

Classic moves

Review by Terry Hrynshyn
Monsignor Quixote by Graham Greene, (Lester and Orpen Dennys)

Monsignor Quixote adds another novel to Greene's already formidable list of over twenty works of fiction. Issued by a little known Toronto publishing house, the book is fashioned on the Cervantes' classic work, *Don Quixote*. The allusions to the original are many as the Monsignor is purported to be a direct descendent of the ill-fated Don of Cervantes' time and they share such common companions as a sidekick named Sancho and Rocinante, who in keeping with the changing times, is now a tired old car instead of a weary old nag.

Father Quixote begins as the simple parish priest of El Toboso in rural Spain who through a curious twist of fate is endowed with the unwanted title of 'Monsignor'. The trappings of the Church are his armour against injustice, and together with Rocinante and Sancho (the deposed mayor of El Toboso), the Monsignor wanders about the countryside in search of spiritual peace. The windmills he encounters this time are more animated, however, as they take the form of the Guardia Civil or the state police.

Like his ancestor, the Monsignor's naiveté is also readily apparent as at one point, when the comrades seek refuge in a brothel, he innocently inflates a condom asking, "How do you keep the air in? Surely there should be some sort of nozzle?"; the reader wonders whether it is Sancho who is leading Quixote this time and not the other way around.

Through these simple characterizations, Greene manages to give vent to political ideologies and display a blatant distrust of the Church as an institution, but the work itself falls far short of the original both in scope and magnitude. But Greene's method must be credited; Greene has shown a great respect for the Cervantes original--a less experienced writer might have plundered the work to suit their own means. Not a classic in its own right, *Monsignor Quixote* can, however, be viewed as a tribute to the original Spanish epic.

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