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Cervantes' Don Quixote: A Casebook. Ed. Roberto González Echevarría.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. 281 pp. ISBN: 0-19-516937-9 (hardback), 0-19-516938-7 (paperback).

This casebook is one of the most recent additions to Oxford University Press's prolific series *Casebooks in Criticism*, which consists of more than fifty volumes designed to elucidate both literature and film with a broad sampling of criticism. An introduction by the editor Roberto González Echevarría and a section titled "Self Portraits," in which González Echevarría presents self-portraits of Cervantes from the Prologue to *Exemplary Novels* and *The Trials of Persiles and Sigismunda*, frame noteworthy essays by past and present scholars of Cervantes' masterpiece. This casebook brings together a diverse group of perspectives, each of which promises to contribute in its own unique way to the current state of Cervantine scholarship. In addition, the inclusion of several previously published essays that constitute seminal criticism makes it possible to appreciate today the evolution of *Quixote* studies.

González Echevarría's introduction consists of an historical and literary overview of the novel. Topics he addresses include the lasting appeal of *Don Quixote*, the picaresque elements within the novel, Don Quixote's view of reality, the character of the narrator, and the unique relationship Cervantes shared with his literary creation: "Don Quijote and his creator both invent themselves in a quest for freedom that their advanced age makes urgent, breaking on the one hand with literary tradition and on the other with social expectations" (3). González Echevarría concludes the introduction with a brief yet informative commentary on each essay.

The consequential events that influenced and informed Cervantes' literary production are the subject of Manuel Durán's "Cervantes' Harassed and Vagabond Life," which first appeared in his *Cervantes* (Twayne, 1974). Durán describes Cervantes as both an *insider* (participant in the battle of Lepanto and author of successful books—*Don Quixote* and *Exemplary Novels*) and an *outsider* (financial hardships, prisoner, and social outcast) in relation to the mainstream of Spanish life. Durán concludes his essay with a brief discussion of the debate surrounding Cervantes' lineage. Durán suggests that, while we may never know if Cervantes was a *converso* or not, Cervantes' lineage may help to explain his complex life.

Erich Auerbach's "The Enchanted Dulcinea" first appeared in the English edition of his classic *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton University Press, 1953). Auerbach analyzes the representation of reality in *Don Quixote*. In addition, he debates whether Cervantes' masterpiece is by nature tragic or comic, concluding that the "whole book is a comedy in which well-founded reality holds madness up to ridicule" (50).

He bases this conclusion on the anti-Romantic premise that Don Quixote's adventures lack "serious consequence" (48) and that his "activity reveals nothing at all" (48) about the problems that existed in Cervantes' day. Auerbach then discusses briefly the power and limits of what he calls "Cervantean," and how it elucidates the meaning of the novel.

In "The Genesis of *Don Quixote*" (from *The Anatomy of Don Quixote: A Symposium*, 1932), Ramón Menéndez Pidal traces the origin of *Don Quixote* back to the Spanish *romances*, which he considered to be the essence of Spain. Menéndez Pidal posits the "Entremés de los romances" (c. 1591) as a significant influence upon the writing of *Don Quixote*. While Cervantes appreciated the humor that was a result of di Ser Gherardo's and Bartolo's (the protagonist of "Entremés de los romances") fantasy colliding with reality, Cervantes, according to Menéndez Pidal, realized the limitations of the *romances* and found inspiration in the chivalric deeds of the medieval epics. Another source of inspiration for Cervantes was Avellaneda's apocryphal *Don Quixote*. Menéndez Pidal reasons that there "are sources of literary inspiration that operate by rejection, and they may be as important as, or more so than those that are mobilized by attraction" (86). The genesis of the novel, Menéndez Pidal concludes, has different sources, but the one that provided Cervantes with the first impulse to create Don Quixote was the *romancero*.

Georgina Dopico Black examines the relation "between books and bodies, between canons and cannons, between libraries and power" (95–96) in "Canons Afire: Libraries, Books, and Bodies in Don Quixote's Spain." Dopico Black asserts that libraries have both histories and genealogies. She traces the history of libraries, beginning with those found in Al-Andalus and ending with the Escorial library, to illustrate their role in Spain's emergence as a nation. She bases her discussion of the genealogy of libraries on the priest, the barber, the housekeeper, and the niece's expurgation of Alonso Quijano's books in Part I. Dopico Black also points out that books in early modern Spain were known as *cuerpos de libros*, terminology that appears at the beginning of the *escrutinio* episode. In addition, she suggests that another aspect of *Don Quixote* that illustrates the conflictive cultures and faiths of Cervantes' Spain is Cide Hamete's inability to remember specifically the names of trees, which, of course, are a metaphor of genealogy.

