

Eden in Hemingway's Mythology" pursues the idea that "the loss of love . . . represents the chief stakes in the game of life" (p. 129). She argues that Hemingway's morality is very traditional: those who break the codes pay for their transgressions.

The last section (Relationships with Other Writers) begins with Peter Hays's "Exchange Between Rivals: Faulkner's Influence on *The Old Man and the Sea*." After a general discussion of the relationship between the two writers, Hays focuses on "The Bear" and Hemingway's novella, where he points out many similarities. Much of his evidence is cogent and hard to gainsay, yet it is difficult to believe that Hemingway patterned his story on Faulkner's, even unconsciously. Everything seems a bit too pat.

In "Ernest and Henry: Hemingway's Lover's Quarrel with James," Adeline R. Tintner demonstrates the strange power that Henry James had on Hemingway, a basic distaste mixed with a strong sense of kinship in creativity. She pulls together a good deal of valuable detail. Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin details a long friendship in "Ernest Hemingway and Ezra Pound." It is clear, well organized, and well written. She closes her essay with a short selection of Pound's writing to Hemingway. And the last essay in the book is James D. Brasch's "Invention from Knowledge: the Hemingway-Cowley Correspondence." Brasch argues that Hemingway insisted on invention based on knowledge: that is, the only good things are those that a writer "makes up" from first-hand knowledge. Knowing things is thus a prerequisite to creativity, and Hemingway almost made a fetish of knowing some things well.

The book is generally even in value and in style. It is a useful book, one that adds considerable information about Hemingway. It also illustrates the problem of much of criticism: neat, pat correspondences are delineated where no such correspondences or similarities were intended. It is no wonder that writers and critics are so often at odds. If more critics were writers, we might be spared many highly doubtful speculations.

Alban K. Forcione

CERVANTES AND THE MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS: A STUDY OF EL CASAMIENTO ENGAÑOSO Y EL COLOQUIO DE LOS PERROS

Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984. Pp. viii + 243

\$35.00

Reviewed by Diana Wilson

The cloud-covered dust jacket of Alban K. Forcione's latest work, the most formally elegant of his four seminal books on Cervantes, receives a double exegesis within its frontal fold. There we are informed that this new study of the last of the *Exemplary Novels*—the double novella entitled *The Deceitful Marriage and The Colloquy of the Dogs*—shows how Cervantes is both "elevating his work" far above his age's literature of *desengaño*, and "increasing the reader's freedom from the world of the beast"—from "*feritas*." This sense of elevation and escape from animality that Forcione's book promises readers at its very threshold, however, must be earned. During a long night's journey into a deranged underworld, we are invited to experience, within an aged witch's cell, a mysterious "epiphany of lawlessness" (p. 65). Even before that epiphany, however, we experience the full weight of the Christian humanist tradition that stabilizes all of Forcione's work.

For this nocturnal trip through the "most demanding and difficult to read" (p. 17) of Cervantes's novellas, Forcione is a splendidly courteous guide: always signaling the "gaps" which Cervantes "forces the reader to confront" in the surface of his text; scrupulously conscious of "the instability and elusiveness characterizing the entire work"; rarely trying to deny its meaningful "aura of indeterminacy." Sometimes Forcione will even abandon the reader, whom he depicts as forced "to venture out into the uncharted directions pointed to by ironic statement, and to resolve tentatively and always on his own, the apparent contradictions or to sanction their irreducibility" (pp. 178-79). Although kept from venturing out

too far by the confines of a short review, this reader would like to try to resolve, tentatively and on her own, a few of the apparent contradictions within Forcione's study.

Forcione sums up his approach as "a satirical survey of the forms of evil and as a meditation on its sources" (p. 214). The range of erudition in his survey is staggering: many of its close to 400 footnotes are mini-meditations in themselves. By the book's end we feel liberally and gratefully instructed in the Christian humanist vision of evil in all "its metaphysical and existential aspects" (p. 126). But at key moments we wonder about the aptness of a metaphysical approach to a tale so relentlessly physical—in its wordplay, moreover, so antimetaphysical: a tale framed and metaphorized by syphilis; a tale which puns wildly on "loins" and "testicles"; a tale obscenely open to what Baudelaire calls the "abominable naturalness" of women. *The Colloquy of the Dogs*, seen through a turn of the humanist lens, appears as a striking narrativization, to use Barbara Johnson's classic phrase, "of what makes sexuality problematic for us speaking animals."

