

editions of Tobias Smollett's translation (the most successful, though not the first) before 1797. Fusing native and imported sources, the crime genres would develop in their own directions. A rich vein of English comic fiction runs from Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, through Burney and Edgeworth to Dickens and beyond. In all these different contexts, scholars have never paid enough attention to the wayward comic energies these texts perpetuate. Much needs to be written, for example, on the enduring comic temper of English criminal biography. Few felons were too monstrous to be memorialized as tricksters. Even the appalling Francis Charteris—a convicted rapist who looms large behind the villain-rapists of sentimental fiction and remained sufficiently notorious for a mention in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747–8)—was repeatedly fictionalized in these ways. No fewer than six larky 'histories' of Charteris appeared in the winter of 1729–30, all promising the truth about the man, even as they pad out the facts with scatological pranks or turn him into Don Francisco, an archetypal Spanish rogue.²⁴

More to the point for historians of the novel, the comic-picaresque traditions continue to bring so much life to canonical texts. So many of the most charismatic protagonists come into the world in all the old ways. Roderick Random's mother dreams that she gives birth to a tennis ball, which the devil (who attends her as midwife) wallops out of sight. Laurence Sterne was only updating these conventions with the obstetric accidents in *Tristram Shandy*. High-written comic characters long continued to signal their origins with a lapse of realism—a return to the excesses of early modern characterization. Fielding's Mrs Slipslop is as wide as she is tall, with tiny eyes, cowlike breasts, and one leg shorter than the other. Smollett's Lismahago is hunched over, with a mutilated scalp, grasshopper thighs, and a face 'at least half a yard in length'. Similar energies are there in the savage caricatures of Austen's juvenilia, and more vestigially in a figure like Mrs Musgrove, with her 'large fat sighings' in *Persuasion*.²⁵ The brutal and grotesque incidents in Burney's fiction are only one remove from *Guzmán* and *The English Rogue*, yet without them her novels would be the flattest of courtship plots. Who could forget the hysterical Mme Duval in the ditch, tied to a tree by Captain Mirvan, or the hair-raising coach accident in *Camilla* (1796)? Whether Burney understood it or not, these scenes make plot happen. And still, behind the narrative complications of so much later English fiction, one detects that most Spanish of scenarios: chaos in the night at a roadside inn.

²⁴ *The Life of Colonel Don Francisco* (1730?).

²⁵ Tobias Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*, ed. Thomas R. Preston and O M Brack, Jr (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 183; Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, ed. Janet Todd and Antje Blank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 73.

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Cervantes, Anti-Romance,
and the Novella

BREAN HAMMOND

Cervantes smiled Spain's chivalry away;
A single laugh demolish'd the right arm
Of his own country;—seldom since that day
Has Spain had heroes. While Romance could charm,
The world gave ground before her bright array;
And therefore have his volumes done such harm,
That all their glory, as a composition,
Was dearly purchased by his land's perdition.

(Byron, *Don Juan*, canto 13 (1823), st. 11)

THIS is one of the best-known critical judgements ever made on Cervantes and, equally, one of the most exaggerated claims for the power of imaginative writing ever staked. In destroying the enchantment of romance, Byron implies, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* (pt 1, 1605; pt 2, 1615)¹ fatally undermined those values upon which the glory of the Spanish Golden Age rested, and ushered in an era of decadence and decline. Byron's conception was a long time in the making. Already by 1690, Sir William Temple in his 'Essay Upon Ancient and Modern Learning' had told this story:

An Ingenious Spaniard at Brussels would needs have it that the History of *Don Quixot* had ruined the Spanish Monarchy: For before that time Love and Valour were all Romance among them; every young Cavalier that entred the Scene Dedicated the Services of his Life to his Honour first, and then to his Mistris. They Lived and Dyed in this Romantick Vein . . . After *Don Quixot*

¹ Because this chapter covers a long historical sweep and selection of translations from which to quote is difficult, I have used the following modern translations for story titles and citations: *Don Quijote*, trans. Burton Raffel and ed. Diana de Armas Wilson (New York: Norton, 1999), cited here by part and chapter number, and *Exemplary Stories*, trans. Lesley Lipson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), cited by page number. In the interests of consistency, I have used Raffel's form 'Quijote' except where it appears in book titles and citations in the 'Quixote' or other form.