

Anthony J. Cascardi. *Ideologies of History in the Spanish Golden Age*.  
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This recent book by Anthony J. Cascardi analyzes the formation of the modern subject in assorted literary genres of early modern Spain (here, basically, the Spanish Golden Age): drama (Lope de Vega's *Fuenteovejuna*, Guillén de Castro's *Las mocedades del Cid*, Tirso de Molina's *El burlador de Sevilla*, and Pedro Calderón de la Barca's *La vida es sueño*), poetry (Garcilaso de la Vega), and prose (Baltasar Gracián's *Oráculo manual de prudencia* and Miguel de Cervantes's *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*). The author proposes that literature is a social force that, on the one hand, reflects the tension of a nation's social structure and, on the other, offers solutions to its problems (1). The problems in this case are the two modes of social orientation: one traditional and inflexible (based on rank, blood, and "race"), the other modern and supposedly flexible (based on class, mind, and taste). Cascardi's text relies initially on the sociological works of Américo Castro and José Antonio Maravall, and, although it claims to appeal to contemporary Marxism to address questions of class excluded by the now dated Castro (15), its excursus into thinkers like Hobbes, Descartes, Kant, Weber, Freud, Benjamin, Lacan, Foucault, Gadamer, Bourdieu, Deleuze, Kristeva, and others offers conflictive, yet ever so rich original readings of some of the most important works of Renaissance and Baroque Spain. As the author propounds: "I renounce the idea that there is a single critical method that can be privileged above all others for the interpretation of these literary texts.... [E]ach offers a distinct perspective on the historical conflicts at work in Golden Age Spain and ... together they reveal the plurality of 'ideologies' implicit in the historical orientations of its texts" (15).

In this reviewer's estimation, the chapters on Gracián (chapter 5), Garcilaso (chapter 9) and Cervantes' *Persiles* (chapter 10) are simply sterling. They also adhere quite closely to the underlying fundamental idea that these authors advance modern concepts of subject-formation based not on external, stratified, and hierarchical orderings but on individualistic, internal, and even moral modes of orientation. Hence, Gracián's development of taste constitutes a "spiritualization of animality" (137) independent of rank and validated by foundational community standards. Garcilaso de La Vega advances a displaced form of feeling based on a communal (pastoral) personal suffering for an absent and elusive being—a feeling that becomes in Herrera the object of a wandering subject and, in Quevedo, the decentered activity of an unstable consciousness (263). Finally, Cervantes rejects the old moral order that the *Comedia*, apparently, tried to uphold, and re-

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turns in his final work to the romance and to a universal ethics of subjective freedom (298). These essays, redacted earlier (in 1997, 1994, and 1991, respectively), constitute the core of this superb collection.

The essays on Tirso de Molina's *El burlador de Sevilla* (chapter 6) and *Don Quijote* (chapters 7 and 8), published respectively in 1988, 1993, and 1995, are original and thought-provoking. The Tirso essay, based on the radical work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, allegorizes the figure of Don Juan Tenorio in an economic and psychological fashion. Hence, the *burlador*, as a shifting "desiring machine," stands for a new and limitless capitalist economy in contrast to the *ancien* (mercantile) *régime*, which is limited and literally stone-dead (in the figure of the Knight Commander of Calatrava). The schizophrenia which this character subsequently produces as it disrupts established hierarchies is finally contained by immobilized institutions (the King) that suppress new and unlimited desire (or *oikonomia*). The first *Don Quijote* essay, using a standard Freudian perspective, arrives at a similar socio-economic conclusion by affirming that Don Quijote's mad desire for the social structures of the past can never (psychologically) be recovered. In this respect, Cervantes' "modern" novel is a revisionist work that prepares the way for the author's return to romance and enchantment. The pastoral vision (chapter 8) of Don Quijote's final moments serves a similar humanistic and secular function.

The first four essays in this collection deal specifically with the *Comedia* as a reactionary genre. They are also some of the most dated (ranging from 1986 to 1993). They are by no means unsound or unpersuasive, provided one accepts that Spain was absolutist in the seventeenth century; that the certificates of noble lineage were consistently applied at all times, in all places, and for all subjects; or that the dramatic genre of the *Comedia* (indeed the most popular and accessible to all ranks of society) simply stopped growing or developing, avoiding or subsuming political, social, or even personal conflicts by constantly appealing to Platonic or neo-Aristotelian ideas. That might have been the vision of the *Comedia* in the 1950s and 1960s, during the heyday of famous and influential critics like Casaldueiro, Spitzer, or Wardropper. It does not reflect the neo-historical scholarship that has been done in the last few years.

That notwithstanding, Anthony J. Cascardi's *Ideologies of History in the Spanish Golden Age* offers highly innovative and pluralistic approaches to better appreciate and understand the great literary genres of the Spanish Golden Age. ✱