

Carolyn A. Nadeau. *Women of the Prologue. Imitation, Myth, and Magic in Don Quixote I*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2002. 188 pp. ISBN: 0-83875-510-0.

Cervantes, designated the father of the modern novel for his masterful narratology, reveals his modernity in the representation of his female characters as he constructs a new social role for women that allows them freedom of will and choice. Carolyn Nadeau looks to the women cited in Cervantes' prologue to *Don Quixote*, Part I, to establish a paradigm for the subsequent female characterization in the novel. While Cervantine criticism has offered sources for the creation of the female characters Dulcinea, Dorotea, Marcela, and Zoraida, no previous critic has sought models for these characters in Cervantes' own prologue. Nadeau postulates that Cervantes,

in his prologue and in his female characterization, rewrites, revises, and disrupts the conventions of Renaissance imitation to design his own personal theory of imitation.

It is common for a writer to complete the prologue after the narrative is written. Since this creative exercise is many times independent of the main work and has its own impetus, style, and aesthetics, the critic Alberto Porqueras Mayo has plainly designated it a separate genre (*El prólogo en el Renacimiento español*). Although the prologue can be considered a separate creation from the larger work, it is still related to the work as it divulges the author's motivation for writing or justifies the author's variations and creative innovations. In addition, the prologues of Cervantes' day regularly embrace humanist and philosophical topics, as well as precepts of literary theory. These authors seek prestige for their work in their many references to the classical tradition.

It is undeniable that Cervantes' prologue resists the norms of literary tradition. As Cervantes himself affirms in his prologue, "no quiero irme con la corriente del uso." Nadeau explores how Cervantes' prologue explicitly critiques the literary conventions and imitation theory of the Renaissance. She opens her study with a masterful review of the historical precedents of *imitatio* in the Renaissance, followed by the views of modern scholars on imitation. This serves as a preface to the points of convergence between the women in the prologue and the female characters of the novel who find their introduction in these references to mythical and historical women. Nadeau explores how Cervantes manipulates imitation theory to his own needs as she compares Cervantes to Virgil, who may dismiss his models, and to Ovid, who will incorporate the models that he imitates. Cervantes borrows characteristics of classical women, which he then reconstructs in the context of his century. The mythical characters Medea (Ovid), Circe (Virgil), or Calypso (Homer), or the sacred prostitutes Lamia, Laida, and Flora are revised and recontextualized as the women of *Don Quixote* who become identifiable as contemporary females.

In her second chapter, Nadeau provides an insightful analysis of the dialogue between Cervantes and his fictitious friend to illustrate how Cervantes appropriates imitation in his prologue. The prologue is a critique of contemporary writers, through which Cervantes conceives a new perspective on literary imitation. Nadeau explains that Cervantes questions the authority of source, author, and text by limiting his imitation and by allowing for invention and authorial creativity. Rather than relying solely on copying the classics, Cervantes forges a solid relationship with the present-day reader as he also draws from contemporary society as a source for his imitation. In addition, Cervantes transmits literary authority to his readers

by providing them the privileged status to comment on the creative process in the interpretation of what is good narrative. In a process that can be designated as fragmented, innovative, and personalized imitation, Nadeau illustrates that Cervantes rewrites his sources.

In the third chapter, Nadeau makes reference to the hetairae, ancient courtesans who were sacred prostitutes who embodied not only sexual but intellectual qualities. She explains that Guevara rewrites these classical female figures of the *mujeres rameras* [loose women] Lamia, Laida, and Flora, in his "Letra para don Enrique Enríquez," by distinguishing their physicality from their spiritual knowledge: they can be either saints or prostitutes but not both; in turn Cervantes imitates this treatment as he rewrites Guevara. The sacred hetairae of Guevara's letter are refigured and become in Cervantes' novel vulnerable women who are forced into their profession by need, as illustrated by Maritornes, not a prostitute by choice. In observing how Maritornes, Dorotea, Marcela, and Zoraida seek a different code of behavior in their lives, Nadeau considers gender, race, and class. She perceives a link between prostitution and marriage in the choices that women make to legitimize their lives through marriage, either for wealth (Luscinda) or to pursue a Christian lifestyle (Zoraida). Marcela does not want marriage but Dorotea does. Nadeau concludes that in his imitation of the classical hetairae Cervantes alters this source dramatically to deduce that there are neither good nor bad women but rather women who negotiate their sexuality using marriage as the accepted social institution.