E. C. Riley asserts that the "interaction of literature and life is a fundamental theme of *Don Quixote*" (125) in "Literature and Life in *Don Quixote*" (from *Cervantes's Theory of the Novel*, Oxford University Press, 1962). Don Quixote attempts to emulate the characters from his books of chivalry, but, in doing so, Cervantes parodies the adventures as his knight-errant tries to breathe life into them. Don Quixote goes to extremes, becoming an artist himself, as he creates a new world. Several characters, in fact, most notably the Duke and Duchess in Part II, fall victim to imaginative literature. Cervan-

tes' imagination is so vast that often life and literature interfere with each other; Riley cites Ginés de Pasamonte's unfinished autobiography as an example of how "life and literary composition run *pari passu* in Cervantes" (132). While there are precedents to Cervantes' treatment of Don Quixote, several of which Riley mentions, no author, Riley believes, is able to manipulate the fine line between literature and life as deftly as Cervantes.

Bruce Wardropper examines why *Don Quixote* is a "story masquerading as a history" (142) in "Don Quixote: History or Story?" (first published in *Modern Philology*, 1965). Cervantes describes his novel as an *historia*, or a history, as if the events actually happened. The paradox that Wardropper explains in his article is the following: how can an external framework of fiction contain information that is historically true? Wardropper describes *Don Quixote* as a work of fiction that pretends to be history, concluding, therefore, that Cervantes' masterpiece "does not disentangle the story from the history, but points its telescope at the ill-defined frontier itself" (146). Wardropper suggests that Cervantes wants the reader to judge what is true and what is false. The existence during Cervantes' day of deliberately false histories further blurs the line that separates history from story.

Leo Spitzer's point of departure in "Linguistic Perspectivism in the *Don Quijote*" (from his *Linguistics and Literary History*, Princeton University Press, 1948) is "to start from a particular feature of Cervantes' novel which must strike any reader: the instability and variety of the names given to certain characters...in order to find out what may be Cervantes' psychological motives behind this polyonomasia (and polyetymologia)" (163). Spitzer bases his analysis upon Américo Castro's belief that perspectivism shapes the structure of a novel as a whole, which Spitzer asserts can be found in Cervantes' treatment of the plot and of ideological themes. Spitzer chooses certain linguistic phenomena (names of characters, Cervantes' treatment of common nouns, and dialects and jargon) in order to draw a connection between language and Cervantes' worldview. Spitzer concludes that Cervantes' perspectivism establishes the author as the real protagonist of the novel, for the reader is "given to understand that an almighty overlord is directing us, who leads us where he pleases" (193).

In a most insightful essay titled "Don Quixote: Crossed Eyes and Vision," the editor Roberto González Echevarría discusses the many ways in which vision is an integral ingredient of the novel: "The power to see, or not to see, correctly, and to be seen or not accurately by others, determines the knight's fortunes, and these problems of vision and perception quickly become one of the novel's central themes" (218). In his study of a novel in which the setting is both luminous and transparent, González Echevarría proposes to "confront the mute materiality of things and the hieratic silence of actions as they are represented in the novel" (219). He is particularly interested in how

physical deformities affect the way that characters look at themselves and at other characters. Furthermore, González Echevarría asserts that the cross-eyed Ginés de Pasamonte, and not Don Quijote, should be identified with Cervantes, who like Pasamonte, “had a split point of view in a world where the clarity of vision and of reason seemed to be making increasingly remote certainty in all orders, including the moral one” (235).

George Haley considers how the fictitious author in *Don Quixote* contributes to a novel that Haley describes as “in the process of becoming” (241) in the “The Narrator in *Don Quijote*: Maese Pedro’s Puppet Show” (*MLN*, 1965). After Haley identifies the different narrators and comments briefly on their roles, he focuses on Maese Pedro’s puppet show to illustrate the interplay of story, teller, and reader that occurs within the story of Don Quijote’s adventures. Furthermore, Haley asserts that the puppet show is an analogue to the novel because “it reproduces on a miniature scale the same basic relationships among storyteller, story and audience that are discernible in the novel’s overall scheme” (261). Haley concludes that what Cervantes accomplishes in writing *Don Quixote* is to show how “fictions masquerading as histories are put together by laying bare their inner workings” (262).

Cervantes’ Don Quixote: A Casebook also consists of a photo gallery, a bibliography, an index, and each of the essays is supported by comprehensive notes. It is a fitting tribute to the novel on the four-hundredth anniversary of the publication of Part I. Specialists and generalists alike are able to appreciate the instant accessibility of previously published essays by several of the best known Cervantine scholars. These essays emphasize that the literary nature of the novel was a major component of twentieth-century *Quixote* criticism. While twenty-first century *Quixote* criticism continues to deal with this aspect of the novel, scholars today also approach *Don Quixote* from a historical perspective, as is evidenced by Dopico Black’s essay in this volume. The compelling and indispensable essays in this casebook provide valuable insight into one of the world’s most beloved novels and will certainly provoke much thought and inspire new ideas for years to come.

Michael J. McGrath
Department of Foreign Languages
Georgia Southern University
Statesboro, Georgia 30460
mmcgrath@georgiasouthern.edu