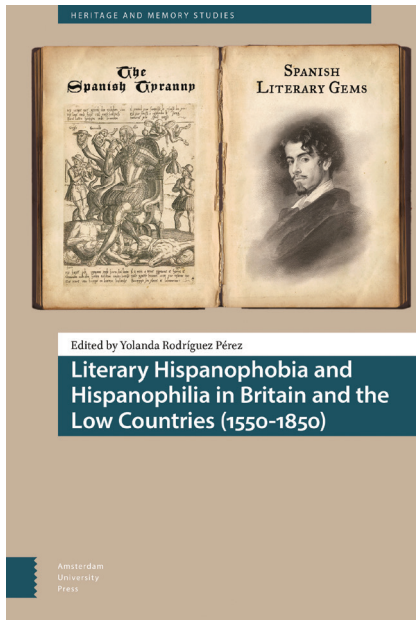


## Review

Yolanda Rodríguez Pérez (ed.), *Literary Hispanophobia and Hispanophilia in Britain and the Low Countries (1550-1850)*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2020, 340 pp. ISBN 9789462989375.



It was the historically distinct fate of the Spanish Empire that the era of its meteoric global expansion would be coterminous with rapid advancements in the print trade. Even as felicitous dynastic matches precipitated the consolidation of numerous European polities under the rule of the Habsburg Emperor Charles V, so did reports of the New World wonders attained in his name suggest that the Spanish monarchy had been accorded a divine historical mission. But hand in glove with its 'golden' successes came reports of the severity with which its conquistadores applied the exemplary punishments of the age in the Amerindian societies Spain believed itself charged with subjugating. Apprehended within a web of emerging European states chafing against the twin Habsburg aims of imperial sovereignty and Roman Catholic orthodoxy, the acts of Spain's colonial agents were interpreted as revealing their homeland's

essential character. The resulting Black Legend became a truth of history, engendering a widely recognised set of sixteenth-century stereotypes now regarded as brazenly hispanophobic; these commonplaces would serve as an intoxicating stimulant for the nation-centred historiography of Spain's European rivals, which repeatedly drew upon this discourse well into the Romantic era and beyond. Nowhere in Europe did this ideological inheritance run more deeply than within the nations comprising Great Britain and the Low Countries.

Yolanda Rodríguez Pérez's edited volume, *Literary Hispanophobia and Hispanophilia in Britain and the Low Countries (1550-1850)*, a multinational endeavour resulting from a series of research initiatives sponsored by the Dutch Research Council (NWO), sets out 'to investigate new and more complex dynamics regarding perceptions of Spanishness'

(9) in an era spanning three centuries. As might be expected of a project encompassing such a broad swath of European literary history, some contributions succeed in furthering this aim more successfully than others. But as the volume unfolds, one cannot but sense that there is important interdisciplinary work taking place between its covers. As Rodríguez Pérez and her contributors demonstrate, although Spanish writers were producing ‘internationally hailed masterpieces’, even as they were being ‘translated, imitated, and emulated’ by writers responding to them ‘out of sheer admiration and as creative inspiration’, when introduced to foreign audiences in print these works were commonly ‘harnessed with a discrediting propagandistic agenda’ (12). Although initially a phenomenon of the sixteenth century, the formula – as the study also demonstrates – will be reified in the hispanophilic cum hispanophobic productions of the Romantic era. Accordingly, the volume is organised two parts: ‘Early Modern Discourses on Spain’, and ‘Modern Discourses on Spain’.

Alexander Samson’s ‘Being Spanish in the Early Modern World’ opens part one by offering both a long view of what it meant to be ‘Spanish’ during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and a broad geographical survey of the ongoing problems of inclusion and exclusion confronting the Spanish Habsburgs. Addressing the inherited historical assumptions obscuring the layered complexities of governance within Spain itself, Samson explores the means whereby the Spanish monarchy sought to negotiate the intricacies of far-flung dynastic inheritances and even farther distant colonial obligations. In this light, the fixed, quasi-totalitarian absolutism of the post-Romantic historical imagination recedes, revealing aspects of a dynamic culture subject to the rapidly mounting contingencies with which it was forced to contend.

