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Robert S. Stone. *Picaresque Continuities: Transformations of Genre from the Golden Age to the Goethezeit*. New Orleans: University Press of the South, 1998. 202 pp. ISBN: 1-889431-40-0.

Picaresque Continuities seems at first glance to be a selective but well-documented study of versions of the picaresque narrative very much in the best tradition of Comparative Literature studies. But although only two sections deal directly with Cervantes' works, this book is a significant addition to Cervantine studies, not only for the attention given to both *Don Quixote* and to "El licenciado Vidriera," but also given Stone's argument for the centrality of Cervantes' fiction within a process that the author defines as the evolution of the picaresque into the narrative form known as the *Bildungsroman*. Beginning with the epoch of *Lazarillo de Tormes* and ending at the crucial moment in the rise of European romanticism marked by the publication of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795), Stone provides a wealth of incisive commentary on the texts in question. He also offers at least two provocative conceptual perspectives on the nature of the first picaresque texts and on the thematic and ideological transformations represented in subsequent works. The first of these arguments has to do with the affinities and (to this reader, previously unremarked) mutual relevance shared by the putative *Ur-text* of the Spanish picaresque, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, and the "non-fiction" chronicle of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *La relación que dio Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca de lo acaecido en las Indias* (1542). The second key argument of this study is the complex web of relationships, not only diachronic but subtly synchronic, in the realms of the social and economic from which the picaresque narrative arose. From this beginning, Stone convincingly shows how the later phenomenon of the *Bildungsroman* developed out of the picaresque. The crucial linkage in this evolution, moreover, is manifested most fully in *Don Quixote*, specifically in the dynamic of the evolution of the character of Sancho Panza.

The book is amply documented and well grounded in the relevant historical sources and literary-critical scholarship on the picaresque and narrative in general. It is also an exercise in bold critical imagination. In particular, Stone argues very convincingly for the not just coincidental importance, in the genesis of the Spanish picaresque, of timing: i.e., the fact that this first key text (*Lazarillo*, 1554) appears when the Spanish empire is still in the early stages of its New World project of exploration, conquest, and colonization. Ongoing uncertainty about the precise date of the composition of *Lazarillo de Tormes* might seem to undermine an assertion of direct influence of the Cabeza de Vaca text on the writing of *Lazarillo*. But Stone's more fundamental argument—that the many "relaciones" from the New World were already, in

one form or another, in the air—is both intriguing and plausible. As the study makes clear, Stone's central argument concerns a new, shared *Zeitgeist*, a sense of the paradox of conquest and colonization, with its sufferings as well as its lures of advancement.

Stone's approach to the analysis of the texts in question has a dual focus. First, he is concerned with the significant currents and changes in literary form (what we would call history of genre), and second, he addresses the trends of socio-cultural history viewed more broadly, the slow and subtle shift from the hierarchies and assumptions of the European medieval world view to the incipient dislocations and possibilities of a more fluid, proto-capitalist social reality. For Stone the texts under examination are not only reflections of the problems and, in some cases, incipient changes of a given society, but are also forward-looking "pragmatic" documents, examples and lessons in how to "read" the new society and economic reality into which the reader of the epoch, as well as the protagonist of the text, is moving. As the author states at the outset, "I focus on certain moments where texts overtly try to teach readers how to view the world in less conventional or new ways, both within the novel, as well as without. By scrutinizing passages that foreground acts of reading and interpretation—acts by which sense is made of the world by protagonist and reader alike—I show how these texts respond to social, political and cultural realities as hero and reader are presented with an inventory of social roles that must somehow be negotiated" (1). Likewise, Stone underlines the element of social change: "The world depicted in both the picaresque and the bildungsroman, is a changing, unstable place, and a character or type emerges and evolves with it (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 365). Accordingly, my emphasis is upon a contextual reading of the hero's experience of shaping and being shaped in an increasingly secular and capitalist world" (1). Given this broadly inclusive and complex perspective on the documents of each epoch, the distinctions between "pure" fiction, non-fiction memoir, and those works that sit problematically between these often arbitrary categories are also interrogated by the author with considerable insight and imagination.

The organization of the chapters underscores the diversity of the works examined and the variety of interests and phenomena embodied by these works. The author stresses both the linkages of influence across the chronological trajectory and also the significant differences between the several nationalities and cultures—as well as their respective historical moments—from which these narratives arise. The chapters are as follows: "Introduction: From Picaresque to Bildungsroman"; "Chapter One: New Worlds: The Colonial Other and the Inchoate Bourgeois"; "Chapter Two: The Pícaro and the Moors: All Dressed Up and Nowhere to Go" [dealing largely with *Guzmán de Alfarache*]; "Chapter Three: 'El licenciado Vidriera': the Fragile Mind and the Fragmented Body"; "Chapter Four: Sancho's Legacy"; "Chapter Five: Pica-

resque Internationals: Estebanillo, Simplicius, and Gil Blas"; and "Chapter Six: To 1800 and Beyond." The concluding chapter deals mainly with Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and offers some brief but provocative comments on Lizardi's *Periquillo sarniento* and the Brazilian work *Memórias de um Sargento de Milícias* by Antônio de Almeida.

