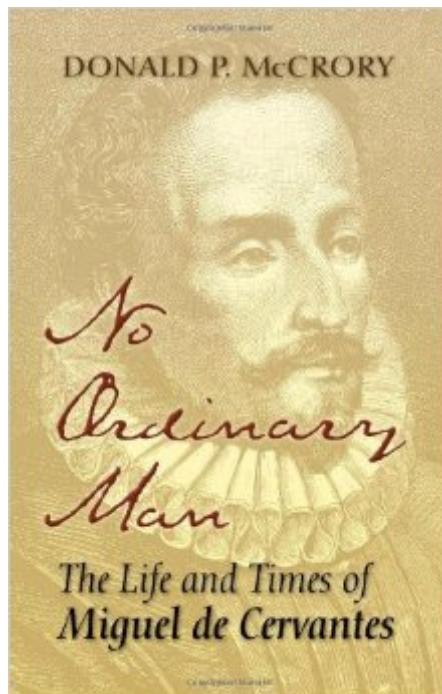


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No Ordinary Man: The Life And Times Of Miguel De Cervantes



Synopsis

"A fascinating story."Choice "A remarkable achievement."Sunday Herald For the general reader, as well as students and historians, this absorbing study chronicles the life and work of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (15471616). World-renowned as the author of *Don Quixote*, the "Spanish Shakespeare" led an adventurous and fruitful life that encompassed widely disparate rolesspy, lover, soldier, hostage, tax collector, poet, playwright, and, most notably, creator of the first European novel. This biography is based on new original research, and incorporates previously unpublished material on Cervantes' long period of captivity in Algiers; also, his involvement with piracy in the Mediterranean and with espionage and the Spanish Armada; and his work as an agent of the Spanish government. Containing significant details never before available in English, it is an important contribution to the understanding of a unique literary figure.

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Customer Reviews

I really find this an astonishing biography. The best of Cervantes I've read. I'm only halfway through it now but I know two things for sure: every last scintilla of telling information about Cervantes is up-to-date and included, and, that Prof. McCrory has a superb ability to find those larger patterns in a life and give them emotional and psychological meaning. There are moments when you look up and marvel at the tons of documents that must've been sifted to produce the simplest facts. Just to give one example among many, I understand for the first time what living in Esquivias meant to Cervantes, what it must've been like for him, and especially interesting, what it meant to be married to him. Prof. McCrory gives us an uncanny sense of what Catalina's life was like, her financial and

social situation, the impact her mother had on the marriage - and all this in a few quick lines. One never bogs down in this book with all that background information about Philip II or the Armada or the state of banditry along this road or that, as is common in other bios of Cervantes. We always know just enough to place things in context and see the influences acting on poor Miguel. I get, for the first time, a sense of his thought processes, the decisions he had to make, his real options, what the world looked like to him. This is (as much as possible) an intellectual biography as well. Superb work.

Better off calling this Cervantes's wikipedia page filled in with more detail. Awkwardly written. Lots of "however", "nonetheless", and other 8th grade writing transitions. Fails to take a stance of why Cervantes became the author of Spain's bible. Or what he represented. Provides unnecessary background information to the nth degree. The first half of the book is relentless in pushing Cervantes to the background amid extraneous detail. You get all the facts, but nothing touching the essence of the man. Stick to Don Quixote. We shall await a biography worthy of the great man.

This academic biography of Miguel de Cervantes is very enlightening when it comes to the facts surrounding his life and times. It traces the influences from his personal history that manifest themselves in his writing very effectively. The book is alternately engaging and frustrating in the following sense. While I learned a great deal not only about Cervantes but also about 16th and early 17th century Spain, there were passages where Professor McCrory's phrasing and writing style seemed disjointed and difficult to follow. Overall, I would recommend the book to those with a serious interest in the life of Cervantes or the period of Spanish history covered but I don't think this is a great choice for the general reader.

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