me in my desire, neither did I ever ease until by sundry means I had gotten sometime one and sometime another, so long till at length I had gathered all this book.

Afterward having more carefully considered of the value of my bootie, accounting it more precious and profitable than to be kept in the bottom of a hutch, I did what I might to persuade the author thereof to publish it; but in the end seeing that he made so small account of the same, that there was no means to obtain his consent, I adventured unawares to him to go through with my enterprise . . . Howbeit, in as much as it may so fall out that the author, considering what small account he made of his writings, in lieu of rejoicing in the commendations that hereby shall redound unto him, may find fault that I have thus published them of mine own head, and withal that I have thereunto set his name...

The *Discours politiques et militaires* was purportedly written while François de la Noue was in prison at Limburg (Cervantes says *Quixote* was engendered in prison); the sixth discourse consists of a lengthy attack on "The books of Amadis de Gaul and such like," anticipating *DQ*. This should be quoted at length since it is relevant to the origins of the modern novel. *DQ I* prologue:

thy labor doth aim at no more than to diminish the authority and acceptance that books of chivalry have in the world. . . let thy project be to overthrow the ill-compiled machina and bulk of those knightly books, abhorred by many, but applauded by more; for, if thou bring this to pass, thou hast not achieved a small matter.

In ch. 47 the canon expands on this:

those books which are instituted of chivalry or knighthood are very prejudicial to well-governed commonwealths; and although, borne away by an idle and curious desire, I have read the beginning of almost as many as are imprinted of that subject, yet could I never endure myself to finish and read any one of them through; for methinks that somewhat, more or less, they all import one thing, and this hath no more than that, nor the other more than his fellow. And in mine opinion, this kind of writing and invention falls within the compass of the fables called *Milesiae*, which are wandering and idle tales, whose only scope is delight, and not instruction; quite contrary to the project of those called *Fabulae Apologiae*, which delight and instruct together. And though that the principal end of such books be recreation, yet cannot I perceive how they can yield it, seeing they be forced with so many and so proportionless untruths; for the delight that the mind conceives must proceed from the beauty and conformity which it sees or contemplates in such things as the sight or imagination represents unto it, and all things that are deformed and discordant must produce the contrary effect. Now, then, what beauty can there be, or what proportion between the parts and the whole, or the whole and the parts, in a book or fable wherein a youth of sixteen years of age gives a blow to a giant as great as a tower, and with that blow divides him in two as easily as if he were a pellet of sugar? And when they describe a battle, after that they have told us how there were at least a million of men on the adverse side, yet if the knight of the book be against them, we must of force, and whether we will or no, understand that the said knight obtained the victory through the invincible strength of his arm. What, then, shall we say of the facility wherewithal the inheritrix of a kingdom or empire falls between the arms of those errant and unknown knights? What understanding, if it be not altogether barren or barbarous, can delight itself, reading how a great tower full of knights doth pass through the sea as fast as a ship with the most prosperous wind? and that going to bed a man is in Lombardy, and the next morning finds himself in Prester John's country, among the Indians, or in some other region which never was discovered by Ptolemy, nor seen by Marco Polo? And if I should be answered, that the inventors of such books do write them as fables, and therefore are not bound unto any respect of circumstances or observation of truth, I would reply, that an untruth is so much the more pleasing by how much the nearer it resembles a truth, and so much the more grateful by how much the more it is doubtful and possible; for lying fables must be suited unto the reader's understanding, and so written as that, facilitating impossible things, levelling untrue things, and holding the mind in suspense, they may ravish a more delight, and entertain such manners, as pleasure and wonder may step by step

walk together: all which things he that writes not likelihoods shall never be able to perform. And as touching imitation (wherein consists the perfection of that which is written), I have not seen in any books of knighthood an entire bulk of a fable so proportioned in all the members thereof, as that the middle may answer the beginning, and the end the beginning and middle; but rather they have composed them of so many members, as it more probably seems that the authors intended to frame chimeras or monsters than to deliver proportionate figures, most harsh in their style, incredible in exploits, impudent in love matters, absurd in compliments, prolix in battles, fond in discourses, uncertain and senseless in voyages; and finally, devoid of all discretion, art, and ingenious disposition: and therefore they deserve, as most idle and frivolous things, to be banished out of all Christian commonwealths.'

