

A journey, quest for the impossible dream.

To begin, I would like to ask you something: Who, in all of history, has had the loftiest dreams?

Offering one definitive answer to this question, I believe, would prove impossible and ill-advised, as there of course is disagreement on how to measure such a claim.

In the world of the novels, however, I can submit one figure, to which I presume, few people will express opinions of disapproval. That is Don Quixote de La Mancha.

In his fabled travels with his companion, Sancho Panza, he quested for the impossible dream: to uphold truth, while combating the devil and falsehood.

Last autumn, I visited La Mancha, one of the famed settings of the novel. It is about two hours of trip by bus or train from Madrid to the south. It is covered with reddish-brown soil, the color of the country, Spain, itself.

I climbed to the top of the hill of Campo Criputana, where there are 10 windmills. These were once used utilized to mill wheat, but the blades are not circulating now. They have become the visual symbol of the area, attracting tourists from around the world.

Don Quixote intended to fight against this windmill, believing it an evil giant. He charged the windmill on his horse, Rosinante, raising a spear in his right arm, ignoring the pleadings of Sancho Panza.



When he reached the first windmill and jousted with its blade, just then a sudden strong wind made the windmill circulate. The spear was crushed into pieces; the rider and the horse were thrown to the ground, tumbling down the hill. This story is one of the most well-known in literature; many people are familiar with it, even without having read the book.

It has been interpreted that Don Quixote, who would rushed to fight the windmill, thinking it an evil giant, is a model idealist, while Sancho



Panza is a model realist.

The dialogue between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza is very interesting and educative. Don Quixote's words are profound, but Sancho Panza's also sometimes ring true—for example, when Panza says:

“Human being is eventually same, while sleeping, regardless of whether he is in high lank or in low lank, or whether he is rich or poor.”
“When we abandon this mundane world and comes the time when we are going to be buried, all of us have to pass through the narrow road even though we are a federal lord or a daily employed worker. There is no difference between the width of the space that takes the body of a Pope or a servant, even though there may be difference of their height.”

At the Spain Plaza, Madrid, there are two statues. One is a statue of Don Quixote on his horse, with Sancho Panza on a donkey; the other is of Cervantes, the book's author. The latter is located at the higher part of the pedestal, and looks like as if he is watching and protecting the heroes of his



novel. The statue was built just one century ago, on the 300th anniversary of the first edition of the book.

The year 2005, when I made a visit to Spain to view the scenery of the novel, commemorated the 400th anniversary. Events to celebrate the occasion were held

all over Spain.

The novel has been said to be one of the most translation works of literature, ranking second only to the Bible. At the library of Cervantes in Toboso village, I found books translated into 54 languages donated from countries around the world.

Now, I would like to talk about why I have been so interested in the novel “Don Quixote”. When I was in 6th grade, my primary school decided to put on a mini-drama as part of a culture festival, in which I played the part of Sancho Panza. From that point on, I have been fascinated with the story. I began to read the novel for children and when I grew old I also read the book for adults many times.

I would go to theaters to appreciate the musical “Don Quixote de La Mancha” in Tokyo. Koshiro Matsumoto, one of the most noted actors in Japan, played the role of Don Quixote. About five years before my

retirement I took a class in which Professor Minoru Chonan gave a lecture about the 400-year-old story. Over time my fascination has not waned, but grown ever stronger.

I would like to note here that Cervantes finished the first section of the novel when he was 58 years old, and only completed the latter part a decade later—at the age of 68.

Hamlet, Faust and Don Quixote—some consider these the three great heroes of Western novels. It was a mystic coincidence that Cervantes died in 1616, the same year as Shakespeare, the author of the Hamlet died.

The story is long and interesting. It is said, however, that to what extent one can understand deeply the novel depends on the ripeness of each reader himself. I met so many visitors from Japan at many places in Spain. A Spanish guide said to me, “As for the numbers of visitors to the land of Don Quixote, the

This made me many Japanese enthusiasm for of the reasons, I difficulty in Japan keeping sight of the future. I think



Japanese is No. 1”. wonder why so share my Don Quixote. One presume, is the of holding onto and one’s dreams for that the image of

Don Quixote, and the way he lived his life, inspires hope for Japanese wishing to advance toward his or her dream or goal, even in the face of the criticism of others.

I would like to read the words of Cervantes, the author of this novel: “If the people’s life itself is crazy, what on earth is the authentically craziness. Having no interest in this actual world and indulging into dream only may be crazy. In other part, however, it is also crazy life to seek after actual life only and don’t have dreams. However, the craziness to which we should hate the most is the way of living in which they don’t dare to challenge to realize ideal life and ideal society, adopting the actual life as it is.”

This passage makes us think about our lives. In conclusion, then, I would like to kindly ask each one of you: “What is your impossible dream?”