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Alberto Rivas Yanes, ed. *El hidalgo fuerte: Siete miradas al Quijote / L'hidalgo fuerte: Sept regards sur Don Quichotte*. Luxemburg: Círculo Cultural Español Antonio Machado, 2005. 237 pp. ISBN: 2-9599777-2-6.

The 400th anniversary of the publication of the first part of *Don Quijote* gave rise to innumerable colloquia, conferences, public readings of the novel, and—of course—publications of all types. In this way, the commemoration of the anniversary fomented a truly international conversation about Cervantes' work and its impact on modern literature and culture. The essays in *El hidalgo fuerte* represent yet another contribution to this conversation, published under the aegis of the Círculo Cultural Español Antonio Machado, an organization founded in 1975 by a small group of Spanish expatriates living in Luxemburg. Luxemburg may not be the first country that leaps to mind when one thinks of hotbeds of Cervantine criticism, but the Círculo Cultural crafted a strong program to celebrate the anniversary of *Don Quijote's* appearance, and the seven essays that make up this book represent a selection of the critical analyses that formed part of that program. Although not all the selections are equally strong, the book contains many worthwhile examinations of *Don Quijote*—its structure, its impact on other creative and literary forms, and its critical reception.

Each of the essays is published here in a bilingual (French and Spanish) format, with the French version appearing on the left-hand pages and the Spanish on the right. The book begins with a prologue by Jean Canavaggio, which consists almost entirely of summaries of the essays that follow. Readers expecting Canavaggio to delve deeper into, or to engage with, the content of the essays will be disappointed, but the prologue does provide a helpful overview of the critical frameworks that inform the essayists' contributions.

The essays themselves are divided into three sections. The first, and most substantial, "La mirada crítica," contains three essays that focus on the novel itself. The first essay of the section, Guillermo Serés's "Las grandes líneas de la composición del *Quijote*," is, as its name suggests, grand in its scope and in its scholarly ambitions. Serés focuses on four aspects of the novel (dialogue, monologue, description, and the *novelas interpoladas*) and the role that they play as Cervantes advances three great themes: love, literature (or literary theory), and justice. Dialogue and monologue serve to advance theoretical ideas, while the *novelas* exist to put those abstract ideas into concrete human action, which immediately problematizes the "purity" of the theoretical. Or, as Serés notes, "las 'novelas' insertas en la historia de caballero y escudero funcionan a modo de defectuosos *exempla* de tales ideas" (45). Cervantes demands that his reader participate actively in the process of the creation of meaning from text: "De modo que el ritmo narrativo del *Quijote* está definido, en esencia, por la alternancia de momentos de acción (principalmente narrados en tercera persona) y de momentos de reflexión (muchas veces presentados o re-presentados), lo que obliga al lector a un permanente ir

y venir de los hechos a los pensamientos de los personajes" (33).

The second essay in this section, Pedro Javier Pardo's "El *Quijote*, la novela y la metanovela," is (as its author admits) another effort at unpacking the old cliché, frequently tossed out by well-meaning critics, that *Don Quijote* is the first modern novel. Pardo agrees with this statement, and asserts that the novel's "modernity" is a consequence of its realism and its self-consciousness as an artistic form: "O, en otras palabras, la obra de Cervantes se interesa no sólo por la realidad sino también por la representación, es decir, por sí misma como representación, y en este sentido no es sólo novela sino también metanovela" (109). Following Bakhtin, Pardo declares that the novel's "realism" is best understood as being a function of its dialogic nature, and in fact uses the term *realismo dialógico* to describe the relativistic, skeptical, questioning nature of Cervantes' treatment of reality. He also suggests that the book's many meta-novelistic characteristics (multiple levels of narration, insertion of narrators' comments into the "story," etc.) likewise reinforce the need for an active reader, one who is equipped to handle the complex linguistic and narrative labyrinths of the text and (at the same time) negotiate "reality." "Cervantes no quiere que seamos Quijotes," says Pardo (135), which is clever and (mostly) true.

The third essay in this section is the least ambitious but perhaps the most intriguing. Muhsin Al-Ramli's "Mahoma en el *Quijote*: Una interpretación distinta" considers both the influence of Islam on the writing and content of the novel, and also compares Don Quijote with the prophet Mohammed. Al-Ramli emphasizes the humanistic nature of Cervantes' worldview: "En el *Quijote* se encuentra un mensaje de libertad de conciencia, de respeto al prójimo, de entendimiento y de los distintos caminos apropiados para el diálogo entre culturas y civilizaciones diferentes" (147). Cervantes' descriptions of Muslim characters—their dress, feelings, and ideas—are detailed, compelling, and convincing, says Al-Ramli. He points out that Mohammed is mentioned six times in the course of the novel (more than any other prophet). Al-Ramli's most intriguing contribution is his assessment of the ways in which Don Quijote and Mohammed are similar: both figures evince a shared idealism, and both are misunderstood by their peers. Neither is able to resort to miracles, and both believed that the best way to live is "[tomando] las riendas de su caballo en el camino de Dios" (161). Perhaps the strongest evidence supporting a connection between the *caballero andante* and the prophet of Allah is, of course, the fact that Cervantes spent five years in daily contact with Muslims during his captivity in Algiers. Al-Ramli suggests that, albeit in a subtle fashion, this prolonged experience with representatives of Islam permeates the characterization that Cervantes lends to the protagonist of his novel.

