



Yamada, Yumiko. *Ben Jonson and Cervantes: Tilting against Chivalric Romances*. Tokyo: Maruzen, 2000. 200 pg.

Citing Aristotelian dramatic principles and the related impulse to satirize chivalric romance, Yumiko Yamada makes a strong case that Cervantes influenced Ben Jonson through Thomas Shelton's English translation of *Don Quixote*. Her argument centers on a homology that unifies the entire study and corrects the modern linkage of Cervantes to Shakespeare. By showing that Cervantes is to Lope de Vega as Jonson is to Shakespeare, Yamada resurrects the link between Cervantes and Jonson (both were strongly classical and humanist) and argues that Lope and Shakespeare preferred commercialism over classical principles. Yamada also casts the difference in style between Jonson and Shakespeare as the difference between neo-classicism and romanticism, the rational and the sentimental. These broad strokes are examined closely in six chapters and a conclusion.

In the first two chapters, Yamada establishes the influence of Cervantes on Jonson, who originally considered *Don Quixote* as similar to the chivalric ro-

mance *Amadís de Gaula* but later recognized in comments on drama by the Canon of Toledo and the Curate that Cervantes shared Jonson's own preference for classical dramaturgy. Jonson saw the dialogue between the Canon and the Curate not as a caricature of neo-Aristotelianism but as a genuine reflection of shared artistic ideals: simplicity, lucidity, poetic truth, verisimilitude, proportion, the unities, and the separation of comedy and tragedy, all of which contrast with the techniques of chivalric romance. Cervantes and Jonson promoted such principles of classical dramaturgy and criticized, respectively, Lope and Shakespeare, who abandoned them for profit. Indeed, Yamada remarks, *Don Quixote* is actually more against Lope than chivalric books.

Chapters Three and Four develop the Cervantes-Lope-Jonson-Shakespeare homology. By abandoning classical principles, Lope catered to his audience and monopolized the stage, driving Cervantes out of the theater business. Similarly, Jonson's adherence to classical principles kept audiences away and cost him popularity as a writer of civic tragedies, whereas Shakespeare met the public's demands by violating these same principles. In short, Lope and Shakespeare are alike in "the improbability of plot and intricate, hyper-elevated style" (144). When Jonson read Shelton's translation of *Don Quixote*, he must have seen Cervantes's career problems underlying the remarks of the Canon and the Curate as a reflection of his own situation (being eclipsed by Shakespeare) and fought back by having his selected plays published in 1616 in the first deluxe folio edition in the history of English literature. Jonson's quotation of *Don Quixote*, Part I, in the opening work of the Folio highlights similarities between the two playwrights. In 1623 Shakespeare's own works were published in the same deluxe format, and Jonson's contribution "To the Reader" seems to praise him warmly. Not so, says Yamada. Jonson simultaneously shows courtesy to the late Shakespeare and builds in a critique by adopting the Cervantine technique of mock encomium, violating in the process his own Aristotelian principles: his praise of Shakespeare is neither simple nor straightforward. The hidden message is that Shakespeare's success lies not in poetic training but in a vulgar appeal to the masses in the grandiloquent language derived from chivalric romance. If "To the Reader" is a "wholly reversible" poem, then Jonson remained true to the critical position he had taken in creating his own Folio (81).

Chapters Five and Six enhance the controlling homology by locating in Sidney the influence of chivalric romance on Shakespeare. Jonson understood that Shakespeare's inflated diction and emphasis on honor and valor come from Sidney, whose *Arcadia* had been influenced by *Amadís de Gaula*, with which Cervantes begins and ends *Don Quixote*. In England as in Spain, for Jonson and Cervantes, the popularity of chivalric romance was an impediment to the development of humanist drama based on classical principles. The authors also disapproved of chivalric romances as literal history. In Jonson's case, the enemy was Arthurian myth and its emphasis on chivalric ideals, perpetuated by Sidney's *Arcadia* and the latter's own military exploits. It was *Britannia*, written by Jonson's teacher William Camden, that corrected British imperial history. "In sum," writes Yamada, "it [chivalric romance] was a metaphor for any medium which could plunge an individual or body politic into insanity, by asserting what is false to be true" (145).

The conclusion finds numerous pre-chivalric elements in Plato's emphasis in the *Republic* on the "good": self-sacrifice, love, honor, valor, and rewards in the afterlife. Aristotle responded in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Rhetoric* with stress on human action itself, and the importance of truth, plain speech, and correct language. A further homology now becomes possible: Plato's philosophy (the roots of chivalry) is to Don Quixote as Aristotle's philosophy (the corrective to chivalry) is to Sancho Panza. More specifically, the Platonic vision of ideal good and beauty parallels Quixote's love for Dulcinea, whereas Sancho's uneducated, common-sense approach to problems not only makes him a better governor than the satirical Duke realizes but also (as Yamada would do well to point out) critiques Plato's philosopher king. She further notes Horace's preference for the hero's *sapientia* in the *Odyssey* versus war and passions in the *Iliad* (again the roots of chivalric romance) and concludes the book by noting that "Jonson must have felt sure that" Cervantes, like Horace, had transformed Aristotle's philosophy into a pattern of right living (165).

Ben Jonson and Cervantes is Yamada's own translation from the original Japanese. There is only one mistranslation in the main text (the botched idiom "long-seated rivalry" on 11), but the errata sheet does not account for all of the printing errors. The author styles her work as a "detective story" (ix), drawing conclusions from evidence and correcting critical misperceptions. Her claims seem overwhelmingly valid, and she relies only rarely on an educated guess. Throughout the study, the reader may find Yamada's use of "romance," "romanticism," and "Romanticism" a bit fuzzy, but her general purpose is to associate Shakespeare with feeling rather than neo-classical restraint. The association of Shakespeare with Romanticism would be more persuasive if the author acknowledged, for example, the presence of classical dramaturgy (the unities) in *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Tempest*—plays on either end of Shakespeare's career. But Yamada has a virtuosic command of Cervantes, Jonson, Shakespeare, Plato, Aristotle, and Renaissance literary history. To a large degree, her intention to "challenge you to rethink the history of literature and ideas" (ix) accurately reflects the book's revisionist achievements.

Matthew A. Fike
Winthrop University