

"Aristocratic Equestrian Culture(s) and Don Quijote's Journey from Castile to Aragon"

Abstract:

While the representation of courtly culture in *Don Quixote* has been amply studied, there is a tendency to treat all manifestations on the same foot. Yet, jousts were not the same as the game of canes, an equestrian exercise in which riders most usually were required to wear Moorish clothing. The selection of each equestrian performance may certainly suggest issues of cultural identity, as the joust is linked to a traditional, European courtly culture, while the game of canes is associated with the Islamic legacy of the Iberian Peninsula. But more importantly, there is also a class hierarchy between these aristocratic equestrian practices: Moorish clothing, expensive as it was, was relatively more affordable than armors, and therefore promoted a more inclusive concept of nobility. In this presentation I will analyze how Don Quixote's (parodic) courtly culture is construed as a refusal of the game of canes, which was by far the most common equestrian performance in Cervantes' time in the Kingdom of Castile. His penchant for jousting explains his journey to Aragon in Cervantes' second part, since jousts were far more common than games of canes in cities such as Zaragoza and Barcelona, which becomes not only a cultural preference, but also has a political and social significance.