



## Romances of Chivalry in the Spanish Golden Age

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*MLN*, Volume 98, Issue 2, Hispanic Issue (Mar., 1983), 287-288.

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*MLN*

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him from Don Melón, who is not repentant or even conscious that he has committed any sort of moral transgression.<sup>2</sup>

I realize, of course, that to argue for the moral seriousness of the *Libro* is to take a minority position with respect to current scholarship and I am uncomfortably aware that, as E. D. Hirsch has shown, all interpretations tend to be self-confirming.<sup>3</sup> To disagree with Ms Seidenspinner-Núñez about what Hirsch would call the intrinsic genre of the book inevitably means disagreeing with her about the interpretation of a good many of the details she cites in support of her view. She has written an intelligent and provocative book, well organized and written in a clear and attractive style. Not the least of its merits is that it brings to the study of the *Libro* an enviable familiarity with a very wide range of secondary sources; the bibliography lists 585 items, many of them not directly concerned with medieval Spanish literature.

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## NOTES

- 1 *Libro de buen amor Studies*, ed. G. B. Gybbon-Monypenny (London, 1970), p. 77.
- 2 For a fuller discussion of this point, see my book *La alegoría en el Libro de buen amor* (Madrid, 1959), pp. 119-21.
- 3 *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, 1967), pp. 165-66.

### **Daniel Eisenberg**, *Romances of Chivalry in the Spanish Golden Age*

Newark, Delaware: Juan de la Cuesta—Hispanic Monographs, 1982.  
Pp. xviii & 182.

Not since 1920, when Henry Thomas published his *Spanish and Portuguese Romances of Chivalry* (Cambridge University Press), has anyone attempted a comprehensive survey of the Spanish romances of chivalry. Much bibliographical work has been done during the past sixty years, and a new critical assessment of the romances and their place in literary history is certainly in order. With the publication of *Romances of Chivalry in the Spanish Golden Age* readers of English now have access to a thorough and precise account of the development of the Spanish romances with complete bibliographical details. When one considers the wealth of critical work on the literary contemporaries of the romances of chivalry, among them the picaresque novel and the pastoral romance, it is all the more surprising that there has been no comparable up-to-date study of the chivalric romances. Such a study was clearly needed, and Daniel Eisenberg's book meets this need.

No less an authority than Martín de Riquer has contributed a *proemio* in which he underscores the need for a study such as this one. In his own preface Eisenberg points to a crucial flaw in traditional assessments of the romances, which is that they are colored by what Cervantes seems to have thought of them. Only by judging the romances on their own merits, says Eisenberg, can modern scholars accurately appraise the role they play in the history of Spanish literature and their relationship to *Don Quixote*. As Riquer observes, the present work is an important step toward such an appraisal, and Daniel Eisenberg is uniquely qualified to take the step. He is unquestionably today's leading scholar of Spanish romances of chivalry by virtue of his numerous publications in the field, the most recent of which is his invaluable bibliography published by Grant and Cutler (London, 1979).

*Romances of Chivalry in the Spanish Golden Age* begins with definitions, and Eisenberg wisely delimits the field, excluding translations and unoriginal adaptations of foreign romances. In the second chapter he offers a careful survey of critical work on the romances, and his discussion of the contributions of Clemencín and Thomas are especially useful. The next chapter places *Amadís de Gaula* in the tradition, presenting it as a predecessor in which an essentially Breton original was adapted to the Castilian context. The fourth chapter is an excellent survey of the role of the Spanish romances in sixteenth-century literary history, and the fifth describes a typical Spanish romance of chivalry and is a brilliant synthesis of the romance form. In the sixth chapter Eisenberg compares the fortunes of Montalvo with those of Feliciano de Silva, and a final chapter proposes new avenues of research and will no doubt challenge both specialists and graduate students.

In a second part Eisenberg offers four previously published articles which he has updated for this book. All are significant contributions to the study of the Spanish romances, and they enhance the utility of the book. As an appendix, two little-known comments on romances of chivalry are included. There are several handsome illustrations in the text from a 1545 Seville edition of *Cirongilio de Tracia*, and the front and back covers of the paperback edition contrast a sixteenth-century *caballero andante* and a modern one.

Eisenberg's book has many strengths. It gives a comprehensive overview, currently unavailable in English or in any other language, of the Spanish romances of chivalry. There are many suggestions for future research, both on the romances themselves and on their relationship to *Don Quixote*. The scholarship is solid and is supported by extensive documentation. *Romances of Chivalry in the Spanish Golden Age* will be the major study in the field for years to come, and one hopes that it will indeed encourage further work in a long-neglected area of Hispanic studies.