Medea's conflict between love and loyalty is the foundation for Nadeau's exploration of Cervantes' characterization of Dorotea and Zoraida. In her fourth chapter, Nadeau discusses Ovid's representations of Medea in the *Heroides* and in the *Metamorphoses*, with their different perspectives on marriage and betrayal, to reveal the multiplicity of this character. Both Ovid and Cervantes create women characters who are more complex than they may at first appear to be. In *Don Quixote*, Dorotea is first disguised as a man, then is revealed as a woman, and then later masquerades as the Princess Micomicona; Zoraida, who like Medea abandons her home and family to establish herself in a foreign land, has a cultural duality. Cervantes does not imitate Ovid's portrayal of Medea's renowned cruelty, but instead draws from the other characteristics that Ovid portrays in his creation. While Cervantes' female characters may function within a structure similar to that of Medea, Cervantes allows for a resolution of the conflict of passion by restoring harmony within a Christian context. Zoraida's betrayal of her Moorish father is for spiritual, not carnal reasons and is justified in her conversion to Christianity. Dorotea restores order to legitimate families and defends women's honor. Cervantes' imitation yields to more pressing social

concerns that pertain to contemporary women and the institution of marriage.

As Nadeau reviews Cervantes' treatment of sorcery in *Don Quixote* in her fifth chapter, she reveals that Cervantes pursues more invention than imitation. Nadeau examines the history of Circe and Calypso as a counterpoint to the function of the sorceress in the figures of Maritornes and Dulcinea. She explores the different types of sorcery in *Don Quixote*, Part I, through the sociocultural myths of female magic and witchcraft. Cervantes' sorcery, coming from varied sources, is both fantastic (unnamed sorcerers after Quixote) and real (priest-magician brings Quixote home). While magic, sorcery, and the supernatural may have their sources in the ancient figures of Calypso and Circe, Cervantes departs from these classical models (Dulcinea as Circe-type enchanter, Maritornes as Calypso figure) to select both popular and contemporary models of sorcery from books of chivalry, folklore, superstition, and witchcraft, and Neoplatonic treatises on astrology and on the occult.

Nadeau systematically concludes that Cervantes does not reject imitation and literary tradition but modifies and adapts it to mirror his contemporary society. He gives the seventeenth-century author a new freedom to dismiss classical sources as the only legitimate authority, and to invent a more contemporary source of authority. Nadeau has uncovered the imitation strategies through which Cervantes simultaneously proclaims and disguises his sources. The distance that Cervantes creates between the classical women whom he recalls in his prologue and the female characters of his novel derives from his preference to represent his contemporary world. As *Don Quixote* relates the history of Don Quixote, Cervantes takes the role of the historian who must represent things as they are and not as he may want them to be.

Carolyn Nadeau is to be commended for her dedication and scholarship in an investigation that is replete with critical evaluations and perspectives. She has organized her study, comprised of an introduction and six chapters, the last of which provides her conclusions, in a manner that is comprehensible to all levels of readers, and she illustrates her observations with the generous use of quotations. All Spanish citations are followed by the English translation to allow for the accessibility of the text for the non-Hispanic reader. Nadeau supports each issue that she presents with a critical history of both traditional and contemporary criticism. She effectively synthesizes source and critical materials to create an informed analysis that summarizes the fundamentals as a foundation for her original thesis on the women of Cervantes' prologue. The notes are well documented and extensive, and there is a valuable bibliography of primary sources and varied crit-

ical works. Nadeau fulfills her goal to elucidate Cervantes' view of Renaissance literary convention in a perceptive, gracefully written investigation that will take its place as a highly insightful contribution to Cervantine studies.

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