As noted above, while only two chapters deal specifically with Cervantine texts, the imprint of Cervantes' vision underlies the study as a whole. Stone characterizes the importance of *Don Quixote* in relation to the picaresque as follows: "*Don Quixote* combines the most popular, newest prose form of Cervantes' day, the picaresque novel, with the still-popular prose form of a former time, the chivalric novel, incorporating several other sub-genres as well" (5). This is a fairly broad and unexceptionable assertion. Perhaps more novel is the author's suggestion of the greater importance that Sancho's role and character development take on when one considers *Don Quixote* as a key stage in the early movement of narrative toward the *Bildungsroman*: "Sancho undergoes the first process of *Bildung* in early-modern literature: he is not only a new type of literary character, but the starting point for a whole new way of storytelling that appeals to a world transforming under the pressures of history" (3). These suggestions, stated near the beginning of *Picaresque Continuities* are convincingly elaborated in chapter four (95–131).

Stone's reading of "El licenciado Vidriera" is imaginative and well argued. The author examines numerous aspects of this notoriously complex and disturbing novella, but in particular there are two elements to which he gives special attention: first, the question of the protagonist's essentially failed or incomplete psychological and social development, and second, the implications of Tomás's ultimate failure to find a place (as a professional) in Spain's society as a comment on the larger problems of the Spanish Empire. Both of these elements are analyzed in detail and with convincing arguments. But the critical notion of including this text within the picaresque is admittedly debatable. Stone justifies this inclusion as follows: "Rarely has it been seen as a segment along the picaresque continuum.... Yet it is in 'El licenciado Vidriera' that the picaresque narrative elements being explored here are most in evidence, as the novella is quite simply the life story of a low-born, gifted individual, struggling for success on his own terms" (75). Toward the end of this chapter, Stone sums up the problem of Tomás Rueda's life, identity, and death, reconnecting the trajectory of the licenciado's story with the structure of the picaresque:

Unable or unwilling to find his place between words and bodies in his world, Tomás takes refuge in madness, where he achieves fame and speaks his mind. When he is cured and returned to the constraints of

daily life, it proves unbearable, and so the Licenciado Rueda chooses a glorious death...over a doomed career in a social hierarchy that rejects him. ...The geography of this career is also significant: the war in Flanders presents a way for Tomás to get out of Spain physically without leaving it behind hegemonically or psychologically, enabling him to achieve in death what he could not in life. Thus, the picaresque origins of the novella are underscored by its ending, which, in order for it to signify, must be compared to its beginning. (93)

In effect, by tracing the elements of the picaresque within "El licenciado Vidriera," Stone demonstrates how the picaresque broadly understood surfaces in and gives shape to a unique work of a fiction that marks a significant stage in the evolution of early-modern fiction and in the representation of modern subjectivity (Tomás's isolation, madness, and final exclusion). The picaresque, thus, is treated less as a genre category than as a set of influences and also as a way of reading the text in question.

Stone's treatment of *Don Quixote* is if anything even more complex and inventive. In this case, the core of the argument is to posit the novel not only as the mad adventure and tragic trajectory of Don Quixote, but to see the narrative as a complex interaction between the mad hidalgo and his squire, one in which, as Don Quixote lives out and exhausts his literature-induced possibilities and illusions, Sancho is educated so as to become a prototype of the modern, resourceful, and practical survivor. As the focus of Stone's reading shifts more toward Sancho's development, it becomes more than plausible to view the novel as a significant stage in the move toward the *Bildungsroman*, understanding that the "Bildung" is Sancho's. The significance of this perspective has to do with Stone's overriding argument that the picaresque in general is a subtle heuristic artifice, one that equips its readers for a new socio-economic world, making us more subtle readers of fictions and the world:

Cervantes wished to educate his audience, to transform them into critical consumers of fiction. ...Viewed in this way...the *Quixote* becomes a sort of sophisticated primer, a talking book that directs itself away from literacy controlled by the aristocracy and toward a more orally attuned mass audience, schooling this audience in literature and interpretation, challenging it to demand more than just entertainment from books. In parallel fashion, the hidalgo from La Mancha, a talking book himself, edifies his squire Sancho Panza. (95)

The connecting and combining of picaresque and *Bildungsroman* makes sense for Stone, in his locating of *Don Quixote* within the evolution of modern fic-

tion, as he defines Sancho's place in the total narrative picture: "In addition to debunking the chivalric novel, Cervantes is using his book, which I believe to be another transformation of the picaresque, to depict the process of *Bildung* as it could play out in Sancho's Spain (more successfully than in Tomás Rodaja's)" (97).

It is not possible in the space of a brief review to do justice to the range and complexity of the penetrating and original literary analysis provided by this study. This reviewer suspects that some readers will take issue with one or more of the interpretations offered; others may question whether or not the concept of the picaresque as a recognizable genre has been pushed to such a point that it has lost something of its taxonomical utility. But there can be no question that this study is a provocative and significant contribution to both the bibliography of the picaresque and to Cervantine studies. That said, I cannot conclude without mentioning that the edition leaves much to be desired. University Press of the South has printed the text in an all but unreadably small font, and the whole look of the production suggests a lack of publication quality that a work of such strong critical content and graceful, clear prose truly deserves.

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