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The Cambridge Companion to Cervantes. Ed. Anthony J. Cascardi.
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This volume, which includes guides for further reading and an appendix listing electronic resources, provides a comprehensive presentation of Cervantes' *oeuvre* as well as a representative sampling of contemporary theory. It is a fine introduction for the serious student and generalist, and a worthwhile review for the specialist.

B. W. Ife opens the collection with an account of the non-artistic background of Cervantes' life and work ("The Historical and Social Context"), stressing the importance of historical understanding even while reading a "timeless masterpiece." In his survey of the political forces and individual choices that lead to the unification of the Iberian Peninsula, and then to Empire in Europe and beyond, Ife discusses the great opportunities and intractable problems created within Spain, including resultant mentalities: the anxieties and resentments of the marginalized *conversos* and *moriscos*, the overburdened but proud peasantry, the status-conscious nobility, etc. Ife's account is clear and necessarily brief, but not without nuance. He emphasizes, for example, the fact that "Imperial Spain" originated in and sustained a rather impressive diversity of regions, laws, economic structures, and ethnicities. He also points out that although much of the path toward unity (especially Catholic orthodoxy) was the result of consistent intentionality, some of the major developments (beginning with the union of Castile and Aragon) were also the consequence of chance, and could have easily gone otherwise. A number of general themes are presented, and Ife frequently refers to scenes in Cervantes' works where they arise. The customs house at

the outskirts of Seville in "Rinconete y Cortadillo," for example, illustrates the tensions between centralizing authority and independent entities within Spain. The essay concludes with some tentative remarks about the ways in which historical realities informed Cervantes' art. Ife wisely maintains that an understanding of the social dynamics of sixteenth century Spain probably will not allow the reader to clearly delineate our author's ideological profile (the point on which Ife is least willing to concede Cervantine ambiguity and perspectivism is that of the dishonored woman's social plight). Such an understanding is, however, indispensable in appreciating the complexity of Cervantes' literary creations.

Frederick De Armas ("Cervantes and the Italian Renaissance") discusses the way Cervantes not only draws upon classical and Renaissance models, but also sets them in a dialogic relationship within his works. De Armas points out that this tendency is present from Cervantes' early works (e.g., the figures of chaste Galatea and lascivious Venus in *La Galatea*) through his final Byzantine romance, *Persiles y Sigismunda*. This focus allows for a persuasive account of the particular richness of *Don Quijote*, a work that playfully modulates a great range of models while drawing them into contemporary aesthetic, political and religious polemics. De Armas proposes a few underlying principles that give a coherence to the trajectory of Cervantes' literary career: an abiding interest in the relationship between visual and verbal representation, a general adherence to the *Rota Virgilio* movement from pastoral to epic, and an undying "desire" for Renaissance Italy (however fragmented and distant such a place might be). The essay presents an instructive account of Cervantes' engagement with tradition, and of the way in which imitation and innovation are often inseparable in his works.

Anthony J. Cascardi provides further discussion of Cervantes' complex relationship to artistic models in "Don Quijote and the Invention of the Novel." Building on Bakhtin's theory of "novelization," Cascardi examines how the dialogic principle is at work in *Don Quijote* on the level of genre, language, and literary theory itself. The essay thus includes a useful summary of Cervantes' literary horizon, the multiplicity of speech types to which he was sensitive, and theoretical debates surrounding imitation and invention in fiction. Cascardi discusses the importance of social context in language use, and reminds us that Cervantes' ear was particularly attuned to such factors. The result is an unprecedented perspectivism in *Don Quijote*, one in which no single voice or literary model is privileged or completely discredited (given the emphasis on language, I found the lack of reference to Leo Spitzer's seminal essay a bit surprising). The essay concludes with some interesting comments about a structure of *interruption* (as distinct from sim-

ple episode) in Cervantes' masterpiece. Cascardi convincingly argues that this narrative technique is yet another of the profound principles of composition that was to create one of *Don Quijote's* greatest legacies: its unprecedented openness of form, allowing for a creative critique and appropriation of models, and therefore a truly dynamic relationship to existing discourse.

