



Cervantes and Modernity: Four Essays on Don Quijote

E C Graf

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Graf argues that the doubts expressed by both historicists and postmodernists regarding the progressive nature of Don Quijote are exaggerated. He also argues that interpretations that abstain from this debate by emphasizing authorial ambivalence or positioning the novel at a crossroads do not seem as responsible as they once did. Beyond these skeptical and neutral alternatives, there are key steps forward in Cervantes's worldview. These four essays detail Don Quijote's anticipations of many of the same ideas and values that drive today's multiculturalism, feminism, secularism, and materialism. An important thesis here is that the Enlightenment remains the best vantage point from which to appreciate the novel's relation to the discourses of such movements. Thus Voltaire's *Candide* (1759), Feijoo's *Defensa de las mujeres* (1726), and Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) are each shown to be logical extensions of some of Cervantes's most fundamental propositions. Finally, this book will still be of interest to specialists immune to the ideological anxieties arising from debates over notions of modernity. Graf also explores the interrelated meaning of a number of Don Quijote's symbols, characters, and episodes, pinpoints several of the novel's most important classical and medieval sources, and unveils for us its first serious English reader.

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