

meet the unbearable expenses of his Majesty' (65) rather than 'even though an incalculable amount of gold arrived continually from the Indies, all was diverted to Germany to meet the unsustainable expenses of His Majesty'. As this last example illustrates, language changes over time (*puesto que* could mean 'even though' in Golden-Age Spanish), so caution is crucial when translating older texts. These and other infelicities obviously create a poor impression. Such is regrettable as Samson has written an otherwise good book. Careful editing would have made it even better.

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VERONIKA RYJIK, *'La bella España': el teatro de Lope de Vega en la Rusia soviética y postsoviética*. Madrid: Iberoamericana/Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert. 2019. 312 pp.

Russia's love affair with Golden-Age Spanish theatre and Lope de Vega, in particular, is well known. While a number of critics have explored this relationship during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Veronika's Ryjik's *'La bella España': el teatro de Lope de Vega en la Rusia soviética y postsoviética* brings fresh insights into the complex reception of Lope's theatre in Russia over the past century. Contextualizing the Spanish playwright's theatre within the Russian field of cultural production, censorship practices and changes in ideological imperatives, it contrasts official discourses about the playwright's work with the reality of stage productions. 'La bella España' in the title refers to an article that criticized Russian productions of Spanish theatre for the pervasive quality of *испанщина*, a tendency similar to *españolada*, which highlights the stereotypical, such as the passionate Spaniard, bright colours, singing and dancing, instead of exploring the authentic depths of a work. As a result the most popular Golden-Age plays in Russia tended to be *comedias de capa y espada*, and Lope's dramaturgy appeared to be 'festiva, visualmente impactante y, sobre todo, ligera' (28).

Carefully documented, the monograph is composed of an Introduction by Enrique García Santo-Tomás, a Prologue, seven chapters, and an Epilogue, as well as a Bibliography and an Index, followed by illustrations of Lope's plays from 1936–2013. In the first and introductory chapter, Ryjik suggests the formation of an 'alternative canon' of Lope's work under Stalinism. In particular, it investigates the complex socio-political and cultural factors at play during the purges of the late 1930s. With the advent of Socialist Realism in the 1930s, the state's official stance was anti-elitist and anti-*avant-garde*; yet, simultaneously evinced a keen interest in popular forms of culture and folklore. Despite a rejection of modern foreign literature, the latter tendency encouraged the Russian reception of Lope, who was viewed as a *народный поэт*, a popular or people's poet. This official approbation permitted Russia's growing fascination with Lope, leading to a sort of 'lopemania' in the 1940s. The second chapter of the book assesses the staging of his plays during the late nineteenth through the early twentieth century. Ryjik indicates that in Russia the most famous works of Spanish classics consisted primarily of Lope's *comedias de capa y espada*. The third chapter of Ryjik's book examines translators and their role in shaping Lope's theatre. While earlier translations were literal, the new translations of the 1930s paid greater attention to aesthetic concerns, improving the overall quality of works, while also leaving their stamp upon Russian productions. The following chapter explores the negotiation of ideological concerns, censorship, and official discourses about Lope, which differed from productions, which were more likely to be a comic escape than to exhibit political message. The fifth chapter analyses Russian productions of *Fuenteovejuna*, which lent itself to a political