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Echoes and Inscriptions. Comparative Approaches to Early Modern Spanish Literatures, Ed. Barbara Simerka and Christopher B. Weimer. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2000. ISBN: 0-8387-5430-9. 277 pp.

This thought-provoking volume contains a collection of fifteen essays, whose unifying thread is the comparative approach applied to Hispanic texts. Most of them were written by Hispanists; in some cases the comparisons are between two Hispanic works or Hispanic periods.

The essay of most general interest is the opening one, by the comparatist Walter Cohen, on "The Uniqueness of Spain." He endorses what he calls "the Semitic hypothesis," by which he means the Arabic and Hebrew influence as set forth by Américo Castro, and defends and links to the *converso* class the rise of the novel in Spain. He reminds us that Castro is part of the line of German (Spitzer, Auerbach) and Eastern European (Bakhtin and Lukács) philologist scholars who "were marked in one way or another by the twin catastrophes of Stalinism and fascism." In the process he calls Curtius

“morally obtuse” for, in the late 1940s, defining European unity in terms of medieval Christianity, with no reference to the slaughter of millions of non-Christians by the leader of his own country (26).

On Spain’s alleged uniqueness, the traditional poles are “a Spain that is unique because of the Islamic conquest,” and “Spain that is a typical European country” (p. 26). Cohen points out that other European countries besides Spain dealt with “other” religions - Islam and Eastern Christianity. All the new national literatures of the early modern period had to both absorb and suppress regional literatures and foreign influences. Thus he finds false the opposition between a Christian Spain and a Spain influenced by Judaism and Islam. Spanish literature is thus not unique, but “the most typical literature in Europe” (p. 28). Little evidence is presented for these positions, which call for a more complete treatment.

Space does not permit a discussion of the remaining essays. Their titles are quite descriptive: “Who’s Telling This Story, Anyhow? Framing Tales East and West: *Panchatantra* to Boccaccio to *Zayas*” (Margaret Greer), “Lasting Laughter: Comic Challenges Posed by *Zayas* and Castellanos” (Amy R. Williamsen), “Xavier Villaurrutia as a Neo-Baroque Writer” (Salvador Oropesa), “Through the Looking Glass: Reflections on the Baroque in Luis Buñuel’s *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz*” (Sidney Donnell), “Abjection’s Tapestry: Saint-Amat’s Reading of *Don Quixote*” (Salvador Fajardo), “Comparative Anatomy: Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* and Furetière’s *Le Roman bourgeois*” (James Parr), “Feminine Transformations of the *Quixote* in Eighteenth-Century England: Lennox’s *Female Quixote* and Her

Sisters” (Amy Pawl), “*Comedia* Contributions to a Molière Masterpiece” (Thomas Finn; the masterpiece is *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*), “The Unheimlich Maneuver: *La dama duende* and *The Comedy of Errors* (William Blue), “Rethinking Cervantine Utopias: Some No (Good) Places in Renaissance England and Spain” (Diana Wilson), “Power Grabbing and Court Opportunism: From Spain to France” (Perry Gethner; Desjardins and Tirso), “Eros and Atheism: Providential Ideology in the Don Juan Plays of Tirso de Molina and Thomas Shadwell” (Barbara Simerka), “The Politics of Adaptation: *Fuenteovejuna* in Pinochet’s Chile” (Christopher Weimer), and “Numancia as Ganymede: Conquest and Continenence in Giulio Romano, Cervantes, and Rojas Zorrilla” (Frederick de Armas).

There is a short analytical index to the volume as a whole.

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