In "The Influence of Cervantes," Alexander Welsh directs our attention to the legacy of *Don Quijote* in European literature, neatly distinguishing two major influences. One is formal, dealing with how, by subverting ostensibly artificial representational modes, the variegated Cervantine "frames" (parody, the incorporation of manuscripts and multiple authors, etc.) provide a model for realism. The other is thematic, having to do with Quijote as a new sort of hero. Although later writers tended to appropriate one or the other, Welsh discusses how authors like Fielding (*Joseph Andrews*), Sterne (*Tristram Shandy*), and Tolstoy (*War and Peace*) develop both aspects of *Don Quijote*. Of course, there are a number of ways a quixotic character can interact with a disillusioned world, and Welsh provides a brief overview of how such relationships change according to historical and national contexts: the Romantic idealization of the Quijote figure *vis-à-vis* an abject reality, quixotism conceived as a youthful developmental stage that precedes integration in a Hegelian teleology, Kierkegaard's triumphant "knight of faith," the modernist Quijote who remains muddled in an inscrutable universe (in some ways the most authentically Cervantine, according to Welsh). One soon sees how Cervantes' innovations in method (his "model for realism") and character (his new hero) merge, yielding some of the major themes of the modern novel: the formation of individual identity, the quest for justice, and the capacity of a particular reality to accommodate both.

Mary Malcolm Gaylord focuses on "Cervantes' Other Fiction," that is, *La Galatea*, the *Exemplary Novels*, and *Persiles*, claiming that these works have been rather unfairly neglected in the shadow of *Don Quijote*. Showing how they, too, contain a high degree of metaliterary discourse and sociohistorical references, Gaylord's essay resonates with preceding ones by pointing up the complexity of Cervantes' engagement with his material. Her argument strikes me as slightly ironic, since the "hierarchical scale of literary value" (101) Gaylord questions is effectively reinforced. Heterogeneity, metafiction, and subtle modulations of social reality are the "literary values" that give *Don Quijote* pride of place in the history of the novel; revealing such elements as proof of the virtue of the other works, it seems to me, once again "privileges" *Don Quijote*. This is not necessarily a problem, for most would agree the privilege is well deserved (of course, it would be another thing to argue that these "other works" actually do a better job of it than *Don Quijote*). Gaylord's essay

provides further evidence that Cervantes' agile sensibilities were at work throughout his career, and it helps us understand how the composition of the "romance" *Persiles* after the "realist" *Don Quijote* is not a confounding inconsistency in his artistic development. Gaylord also suggests that current critical inquiries into the "material contexts" of Cervantes' works may uncover previously overlooked elements of "disillusionment," "scorn," "bitterness" and "distrust" in his writings. Much recent criticism does, indeed, promote a disaffected and subversive Cervantes, whose ideology should be categorized, say, in contrast to a propagandistic Lope de Vega. I predict an artful evasion on the part of Cervantes.

Thankfully, Lope also avoids such a fate in Melveena McKendrick's essay on Cervantes' theatrical works ("Writing for the Stage"). McKendrick explores Cervantes' mediocre showing in theater as a function of his great strengths as a novelist: his narrative propensity, and tendency to give sustained attention to theme and character over dramatic concentration and sequencing of scenes. She also considers how his love of theater enriches the prose, as with his masterful dialogue, visual imagination, and play-acting characters. After observing some of the ways Cervantes apparently learned from Lope in his own later plays, McKendrick interestingly suggests that it is in *Don Quijote* that his meditations on the *comedia nueva* were fully developed. Also worth reflection is her claim that conceptions of identity are far from deterministic in either Lope or Cervantes, although critics perhaps tend to overlook somewhat the degree to which Cervantine characters do, in fact, "come home" to a particular identity, while those of the *comedia* are often left in a pragmatic (if not quite *gracianesque*) compromise. Despite the deficiencies in poetry and dramatic craftsmanship acknowledged in Cervantes' full-length plays, McKendrick provides highly appreciative summaries and analyses, and ends with an insightful exposition of the thematic and formal virtuosity of the *entremeses*. The essay convincingly argues in favor of studying the theatrical works both in their own right and for the light they cast on his prose works. In the process, we are again reminded of the peculiar combinations of conservatism and subversiveness, romance and realism, contained throughout Cervantes' writings.

