



Don Quixote (which was a dream)

Kathy Acker

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Kathy Acker's Don Quixote is an indomitable woman on a formidable quest: to become a knight and defeat the evil enchanters of modern America by pursuing "the most insane idea that any woman can think of. Which is to love."

In this visionary world, Don Quixote journeys through American history to the final dys of the Nixon administration, passing on the way through a New York reminiscent of prerevolutionary St. Petersburg and a brutally defamiliarized contemporary London. Here transvestites who might play a t being Nazis and beautiful she-males enact the rituals of courtly love. Presiding overt this late-twentieth-century *Levithian* is Thomas Hobbes--the Angel of Death.

Don Quixote (which was a dream) Details

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From Reader Review Don Quixote (which was a dream) for online ebook

Griffin Alexander says

'The carcass of wood comically perched on cement paws I call "home". The style of its hair is corrugated iron that exists in the sun like skins being dried. In the diningroom, nailheads glisten from the rough floor, lines of pine and shadow run across a ceiling; the chairs are phantom; the light leaks out a gray light; the cockroaches buzzing seem about to hurt. . . 'This's vision because it's what I see.'

ADDENDUM: to be read in concurrence with Borges' story "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" and then to be considered: what it means if the writing (and thereby reading) of this book were taken on in the same manner as Menard's own project.

Peter says

a wild ride. I loved this book, but it really only holds up as a crazy proto-postmodern feminist punk piece of history. outside of the lens of understanding a point in cultural history, this book is absolute drivel. My main compulsion to read this comes from the fact I am also reading her biography, which is probably a better introduction to her than her oeuvre. Don Quixote gets an abortion and spends about a hundred pages incoherently talking with her dog companion about having sex as a woman. Richard Nixon meets the Angel of Death and talks about capitalism and nuclear waste.

Flow Pouet says

Un livre puissant !

Jane Gregg says

The easiest of Acker's works to understand. You won't enjoy it, per se, but you will (or should) get it at least. Think Burroughs.

Michel Siskoid Albert says

Punk poet Kathy Acker's Don Quixote is no easy read, and I do feel that she started losing me as the philosophical parables that make up most of the book piled up. Far more than Cervantes' classic retold, this story of a woman going mad after an abortion and branding herself a knight deconstructs gender in an insightful way, and presents women's narrative as a largely male creation. Despite Don Quixote herself usurping a male role from literature (and Acker poaches from the entire history of literature, not this single work), getting out from under what men have decided women should care about is next to impossible. Don't

expect anything straightforward. I wouldn't call this a story so much as a manifesto, and that's perfectly legitimate, even if it did start to wear on this reader after a while.

Nancy Wilson says

Not sure what I just read fantstical descriptions in hopeless negativity. Surreal, felt a little lost and was glad it was over.

Sean A. says

rambling, ambling free-form cut-up collage-esque narrative that somewhat revolves around a post modern female knight. the grail-quest theme never seemed adequately enough addressed to me, however i really enjoyed the jagged poetry of 'don quixote', how gloriously nothing made sense and the surreal format itself.

Jasmin says

Have read some other Acker books and enjoyed them much more. I found myself bored through much of the plotline, though I enjoyed the many dogs that became characters in the book. There was a line I enjoyed: "CONTACT YOUR LOCAL [something?...] DOG!"

Ryan says

Last year I took a course in experimental fiction, and this book was one the syllabus. I bought the book off of Amazon as soon as I could, but unfortunately, because so few people in the class could acquire it, we ended up not reading the book for the class. Instead we read "Fun Home" by Alison Bechdel, which now that I've read "Don Quixote", I'm thankful happened.

This is a political novel. Not just because it talks a lot about gender politics, and nuclear (dis)armament and ownership of women, but because it literally involves politicians. And it involves their spouses as well. And it involves those politicians and their spouses while they are fucking each other, while Death incarnate acts like a creepy fucking peeping Tom watching them doing it. So "Don Quixote" is a very political novel.

