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Donald Gilbert-Santamaría. *Writers on the Market: Consuming Literature in Early Seventeenth-Century Spain*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2005. 271 pp. ISBN: 0-8387-5588-7.

Donald Gilbert-Santamaría's operating premise in *Writers on the Market* is that aesthetics is intimately linked to consumerism. His emphasis here is on the development of a public theater and on the rise of the novel in Spain at the end of the sixteenth century and in the first decades of the seventeenth. The study is divided into three parts, each containing three chapters. The focal points are Lope de Vega and the *comedia*, Mateo Alemán and the picaresque, and Cervantes and *Don Quixote*. The theme of writing for the marketplace unites the authors and traditions under scrutiny, and allows for a consideration of differences between individual artists and genres.

At the center of Gilbert-Santamaría's commentary on Lope is the *Arte nuevo*: its honoring of and resistance to theory, on the one hand, and the dissonance between the treatise and the playwright's dramatic practice, on the other. This is a scenario rife with tensions. A poetics certainly can be associated with poetic values, but a poetics aimed at pleasing the general audience may sacrifice or compromise principles in order to satisfy popular taste. Commercial ventures contaminate the sacrosanct domain of the artist, and the *Arte nuevo* positions Lope in the midst of a dialectical confrontation. Gilbert-Santamaría sees the playwright as struggling to reconcile the diverse factors, and factions, that constitute the theater-going community, and for that reason "any radical ideological content that may find its way into Lope's plays for the public theater is almost invariably defused" (38). The sample plays are *El caballero de Olmedo* and *Fuenteovejuna*. The particular framing of the analysis endeavors to demonstrate that action and dénouement reflect Lope's interest in appeasing his audience, often evoked as "el vulgo." The dramatist states in the *Arte nuevo* that a play should depict the customs and conventions of its age, yet in practice he tends to represent not so much reality as the audience's self-image, its desires. At the end of *El caballero de Olmedo*, for example, the servant Tello's role in the bringing about of justice for Don Alonso's death indicates less the protocol of the period than a nod to the social margins, including the Spanish groundlings (*mosqueteros*). Lope masters the intrinsic dilemma of the play, however, by affirming an autonomy that transcends class distinctions and ends with an action that can appeal to the "demographic heterogeneity" of the audience. Tello is an intermediary for vengeance, and the aristocratic Don Alonso dies a noble—and even mythic—death. *Fuenteovejuna* is marked by violence, both in the Comenda-

dor's actions and in the villagers' response. The residents of the town not only kill the tyrant, but they savor the flaunting of his decapitated head. The event leads to a public spectacle, a parade, which may, at the same time, engage the spectators and threaten to overshadow the murder itself, as the revelry over violence becomes contagious. The concept of collective agency is innately problematic, given that it compromises independent thought and autonomy. The myth of the hero in *El caballero de Olmedo* is replaced in *Fuenteovejuna* by a new myth, derived from Neoplatonism but corrupted in the process: "a giving up of the pressure of individual choice to the ideal of harmonious social integration" (80). The latter play may seem to promise meaningful action without interpersonal conflict, but the result is a subordination rather than an empowerment of the individual, and thus becomes, perhaps, a comforting fiction, but a fiction nonetheless.