What makes it problematic for the convalescent syphilitic hero of Cervantes's framing story may be found, in the displaced forms of dream logic, within the framed story it appears only to contain. The framing text of *The Deceitful Marriage* locates itself in the old topos of "the cheater cheated." A greedy soldier marries an alert prostitute for the riches she does not have and ends up both deceived and diseased. His failure to understand the "promiscuity" of language (a subject thoughtfully addressed in Forcione's Chapter VI) costs him his health. During a 30-day sweating-cure at the "Hospital of the Resurrection," the Ensign overhears—or more likely dreams—a long conversation between two dogs which he feverishly transcribes into a manuscript. At the center of this text is a third text, justly called by Forcione "the mysterious prophecy that sends the whole *Colloquy* spinning into indeterminacy" (p. 202).

The expounder of this prophecy is the witch Cañizares, a figure whose depiction is indeed "one of the most powerful scenes in Cervantes' entire literary production" (p. 59). Cervantes's witch, dreamed up during the height of the European witch craze at the turn of the seventeenth century, is a true grotesque: her seven-foot skeletal frame is covered by a dark and hairy pelt; her breasts are like "two dry and shriveled cow udders"; her "parchment belly," a drooping sack covering her "private parts." Although Forcione shares with us all his "probing" of the anatomy of this "repugnant monster" (p. 4), one notes a curious blindness on his part, or at least a dismissive attitude, towards the monster's gender: on the opening page he introduces Cervantes's witch as "a monstrous human being" (p. 4); at one point he refers to the breasts of "its" body (p. 84); and in one footnote he even inscribes her as one "of the great paradoxical *spokesmen* of the earlier [humanist] period" (p. 98). Cervantes represents his horrific witch as a dying sex-crazed crone who, paradoxically, holds the verbal key to the dogs', if not to the reader's, freedom from *feritas*. Forcione's strategy of probing a generic rather than a gendered monster suggests an aversion to certain facts about the origins of speaking animals, dogs or men—to what Mary Shelley would indecorously metaphorize as "the workshop of filthy creation." Forcione—who normally insists on the pluralistic nature of Cervantine discourse—chooses to read the witch both unisexually and univocally, as a desecrator of orthodox doctrines: she remains fixed for him as "an epiphany vision of evil" (p. 61) rather than, as Cervantes's talking dog recalls her, as *both* "so wise and so evil." Ruth El Saffar's vision of the witch as "after all, a redeemable character" (*Critical Guide to Spanish Texts* [London: Tamesis, 1976], p. 68), seems to me a more suggestive interpretation of a figure whose long and unsparring confession of witchcraft and carnality closes in unironic sadness with an act of faith: "Yet withal I know that God is kind and merciful and that He knows what is to become of me." It is difficult to see this moment of tragic self-knowledge on Forcione's terms as "the most intense moment of divine absence in Cervantes' tale" (p. 47).

Although the "conversion narrative" of this novella is reserved not for the witch but for the dogs, it is the witch Cañizares alone who knows the mystery of their origins, who is linked with the secret sources of life and fecundity: the real issue at stake in Cervantes's tale, then, it is not "sorcery" but "sourcery." In a eulogy of their deceased mother Montiel, Cañizares relates how her sons had been shamefully transformed into dogs while their mother, her best friend and colleague in witchcraft, was bearing them. After this "doggy birth" the pups were exiled, like romance heroes but into a picaresque world. The slaughterhouse of Seville, where the dog Berganza's first impressions take place, turns out to be, ironically, his foster home. The sensitive dog's discovery that he is a son-of-a-witch, as it were, causes him great pain: he likens the revelation to "knife thrusts which pierced his heart." But *which* witch is

the mother? Forcione consciously sets out to confound the two witches, reconstituting Cañizares, in her "hideous vision of decay," as a "parody" mother (p. 58). This symbolic transfer of maternity permits him to stage a common rejection of their mother by both dogs—a move that Forcione equates with "a climactic affirmation of man's power to resist evil" (p. 58). Cervantes's narrative is more problematic, with only one of the dogs—the one who never gets to tell his life story—rejecting his origins; "if I may be pardoned for speaking that way of our mother, or rather of your mother, for I will not have her for mine."