The sixth discourse of de Noue:

That the reading of the books of Amadis de Gaul, & such like is no less hurtful to youth, than the works of Machiavel to age.

I have heretofore greatly delighted in reading Machiavel's *Discourses* & his *Prince*, because in that same he intreats of high & goodly politic & martial affairs, which many Gentlemen are desirous to learn, as matters meet for their professions. And I must needs confess that so long as I was content slightly to run them over, I was blinded with the gloss of his reasons. But after I did with more ripe judgement thoroughly examine them, I found under that fair show many hidden errors, leading those that walk in them into the paths of dishonour and damage. But if any man doubt of my sayings, I would wish him to read a book entitled *Antimachiavellus*, the author whereof I know not, and there shall he see that I am not altogether deceived. Neither do I think greatly to deceive myself though I also affirm the books of Amadis to be very fit instruments for the corruption of manners, which I am determined to prove in few words, to the end to dissuade innocent youth from entangling themselves in these invisible snares which are so subtly laid for them. Evermore have there been some men given to the writing & publishing of vanity, whereto they have been the sooner led, because they knew their labours would be acceptable to those of their time, the greatest sort whereof have swallowed up vanity as the fish doth water. The ancient fables whose relics do yet remain, namely, Lancelot of the lake, Pierceforest, Tristran, Giron the courteous, & such others do bear witness of this old vanity. Herewith were men fed for the space of 500 years, until our language growing more polished and our minds more ticklish, they were driven to invent some novelties, wherewith to delight us. Thus came the books of Amadis into light among us in this last age. But to say the troth, Spain bred them and France new clothed them in gay garments. In the days of Henry the second did they bear chieftest sway; and I think if any man would then have reproved them, he should have been spit at, because they were of themselves playfellows and maintainers to a great sort of persons: whereof some after they had learned to Amadize in speech, their teeth watered, so desirous were they even to taste of some small morsels of the delicates therein most lively and naturally represented. And although many disdained and rejected them, yet have but over many, having once tasted of them, made them their continual food. This sustenance hath engendered evil humours that distempered those souls which peradventure at the first thought not to have grown so weak.

My judgement therefore of these books in general, shall be this. I think (unless I be deceived) that he that composed them was some courtly Magician, cunning and sly, who to the end to bring his art into estimation, and withal to procure unto those that be dealers therein, both honour & fear, hath cunningly feigned 1,000 marvels which he hath covered and wrapped up in a number of pleasant, desired, and usual matters, so as the one running among the other, the whole might be the better received. I know there are some that will find my opinion to be very strange, because they ween that the author of the said books' intent was no other but to leave to the posterity a portraiture of the exercises of the Courts in his time, and withal to forge a spur wherewith to prick forward young Gentlemen, and to incite them to entertain love

and practice arms, as the two only most beautiful objects that may delight, fashion, and cause them to climb to honour. But their judgement is too simple, as staying rather upon the consideration of the beauty of certain outward matters, than upon the truth of the inward. For notwithstanding I grant that the instructions and examples of this fabulous history may also be propounded, to the end to teach both to love and fight, yet will I say that the most of those loves are dishonest, and almost all the combats full of falsehood, and not to be practiced, so that the following of those rules is to walk in error. All therefore that I pretend to show may far better appear by deducting the particularities that I have noted.

I will begin with the persons of Alquif, Urgand, and their like, enchanters and witches, there termed Sages, as also the Magical or devilish arts which they used are called Perfect wisdom. Yea I think if the author durst he would have named them Prophets, which name they deserved, but with this tail, of Satan. When these Sorcerers or Witches came to any Princes court, they were cherished and wonderfully honored, yea, they were admired as if they had newly come out of heaven, neither did themselves fail to seek meet occasions for to come, as when they must part two knights fleshed to murder each other to minister pastime to ye Ladies, either to bring enchanted armor to save a young Prince that was to receive the order of knighthood, either to set a whole Court in an uproar by some terrible sight, and then to appease and qualify it again.