The theater is more conspicuously a business than the consumption of narrative, but *Guzmán de Alfarache* and *Don Quixote* "provide a powerfully self-conscious engagement with many of the problems of their own production for a market" (85). Gilbert-Santamaría attributes the success of the picaresque to its understanding, and accommodation, of the anxieties of a society that is undergoing social, religious, and economic crises. A text such as *Guzmán de Alfarache* accentuates deception, hypocrisy, and poverty in an almost obsessive manner, achieving a strong degree of resonance with a heterogeneous readership. The situation is paradoxical, in the sense that mimesis is normally linked to confidence in concrete reality, whereas "the poetics of *engaño*...emerge[s]...paradoxically...as an appropriate conduit for representational verisimilitude in a world where 'truth' chronically eludes human perception" (108). According to Gilbert-Santamaría, Alemán wants to share a moral didacticism that requires that his reader identify, to a degree, with the predicament of the protagonist, a marginal being who may have little in common with the average reader. The writer manages to accomplish this feat by stressing positive elements and concealing the negative; Gilbert-Santamaría explicates a passage in the text to argue that Alemán chooses to concentrate on the motif of freedom over cruelty and material privation. Simultaneously, *Guzmán* draws the reader in through negative exemplarity, by means of "a fear of identification" (122), and, when carried to its limits, through "a disturbing form of entertainment that objectifies not only the suffering of others, but the potential suffering of the reader himself" (125). The tension of *Guzmán* is based on the ultimate relegation of morality to violence and, consequently, on the supremacy of violence over other forces of signification. Gilbert-Santamaría believes that Alemán tries to direct the reading of his narrative toward a moral purpose, but that the novel exhibits

what could be deemed a schizophrenic relationship between the goal of didacticism and the representation, on nearly every page, of the brutality and aggression of society.

If writing for the market causes problems for Lope and Alemán, *Don Quixote* “displays an unprecedented willingness to cater to its consumer audience and especially...to that audience’s demand for entertainment” (151). Gilbert-Santamaría underscores the subjective independence of *Don Quixote*, which encourages readers to pass judgment on his actions, and the shift from the Renaissance notion of *imitatio* as the imitation of textual antecedents to an imitation of life itself, albeit self-consciously. A superb example of this movement is the contrast between *Don Quixote*’s imitation of Amadís de Gaula’s madness and Cardenio’s “authentic”—or, at least, plausible—madness. Subjectivity remains questionable, however, and one may note in *Don Quixote*’s knightly vocation “a nostalgia that involves a paradoxical and seemingly contradictory desire to *efface* subjective autonomy” (165). Aggression is once again a part of the literary system. Comic episodes rooted in violence implicate the reader “in a kind of dehumanizing practice that undermines the elusive freedom of subjective autonomy that forms the novel’s ostensible foundation” (178). One can follow a progression that leads to the key measure of what Gilbert-Santamaría refers to as Cervantes’s critique of subjectivity: *Don Quijote*’s negotiations with Sancho Panza concerning the disenchantment of Dulcinea. The knight’s compassion toward his squire in the matter of the lashes establishes a distinction between the public, competitive zone of the marketplace and a private zone of refuge among family and friends. Enchanters are out; humaneness is in.

Among the writers examined, only Cervantes mixes the novel with drama. In an ironic juxtaposition, the example of Maese Pedro’s puppet show features the destruction of the stage and the papier-mâché figures, together with *Don Quixote*’s willingness to pay for the damage. The symbolic gestures point to an attack on the illusions generated by commercial theater and to the absurdity of the effort to cross the boundary between spectator and spectacle. In the last analysis, the crucial locus for *Don Quixote* is the printing establishment (as in II, 62). The market is not the script, but an essential mediator and motivator.

This is a soundly argued and suggestive book. I am impressed by the ambitious nature of the project and by Gilbert-Santamaría’s ability to hone in on specific examples, judiciously chosen to highlight their synecdochic strength. The correlation of authorial, goals, reader-response, and commerce makes a compelling point of departure. When contradictions form the heart of an analytical enterprise, it is difficult to be perfectly consistent, but the

internal logic of *Writers on the Market* is laudable. The wide range of these invites response. Gilbert-Santamaría is adept at dealing with his predecessors in criticism and at surveying multiple perspectives. He covers prodigious writers and works. He expresses himself clearly and well, but I find that one aspect of his style may be more conducive to lectures than to critical discourse: the volume is full of announcements as to what he is doing, what he is refraining from including, what he will defer until later, and so forth. This is a distraction, but a minor one, and some readers will probably welcome the orientation. *Writers on the Market* is an important study, one that should capture the attention of scholars of early modern Spain and whet critical appetites.

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