



## Romances of Chivalry in the Spanish Golden Age

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proper caution. It is regrettable that what could have been a fundamental research tool, in a field that desperately needs such tools, has turned out to be a book of limited utility to either students or specialists.

JAMES RAY GREEN

*Boston University*

***Romances of Chivalry in the Spanish Golden Age.*** By Daniel Eisenberg. Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta: 1982. xviii+182 pages.

One of the chief merits of this book is that it is a study of original sixteenth-century Spanish romances of chivalry for their own sake rather than as fodder for Cervantes' parody. Thus the "most important part" of the book, in the author's own estimation, are the seven previously unpublished chapters, which present the Spanish romances as a genre, carefully defined, with pedigree (it descends from the French *Lancelot* material, via Montalvo's version of an earlier *Amadís*), printing history, and typical characteristics (the last two topics expanded in separate, already published chapters on the readership of the romances and on their pseudo-historicity). The survey of romance-criticism, beginning with sixteenth-century comments and early repertories, is a tour de force of bibliographical thoroughness; what might have been a tedious rehearsal of out-dated studies is instead a lively critique of personalities. Eisenberg is lavish with praise for competence (Clemencín, Gayangos, Thomas) and with blame for biased or defective work (Menéndez y Pelayo, Simón Díaz). His own mastery of the subject makes him pardonably impatient with trivial and superficial scholarship.

Some noteworthy conclusions, which challenge or refine current scholarly views, emerge in the course of the study. Examples: The romances of chivalry continued to be popular well into the seventeenth century, which saw Don Quixote "not as an answer to the romances, but as a new type, an *Amadís a lo ridículo*, as Nicolás Antonio calls him." Feliciano de Silva's chivalric works, taken together, "had more editions, and therefore more circulation," than *Amadís de Gaula*, and discriminating readers like López Pinciano held him in high regard. The romances were expensive luxury volumes read by the well-to-do and aristocrats, not by common people, in spite of statements to the contrary in *Don Quixote*. (On the other hand, in an Appendix at the end of the book which reproduces parts of a rare mid-sixteenth-century dialogue, one of the speakers says that in Seville, on holidays, certain persons read romances aloud from the cathedral steps for the amusement of workmen and street urchins—which

seems to support *Don Quixote*.) The famous passage in *DQ I* in which the priest seems to praise the realism of *Tirante el Blanco* is in fact a condemnation of its silly or pedestrian names, inappropriate details (dying in bed and writing wills, e.g.), and implausible events (man bites dog); in other words, the priest finds *Tirante* unintentionally hilarious.

Both Eisenberg and Martín de Riquer, who has contributed a flattering Preface, have practical suggestions for further research. Eisenberg proposes new editions, thematic and historical studies, work on translations of Spanish romance, studies of the interest of Romantic writers like Southey or of romance influence on the learned epic, and, of course, continued work on Cervantes and the books of chivalry. Riquer urges Hispanists to examine French antecedents.

A word about the format of the book: The text is almost free of errors, in spite of the long and sometimes complicated notes, of which there are more than three-hundred and fifty. The Index is careful and complete, but it does not entirely compensate for the absence of a separate bibliography of books and articles cited in the notes. The artwork is curious: the front cover bears a showy woodcut from the 1545 *Cirongilio de Tracia*, and the back, a modern portrait of *el valeroso caballero Daniel de Montefierro*, with helm and targe, superbly mounted, ready to do battle.

Eisenberg's new book, together with his 1979 *Támesis* bibliography, originally intended as part of this work, provides scholars and students with—at long last—a reliable bibliography of texts and studies, a survey of the romance genre and its complex relationship to *Don Quixote*, and a generous list of subjects for future investigation. In all three areas, it is an admirable contribution to scholarship.

JOSEPH R. JONES

*University of Kentucky*

***The Chivalric World of Don Quijote: Style, Structure, and Narrative Technique.*** By Howard Mancing. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982. xii+240 pages.

Much is written about the *Quijote*, yet little of it by reliable, well-informed Hispanists like Mancing. He has researched the work of his colleagues and of the dilettantes who continuously rediscover Cervantes for us. Analyzing their opinions in a well-reasoned manner, Mancing respects Cervantes and justifies his masterpiece. Beginning with the section "Chivalric Archaisms," he rebuts the self-styled comparatists who issue

Golden Age (Spanish = Siglo De Oro) is the period of Spanish literature extending from the early 16th century to the late 17th century, generally considered the high point in Spain's literary history. The concept century or golden age denotes a period of Spanish literature that encompasses two centuries and two very distinct stages: Renaissance (sixteenth century) and Baroque (seventeenth century). Don Quijote de la Mancha. The first part of the novel was published in 1605; the second in 1615, a year before the author's death.Â Was a Spanish playwright and poet. He was one of the key figures in the Spanish Golden Century Baroque literature.Â Don Quixote resembled both the medieval, chivalric romances of an earlier time and the novels of the early modern world.