



Review

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the review of the action of *Guzmán*, the author says that he hopes that the quotations from the seventeenth-century translation by James Mabbe "will retain a flavor approximate to Alemán's" and the effect is achieved. (Here again one can see how Cervantes stands apart and above his contemporaries. The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century translations of the *Quijote* have a flavor that one does not get from reading the original; the up-to-dateness of the *Quijote* can be appreciated in English only when we come to such translations as those of Cohen and Putnam.)

In dealing with the picaresque novel one must continue to wonder just what the history of that genre would have been in the second half of the sixteenth century if a more liberal king than Philip II had been on the throne. One of those tantalizing questions that can never be answered!

For those approaching *Guzmán de Alfarache* for the first time, Mr. McGrady has put together a lucid and helpful guide; for the more experienced in Spanish literature he has provided a delightful review.

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MARTINENGO, ALESSANDRO. *Quevedo e il simbolo alchimistico*, Padova: Liviana, 1967. xi + 174 pp.

The strange language of alchemical treatises is now considered a result of a social responsibility felt by late medieval alchemists (Cf. G. Eis in *Acts, 18th International Sociological Congress, Nürnberg, 1958, 1962*). True chemists, they did not wish unscrupulous laymen to use scientific knowledge. Their secret vocabulary interested men of letters, among them, according to Martinengo, Quevedo. The Italian critic believes that Quevedo, in spite of a mocking tone in his alchemical references, observed none other than the principle of transmutation of matter in elaborating his literary and moral judgments.

The book comprises three essays. The first, "Quevedo and the science of his day" (pp. 3-60) reveals that Quevedo considered alchemists, magicians and astrologers as exemplars of more general fraudulence. While condemning pseudo-scientists for investigating divine secrets, he included as agents of "transmutation" artisans, merchants and even face-painting women. With this broad target, we may assume that alchemy was, for Quevedo a convenient metaphor. When writing of astrology he accepts the traditional view, while mocking at even scientific speculation.

In the second essay, "Quevedo's stylistic transmutations" (pp. 63-140) Martinengo supplies an attractive, patiently argued account of Quevedo's habit of "animating the inanimate" and, conversely, "reducing the animate to the soullessly material." The general hypothesis is that "the alchemical notion of change was more or less latent in Quevedo's consciousness." While the humanists traditionally attempted to ennoble the human and the material, Quevedo sought to subvert their work, alternately "vitalizing" dead formulae and debasing forms previously endowed

with moral energy. First, employing a ludicrous vocabulary of "legislation," living beings become automata or bodiless verbal formulae; conversely, similar formulae usurp the vitality of men.

Quevedo next extends the process into the picaresque, emptying the narrative of moral significance while animating mere formulae. Through the later works Martinengo finds that Quevedo progressively abandons this stylistic device, though the Italian critic persists in seeing alchemy as the origin and the guiding principle of Quevedo's last political treatises.

The third essay, "An attempt at self-justification: Quevedo's poetics" is hardly concerned with the alchemical hypothesis. Rather, it deals with Quevedo's promulgations of his literary attitudes between 1623 and 1633 (pp. 148-68). The poet allows for innovations he understands; *cultismo* however, with its arbitrary linguistic subversion, offends him, and he attacks *culto* poetry, again materializing the animate. Jáuregui had thought ornateness in "base" contexts to be ridiculous, while his opponent Díaz de Rivas maintained that *culto* vocabulary transmuted base objects into true poetry. In this controversy Quevedo is acrimonious, but cites ancient rhetoricians to support his views.

The hypothesis that alchemical transmutation was the model for Quevedo's dynamic conception of reality may seem to many a delusion marring a valuable book which throws new light on Quevedo's poetic and moral thought. Its author certainly does not commit himself on the question.

Had Quevedo a deeper comprehension of scientific alchemy than, say, the *mosqueteros* watching Ben Jonson's *Alchemist*? It seems rather that the pattern of archaic hermetic lore which served the alchemists as natural philosophy ("What is above is like what is below, . . .") simply intrigued many seventeenth-century poets and their readers.

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MONTESINOS, JOSÉ F. *Galdós*. Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1968. xxi + 291 pp.

Todo galdosiano, y estudiante de la novela española, debe agradecer al prof. Montesinos este primer tomo sobre la obra de Galdós, coronando sus anteriores estudios sobre Fernán Caballero, Pereda, Valera, Alarcón, y otros aspectos de la novela del siglo XIX. Lo que caracteriza para nosotros este excelente esfuerzo de síntesis y de erudición es la soltura y la precisión con la cual escribe Montesinos. Su estilo posee el desenfado de quien lleva madurando ideas durante una larga y activa carrera de investigador y de maestro. Sabe poner los puntos sobre las íes ahí donde hacen falta, ya sea señalando defectos en obras de don Benito, o regañando a aquellos críticos que no hayan ejercido su oficio como lo merece el material sobre el que trabajan; ante todo, Montesinos nos da sus reacciones de lector profundo que ha leído y releído todas las obras de Galdós. Su libro es ejemplo de virtud y tesón para los jóvenes investigadores, sea cual sea su "campo," y como