Adrienne L. Martín addresses the complicated matter of humor in *Don Quijote* ("Humor and Violence in Cervantes"). Pointing out that a characterization of Cervantes' masterpiece as "comic" need not lessen its seriousness and profundity (Erasmus' *Folly* having set an important precedent in this regard), Martín categorizes and briefly analyzes five types of humor in *Don Quijote*. She then proceeds to examine the "paradoxical" link between humor and violence. Aptly citing Nabokov and Kundera as representatives of mod-

ern disagreement over how well the frequently physical humor of Cervantes has aged, and entertaining the possibility that the taste for such comedy bespeaks a cruel sensibility of the period, Martín touches upon various implications of comic theory. Does this farcical entertainment reflect a sort of universal carnivalesque inclination to reassert the grotesque yet regenerative “lower stratum”? Is such humor to be mined for critiques of specific sociohistorical conditions? While preliminary conclusions to the effect that our interpretation of the Duke and Duchess’ antics (*Don Quijote* II) will depend on our readerly subjectivity are somewhat unsatisfying, Martín does a nice job of pointing out the difficulty of separating aesthetic and sociological aspects of humor, and the interpretative risks of attempting to do so. One also appreciates her suggestion that, with regard to farcical and crude humor, perhaps modern sensibilities have not really evolved so much. We may be increasingly aware of what we *shouldn’t* find funny, but a quick survey of popular humor in films and television will confirm that caricature, ample buttocks, thorough drubbings, and well-timed flatulence still have their appeal.

In “Psyche and Gender in Cervantes,” Anne J. Cruz gives a brief overview of trends in Cervantes criticism from the seventeenth century to present day in order to show how psychoanalytic literary theory was intimated (Huarte de San Juan, the Romantics), and then finally emerged, along with feminist theory, in spite of resistance from conservative male *cervantistas*. Even theoretically unsophisticated readers are struck by how certain Cervantine works and episodes (“El licenciado Vidriera,” “El coloquio de los perros,” the Cave of Montesinos episode in *Don Quijote*) seem to invite psychoanalytic interpretations, and Cruz shows how such theory illuminates some central concerns: applied to the characters, for example, it can provide another perspective on the novelistic values of autonomy, complexity, and development. Cruz indicates the variety of approaches (Freudian, Jungian, Lacanian), the objects of inquiry (character, author, as well as critic), and how such inquiry can reveal the dynamics of desire, Western phallocentrism, and so forth. A familiar division in contemporary criticism, between “humanists” and “postmodernists,” is identified, with the Freudians adhering to the former, the Lacanians propagating the latter. While such a characterization does speak to real tendencies, Cruz’s opposition strikes me as unnecessarily reductive: the humanist clings to notions of truth, cohesion, and authorial design, whereas the postmodernist sets forth interpretations (in this case, of *Don Quijote*’s death scene) in which “the textual ambivalences and ambiguities stand for multivalent arbitrary signs that gesture toward an unrepresentable, because meaningless, future” (195). Although Cruz makes the point that no

particular interpretation should be privileged, she repeatedly aligns the continued existence of humanist approaches with a “lingering conservative bent of many *cervantistas*” (195), a “protracted dominance of male Hispanists” (199); by extension, psychoanalytic and feminist approaches, especially post-modern ones, represent progress and liberation. The logic of the essay makes one feel compelled to accept any and all such interpretations, lest one be identified as conservative or repressive. Is it disingenuous to hope that we could appreciate—or critique—the contributions of both “camps” without stridently drawing ranks?

Diana de Armas Wilson presents a relatively new trend in Cervantine studies: the insistence upon the Americas and colonization as a vital interpretative context (“Cervantes and the New World”). The essay works well as a conclusion to the collection, since it picks up Ife’s initial call of attention to “The Historical and Social Context,” while pointing to some directions that a “theorization” of one of these contexts might lead. Perhaps the ubiquity of postcolonial theory makes such an approach inevitable, but Wilson demonstrates that, given the number of New World references in the *Novelas ejemplares*, *Don Quijote* and *Persiles*, it is particularly fitting for Cervantes—a man who, after all, failed twice to obtain a position (and new life) in the Americas. There is much interesting speculation here (don Quijote modeled on Columbus?), and, consistent with other proponents of disillusionment and contrarian discourse in Cervantes, Wilson suggests our author held a negative view of the conquistadors and colonists, who embodied feudal barbarism and an insidious quixotism. The relationship between *Don Quijote* and chivalric novels takes on an added complexity in this light, as Cervantes’ literary parody may have also been intended as satire of the conquistadors who imitated these very works. Thus it is also argued that the rise of the modern novel cannot be fully understood without attention to the colonial context. (Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* is, accordingly, another case in point.) Wilson adds a final irony by suggesting that, in don Quijote’s dejection following the “enchanted boat” debacle (II, 29), Cervantes may have been expressing his own frustration at not being able to participate in the American enterprise. Was this authorial desire most likely a conservative or progressive brand of quixotism?

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