But I do amiss in going about to specify their miracles. For we must imagine that Jupiter and Minerva in old time did never so much as these. Moreover, when there was any question of enquiring after things to come, they were straight sought unto, as the Pagans used to go to the Oracle of Apollo. We are not therefore to marvel that they were much made of, since we see them thus endued with a supernatural power. For these kinds of Magicians are accounted good and succorable. But the author forges also others, as Archalaus the Enchanter, Melie, and many more that delighted only in doing mischief. Whereby we may easily perceive that he makes Magic arts matters indifferent, thinking them lawful or unlawful, according as they be used well or ill. Yet, it seems he allow the use thereof among the Christians, and disallows it among Pagans. These doth he say to have drawn their knowledge out of the books of Medea, who in old time was a notable sorceress. But his Urgand the unknown he says, to be instructed by the wonderful precepts of great Apollidon, whom he feigns to have been as another Zoroaster, wherein he speaks better than he is aware. For Apollidon may be the same Apollion mentioned by Saint John in his Revelation, namely, the Devil, whom we may say to have been the common schoolmaster to them all, because that so pernicious arts, replenished with fraud and lying, cannot proceed out of any other shop than his. We must therefore settle ourselves, and beware we be not snared in the writings and persuasions of those that after they have masqued and disguised impiety, would harbor it among us who are to drive it away as a most horrible monster. Most men when they hear speaking of enchantments and sorceries, do at the first scorn or detest them: but if they suffer themselves so far to be led as to delight to talk of them, or to see some of their proofs, they doe by little and little take a custom not to abhor them.

Like unto such as having long eschewed serpents, do nevertheless by seeing & handling them, come at length to wear them about their necks, notwithstanding nature doth somewhat thereat rapine. Some may say that of a fly I make an elephant, also that if that reading of these follies which every one accounts but fables, were so dangerous, our great learned men should likewise abstain from reading the books of Iamblichus, Porphyry, Psellus, Apollonius of Tyana and such like, who have at large entreated upon Magic and the communication that may be had with Demons, as also of what sacrifices they require. Whereto I answer, that there is great difference between those that peradventure never read any other books but Amadis, wherein the sugar that is dispersed all over makes them to swallow great morsels of Aloes at unawares: and the others who grounded in learning, age, and experience, do seek for some roses in the large forests of thorns. For the first not knowing the snares, are suddenly taken, whereas the others perceiving them afar of, do seek to break them. Truly the youth of our courts within these ten years had

not been so ready to feed their curiosity with such marvels, had not the said books of vanity prepared them. And this is it that hath caused Astronomers & enchanter to be so well welcome. Many account it no inconvenience to see and learn those things that procure mirth and marvels: but they perceive not that the same is the beginning of that game, and that the poison lieth in the tail. There be other pastimes enough though we meddle not with those wherein the magicians' cunning varlets come to play the feats of pass & repass: and such as enter familiarity with them, do never escape their payment, not in Ape's coin (as the proverb terms it) but in much worse, which these petty transfigured maumets (that come to play with the simple) do liberally deliver them: For in the end they catch the souls, infecting them with a foolish belief, which by little and little carries them from God. The prophet Balaam, though a false Prophet, did nevertheless say very well that the people of Israel was blessed because they had among them neither Soothsayer, diviner, nor enchanter. If we will enjoy the like blessing we must also imitate that people, as well in rejecting the persons as the writings, which are as baits to inure us in devilish mysteries. Thus much of the first and principal poison hidden among the fruits of Amadis' delights.

Concerning the second, which I term the Poison of pleasure, which also is much more open than the other, and withal so subtle and penetrative, that to eschew harm thereby we must first use very good preservatives: it consists in many sorts of dishonest lusts, which therein are so lively described, that young men in the consideration of them are deceived, as the birds were in the sight of Zeuxis' counterfeit fruits. The French translators have studied well to polish their translations, also have added as I ween (for the true Spanish language is too simple) all the fairest ornaments they were able to borrow of Rhetoric, to the end the new might be of the more efficacy to persuade things whereto many are but too willing to be persuaded: and having made it more copious and wanton, it is not to be demanded whether the sound thereof be pleasant to the ear, through that which being once passed, it tickles the most tender affections of the heart, which it moves more or less according as the persons are disposed thereto. Oh what a goodly instruction is it for ladies, to see young princesses frying in amorous flames, for some knight whom they never saw until within two hours before, for albeit shame and modesty ought to restrain them within the bounds of shamefastness, yet doth the author make them confess, and even at the first that the violent stings of the God Cupid (whom they do blame) have wounded them so deep, as not being able to get out at the door they must creep forth at the window, into some delicate garden to eat Apricots. But this I have noted, that fortune has been to them always so favorable, that never any of them took harm, so that well we may apply unto them this song,

Your pace it is so swift Guillemette, your pace it so swift.