The concluding sections of *El hidalgo fuerte*—"Creación y recreación" and "Vida soñada, vida filmada"—consist of five essays that take up only about one-third of the book's length, some 70 pages (really only 35 if one takes into account the bilingual format of the book). Although the two sections are separate, both consider the influence that the novel has had on other artistic forms, ranging from the novel to film. These essays, while enjoyable and thoroughly creative, will perhaps be less useful for seasoned

*cervantistas*. The two essays found in "Creación y recreación" focus on the impact that the *Quijote* has had on the work of novelist Luis Landero. Landero himself is the author of the first essay, "Ante todo me apresuro a decir," in which he echoes Al-Ramli's emphasis on Cervantes' humanism, and follows in the footsteps of fellow novelist Carlos Fuentes in describing the *Quijote* as a source of endless creative inspiration: "A veces me canso de Quevedo, y necesito desquevedizarme, y desgongorizarme, y desfaulknerizarme, y desvalleinclanizarme..., pero del *Quijote* no me canso nunca. Cuando no tengo ganas de leer, cuando me saturó de letra impresa, y llego a aborrecerla, siempre me queda el *Quijote*" (169). Isabel Castells follows with "La guitarra de los sueños: realidad y ficción en la narrativa de Luis Landero," an assessment of the impact of Cervantes' writing on Landero's fiction which (like Pardo's earlier essay) revolves around the dialogic nature of both novelists' work. In a nice turn of phrase, she suggests that both writers seek to "hacer convivir la escritura de una aventura con la aventura de una escritura...de abolir las fronteras entre vida y página logrando que narradores y personajes salgan y entren a su antojo de las cubiertas de los libros para intercambiar constantemente sus roles respectivos" (185, emphasis in the original). Like Pardo, as well, Castells points out the metanarratives that occur in both Cervantes' and Landero's writing—the metaphors of *Teatrum mundi* and *Liber mundi* come to mind, as Don Quijote and Sancho Panza become aware of themselves as characters written about by others and (in a sense) performing for others.

The final section of *El hidalgo fuerte* ("Vida soñada, vida filmada") is the briefest (about 20 pages). Claude Frisoni offers up a one-page rumination ("Don Quijote, vivir los sueños o soñar la vida") contrasting the supposed insanity of the great dreamer Don Quijote with the true insanity of "militarotes que perpetran matanzas en nombre de causas inverosímiles a las que llaman cruzadas, caballería, fidelidad, fe o incluso amor cortés" (207). Claude Bertemes's "Citizen Quijote," for its part, examines Orson Welles's never-completed film *Don Quixote*. Welles, like Cervantes, was an insatiable innovator, and his unfinished film (shot in pieces over two decades) remained a fragmentary collage, encapsulating what Canavaggio calls "tres universos esencialmente extraños entre sí" (19): the mythic horizon of Don Quijote and Sancho, the modern horizon of twentieth-century Spain, and Welles's own enormous, egotistic self (in the film, he appears from time to time on-screen as what Bertemes [221] calls "un ser semi-irónico y extraterritorial"). Deliberately, aggressively, even "quixotically," Welles saw his *Don Quixote* as a rejection of the Hollywood system and as a means to re-create himself as what Canavaggio calls "un Quijote de segundo grado" (21).

The strengths of *El hidalgo fuerte* include the diverse perspectives that it offers to the reader—contributors range from Spanish novelists, to French academics, to an Iraqi émigré now living and working in Spain. Although the contributions are uneven—in length, in scope, in tone, and in style—this fact does not necessarily work against the overall success of the book. To be sure, I have a few minor quibbles—the essays lack bibliographies, the book lacks an index, and there are a few typographical errors sprinkled throughout. Nevertheless, *El hidalgo fuerte* is a welcome addition to

the ever-increasing corpus of Cervantine studies, and it stands out both for its unusual point of origin and for the quiriness of its content. One can spend a good deal of time working through Serés's analysis of the large-scale structures of the novel, or one can enjoy Landero's more personal reflections on the novel. The international community of *cervantistas* can look forward to more contributions from this ambitious group of Luxemburgers.

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