As far as Kathy Acker's politics go, I can't say I disagree with them all that much. But there's a problem with inserting politics into a novel, it's difficult to say that you dislike that novel without people assuming you dislike the politics. It's an annoying response. Awhile ago, I started to watch a lot of episodes of Penn and Teller's "Bullshit!" and they seemed to like Ayn Rand a lot, so I decided to read some reviews of her novels on Goodreads. I was disappointed by what I saw going on. Whenever anyone said they disliked Atlas Shrugged or The Fountainhead or whatever because it was long-winded or boring, someone would come along and have a row with that person about the benefits of objectivism and Ayn Rand's weird brand of libertarianism. In my mind, whether or not you agreed with her didn't matter when you judged the quality of her book. You shouldn't just excuse a poorly written book because you like a novelist's politics. I found it funny that this was the most common rebuttal. As far as Kathy Acker goes, I can say that I enjoyed her novel "Don Quixote". But I didn't enjoy it quite that much. Even though it was random in a funny and cool way, I

feel like there was too much randomness to the point that the novel didn't have that much focus. Occasionally it's just incoherent. At one point, there is so much rambling about politics that there isn't much story at all and it was all downhill from there. Her particular brand of feminism doesn't seem to be that complex, a lot of the time it amounts to saying, "Hey, dudes suck, eh?" Which is annoying. And though she details quite a lot of abuse, she seems to have this strange relation to it, because she acknowledges that she doesn't like anyone consistently good. It's difficult to sympathize with the main character if this is the case. It might be her problem but it's not everyone's problem. And I really have to wonder why the book was called "Don Quixote". It's just a gimmicky thing to do. The two novels have very little in common.

Tessa says

I used to shelve books in my college library and one afternoon I stumbled upon this book. At the time I was extremely bored with fiction as a whole and had little interest in reading it. The jacket description sounded interesting so I decided to start reading. I didn't stop. It was amazing. It made me rethink what fiction could be and changed my life in a major way.

Lee Foust says

Although it's weird, my project of reading Kathy Acker's novels backwards in time, and so my reading of the movement from novel to novel is perhaps bassackward, I sensed an interesting shift between *Don Quixote* and its follow up *Empire of the Senseless*. While these two novels stand out, for me, in Acker's oeuvres as the two narrative (rather than thematically-organized) novels--this one framed by Cervantes's classic and *Empire...* by the classic misadventures of a separated couple of an ancient Greek romance and all of that genre's many Medieval romance and novelistic offspring--there's a thoughtfulness and absence of violence that marks this novel from the author's last four--from *Empire...* to *Pussy*, *King of the Pirates*. Even though pirates do appear here--quite briefly at the end--they're not rampaging in violent taboo-breaking mayhem as they do in the novels to follow. Even *My Mother: Demonology*, the only one of the latter novels bereft, if I recall correctly, of violent revolution and piracy, has so much personal, S&M violence, that it fits in fine with the latter stage of Acker's fiction--I guess we could call them the mid-1980s to mid-1990s novels or, the mature Grove Press years.

How do I read this shift? Well, the bullying and horror of the Reagan years, homelessness, and general economic desperation were becoming more than evident in the U.S.A. by 1985-6 when *Don Quixote* was being written and published. I, myself, wrote my first novel in 1986, exploring the possibility of armed struggle against the new cultural fascism but rejecting it for a more personal, internal revolution through art in my own works to follow. Perhaps '86 was that watershed year when we pacifists turned violence loose inside of ourselves and our art when the fascists came that much closer and we felt threatened. Whatever the reason, I loved this novel for its more reasoned, reasonable, and entertaining strategies having less to do with the violence and violent taboo breaking so evident in *Empire of the Senseless*. Not that the world situation wasn't all the more dire as Acker went on to write *Empire...*, and that the strategy wasn't wholly necessary, I just prefer this approach as a reader.

Admittedly, there are a few dead spots in this conglomerate novelistic construction--part and parcel to Acker's cut up and appropriating style. But the opening and closing sections are such fabulous meditations on politics, gender issues, religion, and American history, while, at the same time, capturing and adapting the spirit of the original *Don Quixote*'s magic, that they are among Acker's best pages. Also, the chorus of dogs and other characters actually bring *Don Quixote* closer to Mikhail Bakhtine's definition of a novel as a

dialogic rhetorical exercise. Here points of view are juxtaposed, confronted, re-routed, re-arranged, untied, re-thought, and always left unresolved. I like such thoughtful writing--a series of overlapping and self-contradictory phrases, in the end. This is why art so easily outstrips propaganda--it argues against itself. It makes you think rather than tries to convince you to believe something--which always turns out to be a scam in the end: some old man's capitalist scheme to get your money.

