

Ángel-Luis Pujante, Juan F. Cerdá eds. 2014
*Shakespeare en España: Bibliografía anotada bilingüe /
Shakespeare in Spain:
An Annotated Bilingual Bibliography*
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The relevance, merits and indeed usefulness of this timely book will be apparent to readers right from the descriptive simplicity of its title: few of those who engage in research on the cultural processing of the Bard in non-English-speaking contexts – or indeed share a broader interest in reception, translation and comparative studies – will remain indifferent to it. But the book's timeliness and consequence are also compounded by the extent to which it firmly rests (to retrieve a phrase that Borges once memorably applied to translations that he admired) on "a rich (prior) process" (2012 [1935]:104) – involving both the previous work of its editors, and developments that have delineated the field in which this *Bibliography* deserves to occupy a salient position. Indeed, the past quarter of a century has seen the steady growth and increased specialisation of the study of "Shakespeare without his language" (to give an extended currency to the phrase memorably used by Dennis Kennedy in the early 1990s to refer to the Bard's afterlife in non-Anglophone performance traditions). Shakespeare's verbal and theatrical transits to a variety of cultures, the manifold appropriations of his work in verbal and other media, have become the object of a burgeoning strand within Shakespeare studies – and one that has actively contributed to the discipline's extension into a

range of concomitant concerns and practices. For reasons relating to history and cultural/linguistic proximity, the (comparatively) tight fabric of European cultures has provided a privileged terrain for such explorations, affording insights that have amply proved George Steiner's argument that the reception (through translation and other forms of linguistic and cultural processing) of key canonical authors lights up – like a “radioactive tracer” (1993:14) – the evolving body of the receiving culture. “European Shakespeare,” as the sub-discipline has sometimes been called, is indeed a territory to which both editors have been actively committed – for temporal reasons, more extensively so in the case of Ángel-Luis Pujante, currently the major translator of Shakespeare into Spanish and active promoter of a few international initiatives involving the Bard's cross-cultural fortunes.

The editors' close awareness of the broader background to their efforts shows in some of the features of this *Bibliography* – from the outset, and to state the obvious, both in the fact that it is bilingual and in the nature and particular contents of the annotations, elements indeed in an overall design determined by the stated ambition to reach a much larger audience than Spanish (or indeed Spanish-speaking) readerships. However, the “rich (prior) process” behind this book also (and centrally) involves the particular engagement that Pujante, together with some of the younger researchers in his team at the University of Murcia, has had for some time with Shakespeare's fortunes in their own country. Indeed, as pointed out by the present editors, this bibliography follows an earlier initiative by Pujante and Laura Campillo – an edited anthology (2007) of Spanish responses to Shakespeare over the period 1764-1916. As Pujante and Cerdá explain in their “Preliminary Note,” the period covered by the present bibliography was too prolific to allow for an extension of the previous anthologising project. This perception accounts for the editors' option as regards the nature of the sequel – an annotated bibliography, rather than a selection of texts that, to be representative at all, would in all likelihood prove too vast for a reasonably sized book; while the sheer volume of the textual wake left by Shakespeare's refractions through the Spanish cultural and literary system fully justifies a bibliography that allows readers to have some sense of their range and diversity.

Pujante and Cerdá's endeavour is predicated on compromise: their listings are sizeable, but also selective. The book lists, in its "General Bibliography" section, roughly one thousand titles; and, of these, it offers almost seven hundred chronologically organised "summaries," in English and Spanish, in the 450 pages of its first (and longer) section. Readers are therefore treated to informed glimpses into almost 70% of the titles recorded in the book; and such entries concern not just academic work, but also journalistic responses to Shakespeare (on page and/or stage), and remarks offered by theatre professionals or public figures from a variety of backgrounds. The range of such sources is discussed by the editors, both in their "Preliminary Note" and "Introduction," as contributing to the book's ability to offer "a more comprehensive appraisal of Shakespeare's image in Spain" and beyond. The editors' choices, in fact, are a key element in this publication, since they amount to an extended critical exercise that directs and substantially enriches the book's basic informative rationale. This critical exercise begins, of course with selection: the editors' prefatory contributions include a few remarks, albeit concise, on their criteria for inclusion – indeed, readers of the "Preliminary Note" may find themselves wishing that such remarks, possibly kept short out of editorial modesty, could be more extensive and provide additional detail. Further, the critical edge that the book derives from its grounding on a selective rationale (rather than a mere programme for compiling information) has also been honed at a deeper level, since, as the editors explain, one key reason why certain texts were given a summary in the volume (rather than remaining as simple descriptive entries on the longer bibliography list) was precisely that they could be seen to convey a critical perspective, offering an argument rather than (e.g.) a mere factual record.

The editorial contributions that frame the book's major sections also include an overview of some of the historical trends that have characterised Shakespeare's reception in Spanish culture during the (roughly) two and a half centuries that the volume covers. Some of these trends are common to the Bard's fortunes in other European cultures – for example, the indirectness of textual transits, as translation of his drama by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century men of letters was frequently carried out from French versions. Other historically prevalent aspects include the close links between an attention to Shakespeare, in the receiving culture, and the

production of national representations – assisted by the interplay of self- and hetero-images. At key moments in the history of Shakespeare's reception (in Spain and elsewhere), this process tended to draw both on the associations carried by certain dramatic characters, and on the national (English) significance attributed to the figure of the Bard – often compared to other national writers as supposed embodiments of the cultures they might be construed as representing. An inevitable, pervasive *topos* in the processing of Shakespeare by Spanish authors and commentators is, therefore, the possibility and desirability of comparing him to Cervantes or, indeed, to Lope de Vega or Calderón – and the attractions and perplexities of such a nexus do not fail to criss-cross the book in a variety of ways.

In general, the summaries that make up the book's most substantial part confirm Shakespeare's capacity indeed to act as a "tracer" (Steiner's trope) that brings out the contours and lineaments of the receiving culture – since responses to the English Bard highlight some of the major developments in Spanish literary and intellectual history over the past two and a half centuries. These include: (1) in the earlier chronological segments (from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries), the protracted, resistant presence of neoclassical strictures, followed by a turning of the tide in favour of Romantic aesthetics; (2) over the whole period, and in the broadest possible terms, the tight imbrication of remarks on Shakespeare and discussions about Spain's literary past – its highlights and structuring values; and (3) throughout the twentieth century, culminating in its final quarter (following the watershed moment of Spain's transition to a modern democracy), the gradual and increasing assimilation of the country's academic and intellectual life to major international tendencies.

The latter development has had obvious and indeed deeply felt consequences for the nature, diversity and intensity of the critical response that Shakespeare came to obtain from Spanish critics, academics and theatre professionals. This is also duly noted by the editors in their Introduction, albeit – again – less extensively than some readers might wish: a sharper and more detailed delineation of the historical process that saw Spain's response to the English Bard fall increasingly into line with global academic and intellectual tendencies, and the extent to which this has nonetheless allowed for

the continuity of specificities in his Spanish reception, might indeed make for fascinating reading. The fact that readers browsing this bibliography may find themselves wishing for more – possibly a follow-up project on the part of the team behind it? – is itself, however, testimony to the book's many merits, which prominently include its ability to foster additional debate around its persistently intriguing object.

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