Against the expansive spatial and temporal context wherein Samson sketches the interplay of hispanophobia and hispanophilia, the subsequent chapters in this first part may be read as individual case studies. A significant number of its contributions demonstrate that the ‘occlusion’ and ‘disavowal’ paradigm modelled by Barbara Fuchs’s *The Poetics of Piracy. Emulating Spain in English Literature* (Philadelphia 2013) often holds for Dutch contemporaries as well. However, Frans Blom discovers a welcome counterexample in the repertoire of the Amsterdam *Schouwburg*, where, far from being occluded, the origins of Dutch versions of plays by Juan Pérez de Montalbán, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, Lope de Vega, and others were intentionally avowed as advertising attractions.

Although Enlightenment thinkers like the French *philosophes* produced a voluminous body of writing on Spanish literature and culture, the edited volume largely sets this discourse aside to focus on the recalibration of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century attitudes relative to the Peninsular War of 1807-1814 and the European independence movements that followed in its wake. Pedro Javier Pardo’s contribution ‘From Hispanophobia to Quixotophilia. The Politics of Quixotism in the British Long Eighteenth Century’, is the lone exception to this pattern, which provides an appropriate hinge to the volume’s second part. Setting the stage for the chapters to follow, Pardo reaches back to the hispanophilic temper of the Jacobean age, contrasting this earlier openness with the state-sponsored hispanophobia that became part of the English Republic’s *raison d’état*. Mediated, in part, by the Cervantine appropriations of Sir William Temple (1628-1699) and Sir John Carteret (1690-1763), Pardo demonstrates how both the *Quixote* and its author would increasingly

come to be constructed as transcending their Spanish origins as the Enlightenment unfolded. While also contributing to the hispanophilic antiquarianism that will characterise the work of leading English Romantics such as Sir Walter Scott, Robert Southey, and Lord Byron, the 'naturalised' Cervantes could now be identified sympathetically with a Spanish nation beleaguered by the Franco-Napoleonic aggression that serves as a backdrop for the chapters that follow.

Rodríguez Pérez's concluding summation, "Covering the Skeletons with Flesh and Blood". Spanish Golden Age Drama in English and Dutch Nineteenth-Century Literary Histories', gracefully considers the place of the Spain's *Siglo de Oro* dramatists in the age during which Europe's national literatures were becoming canonised as such. In this context, not only are the influence of de Vega, Calderón, and their contemporaries disavowed, but, much in the manner that ethnocentric discourses sometimes have feminised the romance languages in relation to more 'masculine' Germanic tongues, the period literary histories she brings to bear – English volumes by George Henry Lewes and Charles Dibdin, and Dutch counterparts by Jeronimo De Vries and Willem De Clercq – plainly orientalise Spanish literature and culture as 'luxuriant', 'overabundant', 'florid', 'prodigal', or 'decadent'.

The North-South dichotomy organising these early British and Dutch literary histories reveals them to be of a piece with the historical view about to be advanced by the seminal Victorian historians T.B. Macaulay, J.A. Froude, and J.R. Seeley, all of whom viewed the Anglo-Saxon dismemberment of the Spanish Empire as providential. Against this Whigish teleology, this edited volume joins the collective project of undoing the continuing influence of these and other dated, nationalistic narratives by putting British, Dutch, and Spanish writers into dialogue rather than reinscribing historical oppositions. In this sense, the collection adds to a growing body of scholarship demonstrating how thoroughly the ill effects of the Black Legend came to permeate European culture from the sixteenth century through the Romantic era. The volume will thus be of interest to scholars interested in exploring the international dynamics of literary history, as well the ways literature and drama may figure in processes of national becoming that far exceed the contexts of their originating production and consumption. Additionally, Rodríguez Pérez and her contributors raise the spectre of creative inspiration and artistic hybridity that cannot be contained by the boundaries and ideologies of nation-states – about which this reviewer wishes only that the volume could have said somewhat more.

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