Annie says

I also had to return this to the library, with a red wine stain on it :-/ :-/ :-/.

but it is really good, of course. Thinking lots over the fantasy/desire bit.

Rebekka says

I did not like this book as much as Great Expectations but I did like it more than Blood and Guts in High School. I am not going to write anything more because I am not smart enough to say anything revolutionary or insightful.

Four stars. This book felt very dense to me. Maybe I would have liked it more if I had gone to college.

Sarah says

I read this book on a plane. Don't do that. Actually, I take it back: do. It's a good way to tell if someone is reading over your shoulder.

Greg Kemble says

Read this as a grad student, and now taught it at the community college for a Women's Studies/English course. Right up my alley, in that 80s postmodern pastiche. Troubling, provocative, funny, depressing, confusing, challenging, rewarding... Glad I read it again.

Melanie says

I'd been curious about Kathy Acker; I knew of her work by reputation only, but she once did an interview with Alasdair Gray that I found interesting and insightful, so I guess I was already favorably predisposed. And thus, when I was having dinner at a friend's house and saw some of Acker's books on her husband's shelves--her husband being the more po-mo half of the couple--I called in a favor ("How many of my Julian Barnes books do you have in your possession right now?") and borrowed them.

Well. Whoa.

For one thing, I was reading this book in parallel with my friend's husband's annotations, which...is actually something I recommend. Not necessarily reading Michael's annotations (although they're quite good), but following along with the marginalia and underlinings of someone you sort-of-but-don't-really know. I mean, if we're talking postmodern, it's hard to get much more fragmented and post- than that.

But the book itself is an experience, too. Acker's writing is spiky, prickly, and so are her ideas (about sex, about gender, about power, about literature). And as someone who's read a goodly amount of postmodern/experimental fiction, I'm surprised to say that her use of the various standard techniques (parody, pastiche, etc.) actually *worked* on me as a reader--that is, the text was unsettled and unsettling, destabilized, all of that exciting stuff that can sometimes get lost in fancy typographical tricks and footnotes or whatever.

I'll have to read more of her work, obviously, but I'm almost afraid to because *Don Quixote* was so...I don't know. Stunning, maybe? I feel a bit stunned by it at the moment. It's not a bad feeling to have.

Julie Wallace says

I can understand how this book may be off putting to certain individuals. However, I found the entire novel entrancing. I dare not say more. This is a book I found so much fun reading even if it has some themes that are realistically dark.

I know this may be a novel that was written for a generation that was not my own, but It still impacted me and I am overjoyed that I have been exposed to Kathy Acker. I will seek her out in the future.

Kira says

i want to revisit this. tried to read it like 6yrs ago and gave up. my friend was really into Dennis Cooper and Kathy Acker; i intuitively 'got' Cooper and very much didn't 'get' Acker. hm.
on the other hand, i remember it being bad, and glancing through in a bookstore recently didn't change my mind.

Red says

This book is great, but between this and Judith Butler, I should probably just read a block of plutonium and get a more genuinely dense reading experience.

Celil says

Don Kihote'nin kürtaja gitti?i bir kitapt?!? Kathy Acker'in i?leri, Beat ku?a??n?n bir uzant?s? gibi görölse de, ben bu hikâye özelinde geçen y?l okudu?um baz? ?eylere benzettim. Mesela hemen ayn? dönemde Almanya, ?talya dolaylar?nda geçen Ulli Lust'?n bir Özgür K?z hikâyesi "Today is the Last Day of the Rest of Your Life" vard?. Ulli Lust'?n röportajlar?nda, ben pek Kathy Acker sevgisinden bahsetti?ini i?itmesem de, kendisine baya?? bir öykündü?ünü dü?ünüyorum. Ayn? ?ekilde benim çok sevdi?im sert konu?mac?/?yazar Fran Lebowitz var. Onun gençlik hallerini hat?rlad?m. Dumanalt? bir mekân, elde sigara,

mikrofona yakla??p tek hamlede on be? ki?iyi deviren Fran Lebowitz; az sonra buradaki Don Kihote'ye dönü?ecektir. Gard?n?z? al?n derim... bla bla bla...

Ve zaman?nda ne kadar cesur yay?nc?lar varm??. Bugün olsa ayn? kitab? seçerler miydi, diye dü?ünmeden edemiyorum. Müstehcenli?in çok ötesinde bir edebiyat var orada...
