

From: *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America*, 28.1 (Spring, 2008): 209-11.
Copyright © 2008, The Cervantes Society of America.
<http://www.h-net.org/~cervantes/csa/artics08/Schams08.pdf>

El Quijote hoy: La riqueza de su recepción. Eds. Klaus-Dieter Ertler and Alejandro Rodríguez Díaz. Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 2007. 290 pp. ISBN: 978 84-8489-300-4.

El Quijote hoy is another collection of essays derived from a conference celebrating the fourth centenary, and it illustrates some of the challenges of giving a fresh assessment of Cervantes' contemporary relevance. There are essays that use Cervantes to make pronouncements on current sociopolitical issues: one is a four-page effort titled "Cervantes contra Huntington," with no citations from Cervantes, and no bibliography save a footnote reference to *Foreign Policy*; another observes parallels between scenes in *Don Quijote* and Kathy Acker's *Don Quixote*, whose protagonist has an abortion "... because I refused normalcy which is the capitulation to social control" (258). Others re-

assert the novel's famous complexity and intertextuality, some with a postmodern and materialist hue. Added to the mix are three papers dealing with *Don Quijote* translation and criticism in Slovenian, one on its reception in Hungary, two tracing influence in Teutonic literature (Joseph Roth and Wilhelm Muster), and one pointing out quixotic themes in modern Peninsular poetry. The collection is somewhat uneven and idiosyncratic, with several entries apparently still in their conference-paper format of five to eight pages.

In the opening essay, "Parámetros de lectura y parámetros de recepción en el *Quijote*," Antonio Gómez Moriana stresses the importance of a sophisticated understanding of allusion and evocation: "El elemento dotado de este poder evocador que atribuyo a la alusión funciona en el texto por tanto como un elemento anafórico; no en sentido *transfrástico*, sino en sentido *trans textual* ya que no remite a elementos catafóricos al interior del texto mismo, sino a un patrimonio cultural común al autor y al lector" (18). Having set his parameters of interpretation, Gómez Moriana argues that the library episode (I, 6) contains allusions to the Inquisition, and that Don Quijote's confrontation with the Toledan Merchants (I, 4), representing a confrontation between bourgeois and feudal mentalities, is best understood in light of the Communist Manifesto (28-30). Ángel Repáraz suggests a number of "links" between *Don Quijote* and some German writers (e.g., Hoffmann, Schiller, Mann) as a function of *rizoma*, which purportedly allows for a more disordered, non-hierarchical notion of reception and influence (105-13). Klaus-Dieter Ertler cites Luhmann's "systems theory" to similar effect, and urges us to think of ourselves as consumers approaching the "supermarket" of *Don Quijote*, each taking and making use of what we want. According to Ertler, this helps us grasp the complexity of Cervantes' literary system—although he recognizes the limits of his inquiry: "Lo que no podemos describir aquí, pero que tendría una gran importancia también para el análisis de la configuración sistemática en su totalidad, sería la plasmación de otros sistemas sociales por la novela, es decir —a parte [sic] del sistema literario— el sistema económico, jurídico, y religioso" (120). Although scholars have long been dealing with such contexts, it probably cannot hurt to stress once again the importance of carefully defining one's hermeneutic circle.

"La recepción del *Quijote* en Hungría" (Csaba Csuday, 185-95), "Las traducciones de *Don Quijote* al esloveno" (Jasmina Markič, 197-209) and "La interpretación del *Quijote* por la crítica eslovena" (Branka Kalenić Ramšak (211-23) are, like a number of the entries, somewhat short on analysis, but they contain informative references for scholars interested in the reception of *Don Quijote* in Central Europe. Barbara Pihler focuses on the linguistic play of Cervantes as she illustrates the difficulty and measured successes of translating the novel into Slovenian ("*Don Quijote* y su lenguaje," 225-54). In one of the more sustained efforts of the volume, Fernando Varela Iglesias offers a readable and fairly nuanced overview of "hard school" and "romantic" strains in *Don Quijote* criticism ("*Realismo e idealismo en la recepción del Quijote*," 43-77). And an insightful and rhapsodic account of Cervantes' own *quijotismo* is given by María Luisa Domínguez ("*Metadiscurso y pasión en el Quijote*," 137-55). Aptly invoking Borges, Nabokov and

Fuentes, Domínguez discusses how Cervantes' ludic appropriation of conventions and his suspect narrators do much more than cultivate a critical, skeptical reader. They also affirm the pleasure of reading, and the ability of fiction, in all its artifice, to shed light on reality.

Despite such luminous moments, I am not sure how much *cervantistas* stand to gain from working their way through the seventeen essays of *El Quijote hoy*. The conference undoubtedly produced stimulating discussions and useful connections. But it has made for a somewhat scattered and ephemeral collection of articles. A good reader would more profitably—and with greater pleasure—cultivate an appreciation for Cervantes' complexity, modernity and celebration of imaginative literature by spending time with the primary works in question.

Michael Scham
University of St. Thomas
msscham@stthomas.edu