Despite what Forcione calls Cañizares's "hideously insensitive conscience" (p. 62), the witch has carefully memorized the oracle that promises the dogs' transformation back into their "true form." This liberation from bestiality is to occur when the dogs witness an enigmatic inversion of power, "the fall of the high and mighty / [And] the rise of the downtrodden." Forcione's reading of this elusive prophecy as "a complex case of double citation parody" links Mary's Magnificat to the oracle's traditionally acknowledged Virgilian subtext, that of Anchises's prophecy in *Aeneid* VI ("parcere subiectis et debellare superbos"), a "numinous" moment for Forcione, and one expected to bring "elevating effects" to any text containing it (p. 45). Because Mary's song and Anchises's prophecy subtend the "diabological discourse" of three witches, Forcione interprets such violent intertextuality as "a travesty of the sacred"—a "disfigurement of two venerable texts" capable of "infuriating its readers" (p. 47). Actually, Cervantes's "disfigurement" (and Forcione is correct in calling it that) might intrigue certain readers. For all their venerable values, there are elements in these super-canonical subtexts that—like Cervantes's deceitful soldier who "asks for" a disfiguring case of buboes—invite disfigurement. Both the *Aeneid* and the Magnificat are myths of origin that crase female sexuality: either consigning it, in the name of *pietas*, to a bodiless underworld; or reconstituting it, in the name of patriarchy, as immaculate. Geoffrey Hartman has reflected (in the context of Genet) on how the Magnificat "magnifies" a woman because it removes from her the "curse" of menstruation; "a potential denunciation becomes an annunciation" (in *Literature and Psychoanalysis*, eds. E. Kurzweil and W. Phillips [New York: Columbia University Press, 1983], p. 343). Forcione himself notes Cervantes's curious association between the shameful birth of the dogs and the divine birth of Christ—"this doggish birth comes from another source . . . and there is some mystery in it"—but his focus on "the mystery of lawlessness" has blinded him to Cervantes's focus on the mystery of birth. It might be fruitful to consider Cervantes's parody not as "a travesty of the sacred" but as a travesty or "redressing" of those symbolic orders where, as Cervantes's talking dog is pained to confess, "the first articulate word" uttered by nursing infants is the curse of "whore!" flung at their mothers.

It also bears noting that both of the oracle's revered and prestigious subtexts celebrate new orders of aggression. Long before Anchises's prophecy found its way into Cervantes, it was cited by St. Augustine to demonstrate the arrogant self-praise "of that city which lusts to dominate the world" (*City of God*, I, Preface). As for the Magnificat, Marina Warner has convincingly exposed its intertextuality as "bellicose and triumphalist" (*Alone of all her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* [New York: Vintage, 1983], p. 13). Cervantes's strategy here might be agonistic rather than, as Forcione would prefer, heuristic imitation of model texts. There are numerous passages in this double novella that can only be read as irony of empire—as a truly Erasmian critique of the ideology of conquest. When the schoolboys in the *Colloquy* sell their grammar books (their "Antonios") in order to feed their beloved dog, for example, the ideology famously inscribed in Antonio Nebrija's Prologue to his *Gramática*—"Language was ever the companion of Empire"—is tacitly debunked. We might regard this irony as the cutting edge of Cervantes's later efforts to move beyond the Western narrative epic tradition of quest and conquest, a tradition punningly ridiculed towards the end of the *Colloquy*, where a sexually diseased soldier's unborn epic is dismissed as a quest for "the holy skirt."

