

PAUL MICHAEL JOHNSON. *Affective Geographies. Cervantes, Emotion, and the Literary Mediterranean*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: U of Toronto P., 2020. 307 pp.

In *Affective Geographies*, Paul Michael Johnson weaves a compelling interdisciplinary tale about what he calls “the affective structures that inscribe the Mediterranean” (5). In doing so, he wields and places into dialogue Affect Studies, Mediterranean Studies, Literary Studies and Hispanic Studies in innovative fashion. The result is productive and insightful, offering both an account of the potential for new avenues of inquiry in these areas and concrete illustrations of what such scholarship might look like, asserting a need for “the critical task of recovering the literary Mediterranean” (4), and advancing an initial approach to such a project.

To do so, *Affective Geographies* brings a broad critical apparatus to bear on the writer. Johnson, following Steven Hutchinson and Antonio Cortijo Ocaña, identifies Miguel de Cervantes as having “the most extensive Mediterranean experience of his era” (4). The purpose is twofold: first to upend “the Braudel model” of Mediterranean Studies by attempting “to theorize a literary Mediterranean from the bottom up” by considering how “the microliterary informs, reflects, and refracts the macrohistorical landscape” (5). The second is to examine the particular contours of what Johnson describes as “Cervantine affectivity” (29), an approach to representing and communicating emotion that, according to *Affective Geographies*, constitutes a departure from the traditional methods for depicting emotion in early modernity. This leads Johnson to advance the claim that “Cervantes’s engagement with affect is not only fundamental but fundamentally different” (13).

This introduction reflects the expansive opening chapters, in which Johnson establishes with acuity the broad scholarly context into which his work inserts itself. Here, as throughout, the scholarship is informative without being overwhelming (there are, after all, countless studies on each of these topics) and the ideas are delivered in a rich yet clear prose. The first part of the book, comprising the first two chapters, is titled *Casting Off*, and serves to lay the groundwork for the critical analysis performed in the latter sections. The introductory chapter begins by identifying the interdisciplinary nature of the project, introducing readers to the various scholarly and historical contexts in which it inscribes itself, as well as to the debates, conflicts and other points of contention that have characterized approaches to the three central pillars of the study: Cervantine Studies, Affect Studies, and Mediterranean Studies. Chapter 2, “Connected (Hi)stories: The Cervantine, Literary, and Affective Mediterranean,”

expands upon this initial framework and provides a more detailed account of each of the primary themes of the book as well as staking a claim for their fundamental interrelatedness. With sections on The Historical Mediterranean, The Literary Mediterranean, and The Affective Mediterranean, the author's argument leads to a discussion of the ways in which these sections construct, and how their representation in Cervantes permit, a contestatory vantage point from which to unsettle dominant intellectual paradigms both in Cervantes's day and in our own.

Part II, *Quixotic Passages*, marks a shift to concrete examples of the critical program that serves as a solution to the scholarly and theoretical lacunae articulated in the earlier chapters. Here, Johnson examines Cervantes's treatment of shame and laughter, showing in Chapter 3 the particularly Mediterranean contours of shame, and the techniques Cervantes uses to depict the oft-hidden corollary to honor, much-celebrated, especially, in that geographical context. In Chapter 4, the book turns its attention to laughter, making a case for laughter to be understood as an affect in its own right. In both chapters, Johnson demonstrates the fundamentally political dimension of emotion in the early modern Mediterranean. On one hand, he highlights Cervantes's transposition of the notion of shame from the context of the victors to that of the vanquished, underscoring the subjective experience of the shamed in a space characterized by imperial and religious violence. On the other hand, he shows the use of laughter in *Don Quixote* to destabilize sociopolitical hierarchies and structures of power in the context of Mediterranean alterity.

Moving from Cervantes's most famous work to lesser-known texts, Part III (*Other Ports of Call*), considers two other pieces of Cervantine prose, the novella "La española inglesa" (in *Novelas Ejemplares*, 1613) and Cervantes's final work, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* (1617). Chapter 5 centers on the former and examines Cervantes's use of suspension – narrative as well as emotional – as a technique for achieving a new form of ethical exemplarity for his readers, in which affect plays a crucial role. If suspension permits a propulsion to moral improvement, it does so through a prefatory nullification of rational thought. Chapter 6 explores Cervantes's efforts to articulate this experience of the "ineffable" in the *Persiles*. Here, Johnson reveals the manner in which Cervantes reflects the alterity characteristic of the early modern Mediterranean through a story about the ultimately impossible task of expressing the true substance of affective experience, and how he expands, at the same time, the very notion of the verisimilar, which was so crucial to his literary aesthetics.

*Affective Geographies* ends with an afterword in which Johnson summarizes his arguments and outlines their scholarly and political ramifications, not only for Cervantes's Mediterranean, but also for our own

world. Despite certain tensions and equivocations throughout the text (i.e., between the exceptional nature of Cervantes as a writer and Cervantes as a representative of a Mediterranean aesthetics; between the representation of affect within a text and the purported affective operations of a text on readers; or between the Mediterranean as a unique context and the Mediterranean as a universal context, as demonstrated by the equation “Mediterranean experience = emotional experience” [192]), the monograph performs with great acumen the important function of extending the scope of the “affective turn” to address fields of study in which it has been previously overlooked. In doing so, Johnson fulfills his ambition of serving as “a spur to setting forth across new geographical, disciplinary, and critical frontiers” (195). In this regard, *Affective Geographies* presents an important contribution to both Cervantine Studies and Mediterranean Studies alike.

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KRZYSZTOF A. KULAWIK. *Visions of Transamerica: Neobaroque Strategies of Nomadic Transgression*. Literature of the Americas Series. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave, 2024. xxxi + 388 pp.

The Baroque and the Neobaroque have long been associated with queer culture and queer sexuality: the Baroque appeals to the passions, and formally it derives from a transgressive impulse, the non-classical use of classical forms. *Visions of Transamerica* builds on the poststructuralist approach to the Baroque as the “apotheosis of artifice, the irony and mockery of nature,” outlined by Cuban Severo Sarduy in “The Baroque and the Neobaroque” (translated by Christopher Winks and included in *Baroque New Worlds: Representation, Transculturation, Counterconquest*), embracing and expanding Sarduy’s semiotic understanding of the Baroque as the rebellious resignification of dominant culture, of linguistic and cultural codes at anarchic play mirroring nonreproductive eroticism and queer transgressive identities. Sarduy’s theoretical and fictional Neobaroque oeuvre is revealed to be the center of a large understudied network of queer writers and performance artists from Latin America and the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, who are shown to aim at the same “category-bending” and “decentering of identity” (125) through a panoply of transgressive features and operations including “cross-dressing, androgyny, queer ambiguity, metamorphosis, posthumanity, and borderlands transit” (125-26): Mario Bellatin (Mexico); Silviano Santiago and Hilda Hilst (Brazil); Diamela Eltit, Pedro Lemebel, with Francisco Casa, Juan