But for the knights they are more quick upon the spur. For so soon as the beam of beauty have dazzled their conceits, they are not only in a continual heat, but also even roasted & rosted (as the good old wives of our towns do say of the souls in purgatory) so that they never stand still, until they have found some remedy to refresh them. Neither do these loves in all these difficulties want some subtle Dariolets, that is to say, cunning bawds. And I believe Homer, in the personages that he hath brought in to describe sundry offices did never make any to play their parts better than can these: who know more inventions than a very for of subtilties, to catch the birds with the snares of pleasure. This comedy thus played, the author employs all his eloquence to shew that man's felicity consists herein, and it is of no small force to infect delicate youth with the daily reading of these follies, do harbor them in their hearts: I ween that in the monastery of Franciscans at Paris (which is the fruitfulest clapper of Monks between this and Rome) there is none but if he had as often read the discourse of Amadis as the old miracles of the Golden Legend, and the new fables of the conformities of St. Francis, would feel himself pricked to the quick with these dangerous temptations. Much rather then ought such younglings as trot up and down the delights of the world to forbear them.

It may be alleged that most of the love tricks there entreated of, do tend to marriage. I grant it. But before they proceed to public marriages, almost all of them do commit secret follies as it were for a learning, whereof oftentimes proceed such claps as blemish honesty. Howbeit, who so on the other side will note the dalliances of Florisel, Don Rogel, and many other knights that were more eager upon this game, than is a promoter after his prey, shall find goodly lessons to kindle incontinency, which already flames but too much in young breasts. The author not content to teach how to abuse lawful love, and to practice unlawful, hath also feigned fantastical, which nevertheless, says the story, have brought forth their effects. As that of Amadis of Greece and Queen Zahara. For some Magicians perceiving that they glanced each at other, although Amadis was married, yet taking pity of their passions, as also to take away the spot of adultery, did enchant them both in goodly delightful gardens, where forgetting themselves they nevertheless forgot not to beget two pretty babes, named Anaxartes and Alaxstraxeree, and then having unwitched them again, let them go where they list without remembering anything that had passed between them. What else is this but a secret representation of Mahomet's paradise? Whereof this author thought good to give the Christians of his age some small taste as peradventure somewhat savoring of Mahometism (for then was all Spain full of Saracens) to the end they might accustom themselves to feed both their bodies and minds with carnal thoughts and deeds. I leave it therefore to the judgement of such as are endued with any integrity, whether the reading of such books stuffed with such filthy follies be not dangerous both to young and old: for having once read them, they cannot afterward so cleanse themselves, but still there will remain some spots to stain their conversations.

I once heard a good Gentleman say that they contained a hidden property in the generation of Horns, and I doubt himself had had experience thereof. For he wore two petty horn buds hidden behind his ear, which another of the same occupation had there fastened in full payment of the like some, which not long before he had received of him in pure and true love, and therefore the better to be believed, since he spake as a craftsman. Truly my counsel were to banish and send all such books into Sicily, where the men keep continual watch for fear of surprises by night. So should we see whether their vigilance could warrant them that this Productive cause should not fructify among them. Some attorney of Amadis may peradventure make this objection, that divers though they never read those books, can nevertheless do as bad as the rest. I think there be such, but I give them double blame, in that their inclinations are so ready without help to run into mischief.