In a passing remark on "the obsessive character" of the dream vision in Cervantes's tale, Forcione speaks of "a psychological dimension" (p. 127). It is one of the few dimensions that he does not probe in his erudite anatomy of Cervantes's final double novella, a work which invites interpretation according to two distinct and, it would seem, incompatible codes: the tradition of Christian humanism, for which Forcione is a magisterial spokesman, and the not yet fully transcribed colloquy of feminism and psychoanalysis, towards which El Saffar's *Guide* admirably points us. Forcione allows that the "promiscuity" of Cervantine discourse often collides with the humanists' dream of recovering the lost Adamic speech. Whatever humanist vision is surviving in Cervantes's dark final novella, then, it has left this dream behind. The *Colloquy* looks forward to the recovery of a different voice, to a time when its readers, like its

irrepressible canine heroes, will try to find “the words to say it”—to say the relations between spirit and brute; between marrying a prostitute and prostituting a marriage; between human sexuality and what Forcione regards as “one of the darkest pronouncements” (p. 110) of Cervantes’s dark narrative: that “flesh has gone to flesh.”

Laurie Clancy

THE NOVELS OF VLADIMIR NABOKOV

New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1984. Pp. viii, 177

Reviewed by Charles Stanley Ross

Nabokov’s fiction focuses not on obsessions so much as a range of psychological states that criticism, despite its swelling volume, has not distinguished fully or described precisely. Take the short story “Lik” (1939). Its poetic final cause is to imitate the sensation felt by a neurotic actor engulfed by his own stage performance. Nabokov manages to make the reader feel how the presence of a terrifying derelict suffocates Lik even as the reader, to fully experience Lik’s panic, must understand that his fear is groundless, as if all the events occurred in a play. Nabokov utilizes various means to simultaneously stimulate affective and intellectual responses, and if the psychological state he wished to represent is distasteful, it is not surprising that some of his artistic means, stripped from the context of their purpose, seem perverse. Word games, strong opinions, the seeming intrusion of the author on his created world irritate those who fail to perceive that the manner of expression contributes directly to the final effect sought.

In *The Novels of Vladimir Nabokov*, Laurie Clancy has felt on his own pulse, even if he has not always defined precisely, the unifying force of *Invitation to a Beheading*, *The Gift*, *Lolita*, *Ada*, and *Look at the Harlequins!*. As a result, he says, on his last page, “the faults vanish into relative insignificance.” About Nabokov’s other ten novels, however, he has some harsh things to say, though he is essentially silent about the short stories, poems, autobiography, and scholarship. Clancy derides critics who praise everything, calling them dwarfs for whom Nabokov’s cloak is too large, while he himself is ready to find fault, perhaps readier than is consonant with his concluding words. Nabokov’s satire, especially, makes him (and others) see red. Using his experience as a novelist to announce what fails, what succeeds, he boldly charges the matador. The problem is that we are never convinced that he is not charging a cape flung deliberately before him. Often he seems blind to Nabokov’s feints because he has not found their purpose, the pattern the artist makes in the air.

As a result, he spends much time retailing objections to Nabokov’s personality, saying that Nabokov scorned homosexuals (p. 10); poured his petty hates into his work; was egotistic (p. 39); wrote bad books (“a great deal of *Despair* is not very complex at all but merely confused,” [p. 601]); and mocked physical deformity. Ellen Pifer, in *Nabokov and the Novel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, (1980), demolished the latter objection simply by showing that Nabokov’s characters are squeamish, not Nabokov. (The 1984 publication date of Clancy’s study is deceptive; the bibliography essentially stops at 1978.)

Clancy tends to excuse the rubble of word games, artistic self-consciousness, and even authorial prejudice when they are filtered through a narrator such as Humbert or Van Veen whose conventional character permits eccentricity, but he is not willing to permit these predilections and opinions when the only sanction for them is the more or less ghostly authorial presence, vaguely identified with Nabokov, that fills the three masterpieces, *Bend Sinister*, *Pnin*, *Pale Fire*, that he regards, along with everything from *Mary to Despair*, as failures. He argues ad hominem in discussing *Pale Fire*, berating Nabokov for his inability, first, to decide whether Kinbote should be a boring pedant or a brilliant visionary; second, to divorce his character’s voice completely from his own. *Pale Fire*, the great modern version of pastoral poetry, Nabokov’s poetic allegory of the afterlife, he finds to be confused, contradictory, and ambiguous. Again, authorial self-consciousness ruins *Bend Sinister*, but, I submit, only because Clancy has not found the key to the book’s perfect blend of sensuous style and political satire. The pattern of angled pilasters that begins in chapter one, explains the novel’s title, and renders entirely appropriate the author’s appearance at book’s end remains “irritatingly obscure” to him.