

**José Manuel González, ed., José María Ferri
and María del Carmen Irles Vicente, coord. 2017**
Cervantes-Shakespeare 1616–2016:
Contexto, influencia, relación. Context, Influence,
Relation. Kassel: Reichenberger

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Cervantes-Shakespeare 1616–2016: Contexto, influencia, relación. Context, Influence, Relation is a monumental essay collection, the result of a team collaboration from the Universidad de Alicante with José Manuel González featuring as general editor and José María Ferri and María del Carmen Irles as co-editors. The volume is part of the series “Teatro del Siglo de Oro. Estudios de literatura 129; Cervantes y su mundo 9,” published in Germany with financial support from the local government of Valencia (AORG/2016/108). Most of the essays originated at a conference held at the University of Alicante (19–21 of April, 2016), commemorating the 400th anniversary of the deaths of Shakespeare and Cervantes in 1616.

Attempting to bring together the two iconic literary figures of Spain and Britain, this impressive essay collection stands out for its far-reaching scope. It harmoniously combines articles in both Spanish and English covering a wide range of subjects concerning the life and works of Cervantes and Shakespeare. With an ambitious aim in mind, the three editors have wisely distributed the essays into three distinctive blocks: “La época de Cervantes y Shakespeare,” (Cervantes’s and Shakespeare’s time), “Cervantes y Shakespeare: su mundo y su obra” (their world and their work) and “Cervantes and Shakespeare beyond *Cardenio*.” The collection is eminently interdisciplinary with contributions by prestigious specialists from various countries in the field of the literature and history of the early modern period in Britain and Spain.

The opening section contains four essays which function as a preface to the collection. The first introductory essay is by Darío Villanueva, former director of the Real Academia Española, who discusses the historical roles of Shakespeare and Cervantes as

forerunners of cinema. As Villanueva explains, in the notable scenographic conception of their works one can find “un repertorio insuperable de atisbos y soluciones precinematográficas” (7) [an unsurpassable repertoire of pre-cinematographic traces and solutions]. Michael Dobson, director of the Shakespeare Institute, reflects on the “immense overlaps” observed in the two authors’ “achievements and their influence” (14). Stephen Greenblatt in turn offers a translation into Spanish of a fictional letter authored by Shakespeare and addressed to Cervantes. Greenblatt, who dates this letter 2 August 1612, the signal year in which *Don Quixote* officially appeared in print in Britain, uses this literary artifice to dramatize key features of the relation between Cervantes and Shakespeare. The prefatory section concludes with “Consideraciones introductorias” by editor José Manuel González, a well-known expert on the reception of Shakespeare’s works in Spain.¹ González offers a comparative approach to the ways Shakespeare and Cervantes have made a notable impact on Spanish and English letters, respectively. As he points out, this fruitful interaction started rather late in the case of Spain with Ramón de la Cruz’s first translation of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1772), which marked the beginning of the bard’s long-standing presence in the history of Spanish drama.² By contrast, Thomas Shelton’s 1612 translation into English of the first part of *Don Quixote* gave full rein to the influence of Cervantes’s work, which had probably been available in manuscript from c. 1607 (Darby, 306) in Britain. The lost play *Cardenio*, a joint work by Shakespeare and John Fletcher, based on an episode of *Don Quixote*, is mentioned by González as a major point of contact, which will later be explored in the articles by other scholars included in the collection (Pujante 1998).

Part I, which is introduced by co-editor M^a del Carmen Irlés Vicente, is made of five essays exploring Cervantes’s and Shakespeare’s worlds: from socio-economic aspects, to meteorological conditions and geographical background. Among these articles Armando Alberola-Romá’s study of the so-called “First Ice Age,” (1570–1630) stands out by reminding us of the role played by climate in the contemporary conflicts of England and Spain. Also in this part, Rafael Benítez analyzes Cervantes’s biography and literary

¹ Among other works, González is the author of *Shakespeare and Spain* (2002) and the editor of *Spanish Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (2006).

² For further information on this first translation see Portillo and Salvador (2003).

production against a Mediterranean background. The historical context is subsequently considered by Porfirio Sanz, who investigates the conflictive relations between England and Spain after Elizabeth I's accession to the throne in 1558.

Introduced by co-editor José María Ferri, Part II provides five more essays treating literary aspects found in the two writers' production. Ana L. Baquero offers a study of the dream motif in the Cervantine corpus while Jesús G. Maestro deals with the presence of devilish figures in Shakespeare's *Richard III* and Cervantes's plays. Eva Valero in turn considers the reception of the figure of Don Quixote in seventeenth-century Spanish colonies in South America. This part concludes with María Paz de Miguel's article offering the results of the archeological excavations carried out in the crypt of the Church of St Ildefonse, where the remains of fifteen people, including Cervantes's own corpse and that of his wife Catalina de Salazar, were deposited in 1697 after having been transferred from the original church of the Convent of the Barefoot Trinitarians of Madrid. Further updating is provided by José Manuel Lucía's analysis of the evidence afforded by the document preserved in the University Library of Seville (A Mont. Ms. C29 [1]), rediscovered in 2016, in which Cervantes signed as a witness in a legal suit supporting fellow comedy playwright and actor Tomás Gutiérrez.³

Part III, introduced by José Manuel González, includes seven essays which trace the common literary interests observed in the production of Shakespeare and Cervantes, bringing to light several notable aspects such as the subject of the "treacherous friends" which is explored by Trudi Darby as a possible underlying motivation for the composition of the lost *Cardenio*. The Cervantine legacy of the ghostly *Cardenio* may have something to do with *The Spanish Gypsy* (1621–1622), which is attributed to Shakespeare's dramatic successors Middleton, Rowley, Dekker and Ford. Eric Griffin thus investigates the possible Cervantine sources that could have been used in this collaborative play. Brean Hammond in turn studies "Shakespearean and Cervantine traces" (281) in Theobald's *Double Falsehood*, which provides probably "the only surviving record" (281) of *Cardenio*; thus, the lasting success of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* is evident in its

³ The existence of this document was actually made known in 1914, but in 2016 it was digitized and publicized on occasion of the 4th centenary. See "Documento con dos firmas de Cervantes."

continuation in Restoration drama.⁴ A complementary essay is provided by Barry Ife, who reflects on the intersections between drama and novel in Cervantes's and Shakespeare's literary production.

In *Cervantes-Shakespeare 1616–2016* readers will therefore find an immensely learned collection of essays with splendid contributions from well-established scholars. The volume will no doubt constitute an essential reading which will bring light to the Golden Age of English and Spanish literature through paramount authors Shakespeare and Cervantes. José Manuel González is therefore quite right to foresee the collection's strong impact on the field of Spanish and English studies, since it will represent "an academic and editorial landmark" ("un hito académico y editorial," 41). The volume has indeed set the standards very high for the quinquecentenary.⁵

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⁴ A comparative analysis of this play and *Don Quixote* is offered by Pujante (1998). For the popularity of *Don Quixote*'s adaptations to Restoration drama, see Mora (2015).

⁵ For a comparative appreciation of the Tercentenary in Britain, see Calvo (2014).

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