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J. A. G. Ardila, ed. *The Cervantean Heritage: Reception and Influence of Cervantes in Britain*. London: Legenda (Maney), 2009. 272 pp. ISBN: 978-1-906540-03-6.

As the volume's subtitle suggests, the collected essays of *The Cervantean Heritage* cover a large swath of topics; the contributions range from chronologically catalogued descriptive criticism of English translations of Cervantes' major works to comparative analyses of Cervantes' prose with

British literature from early modern drama to the modern novel. This large range of analytical perspectives and foci means that the text is likely to be of interest to scholars in multiple fields of the humanities, from critics of eighteenth-century British prose by women to cultural historians of Spanish-English relations after the Golden Age.

Because of the ambitious scope of the multi-author volume, some depth and specificity has been sacrificed, as J. A. G. Ardila laments in his preface to the collection. To fault Ardila's editing for said sacrifice would be imprudent, as the essays he has chosen manifest a particularly apt continuum of applications of intertextual theoretical approaches, astute uses of archival research about Cervantes and his British readers, and carefully constructed close readings of multiple primary sources.

The first two parts of the collection are likely to be of great use to readers seeking to familiarize themselves with the historicist debates and critical trends in British readings of Cervantes. Ardila's own essay, which opens the volume, provides a concise and accurate account of the wide array of Anglophonic adaptations of Cervantes' themes and stylistic innovations and glosses key trends in reception by English readers. Following that essay is Frans De Bruyn's insightful treatment of the reception of *Don Quixote* from the Jacobean period to the turn of the twentieth century, which provides a necessary context for the close readings posited in Part IV, entitled "Cervantes and the British Theatre," and effectively encapsulates the dichotomous perspectives on the text, noting that readers either "regard Don Quixote as [...] an object of satire" for comic effect, or see that "the nobility and heroism of his quest" are to be taken as an important and serious critique of the emergent ideologies of his time (32). Both perspectives receive their due attention in the close readings that follow. De Bruyn presents what might be called the thesis of the first half of the book when he writes, "the pronouncements of early readers, however odd, puzzling, or opaque they may now appear, are the products of a discernible critical rationale and epistemological norm" (33). The five essays on English language translations of Cervantes' works that constitute the book's second part are equally useful in demonstrating the claims Ardila and De Bruyn posit about Cervantes' influence on British literature. Each of them focuses more closely on a narrow period of literary history and notes important trends in translation that lead to the permutations of the original texts that manifest in each period and shows how translators' decisions are colored by the "epistemological norms" of their own periods to a greater extent

than any sense of fidelity to Cervantes' master text.

These contextual materials and the demonstrative arguments about English permutations of Cervantean literary styles and themes inform the comparative analyses that succeed them, but do not necessarily provide a complete picture of all the criticism on the subjects they broach. The small fault one might find in the collection would be in its limited review of recent scholarship. Ardila's preface notes a proliferation of critical interest in *Don Quixote* since the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its first volume's publication, and protests that the collection's lapse in contemporary critical perspectives is owing to the quality of that body of scholarship written between 2005 and the present. Ardila notes that such scholarship "neglects or omits former research" making it "somewhat deficient and uninformed" and argues that its "analytical method [. . .] very often proves to be controversial and inadequate" (x). The editor critiques what he calls the "Cervantesmania that blossomed in and after 2005" as "pointless and irrelevant" because of its repeated assertions that some texts in the British canon may be "endowed with the same literary methods or the same topics" as those Cervantes uses and treats (x).

While it would be obtuse not to concur with Ardila's claim that "those who search for metafictional levels, unreliable narrators, and good-natured monomaniac characters after 1615 are bound to find them in many works" (x), one may wonder if this outright dismissal of such criteria for comparison might also limit the nearly ubiquitous profusion of theoretical perspectives emerging from considerations of picaresque fiction (like those based in a Bakhtinian conception of literary production) or gainsay the prolific number of speculations arising out of comparative methodologies that the essayists contributing to Parts III and IV of the book employ. To do so may even risk inhibiting humanistic understandings of the extent of Cervantes' influence.

In spite of Ardila's reticence about newer examples of Cervantes scholarship, Jane Neville's bibliography in the book's back matter, which will no doubt prove to be an invaluable resource to scholars and students alike, does list some recent contributions among its source materials, and the comparative essays—pairing Cervantes with Fielding, Sterne, Smollett, Lennox, Dickens, Mary Shelley, Eliot, Chapman, Fletcher, Rowley, Defoe and Shakespeare—are among the most illuminating analyses the collection boasts. For example, Amy J. Pawl's reading of novels by Eighteenth-Century British women alongside Cervantes is particularly admirable for

its attention to textual details that make her comparative approach one that explicates the debate framed by De Bruyn. When exploring the ways in which Cervantes' titular protagonist in *Don Quixote* might be contrasted to Charlotte Lennox's Arabella in *The Female Quixote*, Pawl notes that "[t]he real danger to the literary Quixote lies not with those who dismiss or fear the literature of romance, but with those whose knowledge of it allows them to co-opt its power" (169). Pawl's juxtaposition of Arabella's defenselessness in her encounters with the rake Sir George with Don Quixote's difficulties in his dealings with the Duke and Duchess demonstrates the troublesome nature of duplicity that arises in such complex narratives when "the Quixote's privilege of creating his or her own visions" is usurped by characters who do not share the affective sentiments of the Quixote's worldview (170). To extend this analysis to the critical reception of interpretations of literary Quixotism seems a logical mode of resisting the prefatory claims that may impose impermeable boundaries on comparative criticism. This mode of resistance might be said to be effectively carried out in the analyses presented in the book's last two parts.

In spite of a singular flaw in the framing of current scholarship, *The Cervantean Tradition* proves to be an important contribution to a body of critical literature on Cervantes' position in the Anglophone literary imagination. The book is likely to find numerous uses in critical work to come, as well as in the classrooms of upper division and graduate students receiving instruction about the influence of the Spanish Golden Age upon the British canon. For these reasons, the volume merits a position in the collections of research libraries of all sizes and locales.

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