

Pérez de León, Vicente.

TABLAS DESTEMPLADAS: LOS ENTREMESSES DE CERVANTES A EXAMEN.

Alcalá de Henares: CEC, 2005.

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Of all Cervantes' works, the ones often left by the critical wayside are his *entremeses*, eclipsed by *Don Quijote* for most modern readers and of less interest to scholars than his other works. There are notable exceptions, of course, and over the years scholarly publications have dealt with one or more of the interludes; Zimic's *Teatro de Cervantes* deals with them in depth, for instance, and they are generally studied in any critical work that examines pre-Lopean theater. Nevertheless, few, if any, critics have dealt with the *entremeses* in a monograph. Pérez León's book, then, is a welcome addition to the corpus of Cervantine criticism, and one that begins to fill the critical dearth around the *entremeses*.

In his introduction, Pérez de León makes his objectives clear: to contextualize Cervantes' *entremeses* within the genre, to reclassify Cervantes' interludes (while not discounting characteristics common to all of them), to study the relation—especially the thematic relation—between these *entremeses* and the wider range of literary production of the period, and to study each *entremés* individually. The unifying concept of the analysis is the *destemplanza* alluded to in the title of the monograph. Each of the *entremeses*, Pérez de León argues, intentionally strikes a wrong note, and that is Cervantes' way of posing a dilemma to his audience.

The first section of the book, "Tablas destempladas" analyzes Cervantes' art of the interlude within the tradition of *teatro breve*, giving examples of how he appropriated aspects of pre-Lopean dramatists and *comedia della arte*, and how in turn his works influenced playwrights who followed him, the affinities between the Cervantine interlude and the picaresque, and how Cervantes' working of themes echoes the treatment of these same topics in his better known works, especially *Don*



*Quijote*. The most interesting part of this section of the book is the intersection of theater and Renaissance psychology. Pérez de León analyzes how the ideas of two noted physicians contemporary to Cervantes—Huarte de San Juan and Gómez Pereira—came into play in the *entremeses*. His arguments are lucid, his examples appropriate, and his analysis further underscores Cervantes' debt to these two philosophers, especially Huarte, whose influence in *Don Quijote* has been thoroughly explored.

In the second part of the book—"Los entremeses de Cervantes a examen"—Pérez de León proposes a new taxonomy of the *entremeses* and then analyzes each separately. Several parts of this section have been published elsewhere previously, and perhaps is for this reason that the analysis in this section seem a bit disjointed, though the author does attempt to provide critical unity by referring to the groundwork laid in the first part. This comment, however, does not detract for the worth of Pérez León's analysis. Any reader of the Cervantine interludes will find these close readings and interpretations enlightening as well as suggestive of avenues for further critical exploration.