Now let us proceed to lay open some other bad drugs that are to be found in this shop. And in my opinion this may challenge the third place, which is a miserable custom brought in by this author, who avows that the highest point of knights' honor consists in cutting one another's throats for frivolous matters. And of these tragedies he makes a sovereign pastime for Kings, Ladies, Courts, and cities. Oftentimes we see in the lists the father against the son, the brother against the brother, the uncle against the nephew, where when they have hewn one upon another two long hours, they have both through faintness fallen down all tainted in blood. Sometime he feigns they knew not one another, another time that they assailed each other to try themselves. But what gross and villainous ignorance and trials are those which procure the perpetrating of so horrible parricides? It may be answered that they be the instructions of the great Apollyon aforementioned, who being a murderer from the beginning, delights wholly in committing of murder. In old time the Romans took pleasure in forcing men to fight to outrance before them, but these were transgressors that had deserved death. Where contrariwise ours are the sons of Kings, Princes, and Lords that counterfeit swordplays: which can persuade unto youth that read these examples, nothing but that they still must be fighting with one or other, to the end to be esteemed of and feared. And peradventure such impressions have multiplied the quarrels in our France within these thirty years, to such quantity as we now see. Also it may be said and that justly, that such spectacles, through customable beholding the shedding of man's blood, have made our courts pitiless and cruel. Let therefore those that

desire to feed their eyes with blood, imitate the manner of England, where they bring in wild beasts, as bears and bulls to fight with dogs, which pastime is without comparison far more lawful.

This likewise was another custom of the knights of those days, that if anyone had made promise to go about any adventure with one of these pilgrims, who always traveled alone with them: though their sovereign Lord, or their father or mother should command them even with lordlike authority and fatherly power to desist therefrom to the end to serve in some other necessary service, yet if they gave it over, it was a perpetual infamy to them, for they were bound by the order of knighthood to follow their gentlewoman, who sometimes was of a reasonable disposition. These be new laws which upon a bravery tend to blot out of men's minds the same which nature hath so lively engraven and so highly commended unto them. In this respect therefore are they also to be buried in oblivion.

I know I shall be accused of oversevere censuring, or else of slandering of our chronicler of Amadis: for whose justification it will be said that in many places of his books he greatly extols Christian piety. Whereto I answer, that he cannot well excuse himself touching this point. But by that which he says, it is to be judged that he discourses not thereof but only for a cloak to shroud himself, and that he hath read but little in the Bible. For he propounds a wild and savage religion, that dwells only in deserts and hermitages, which he should have described more civil and domestical. But how should he deal sincerely in divine matters, that handles humane so profanely.

Finally, I will yet set down one point concerning the exercise of arms, which he makes so unlike to common use that it is rather a mockery and abusing of youth in giving them such precepts: for although the wiser sort do account such knightly prowesses and giantlike strength, wherewith the reader is so importuned, to be but fables, yet the more indiscreet, under so sweet a charm of words cannot forbear, but remember some such draughts as are most conformable to their affections, to the end afterward as occasion may serve to try them, thinking thereby to be more active than others. True it is that sometime by the scoffs that they incur, they are reclaimed from these errors. But we are not to permit them to proceed to these experiences, but rather to propound unto them true documents, and to hide from them the false, so to keep them from failing. When a man hath bestowed all his time in reading the books of Amadis, yet will it not all make him a good soldier or warrior. For to attain to be the one or the other, he shall need nothing that therein is contained. I will not otherwise speak of these mighty blows that cleave a man to the waist, or cut asunder a Vantbrasse arm and all: neither of those shocks or falls that do a man no harm, but that he may rise and leap again upon his horse's back, as he were become a leopard, neither of their continual combats of two hours long, together with their foolish enterparliest neither of their imaginary valiancies that make one man to kill two hundred, because the matter itself shows it to tend only to terrify women and children: yea, whosoever will lose so much time as to read the whole story, may plainly see whether I do justly or wrongfully reprove all these brave and magnificent follies. Howbeit among all that I have here said, I do not comprehend those exercises in arms which are the pastimes of our nobility in time of peace, but contrariwise I do commend them, in that they are besides the pleasure both honest and necessary. And everyone that list to call to mind how during the reign of good king Henry II, through the frequenting of the same, they grew more expert and valorous, will endeavor to renew the practice thereof. Here might I allege many other vanities wherewith these books are stuffed, were it not that I fear to bring myself too far in liking with them, whiles I seek to bring others out of taste thereof. Those which I have here traced may suffice to turn away their minds, that are any whit affected to honest and virtuous matters, from spending their time in the same. For they pollute themselves, weening to reap delight, and through loitering in reading of lies, do disdain those wherein the truth doth most evidently shine forth.