

Barbara Fuchs. *The Poetics of Piracy: Emulating Spain in English Literature*. Haney Foundation Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. 186 pp. \$45. ISBN: 978-0-8122-4475-5.

Barbara Fuchs's new monograph may be slim — without apparatus, its five chapters only cover 130 standard-size pages — but, as is characteristic of her groundbreaking earlier work *Mimesis and Empire: The New World, Islam, and European Identities* (2001), *Passing for Spain: Cervantes and the Fictions of Identity* (2003), and *Exotic Nation: Maurophilia and the Construction of Early Modern Spain* (2009), this latest book is full of ideas. The central point of *The Poetics of Piracy* is that Renaissance English writers, as much as the nation's pirates, stole unmercifully from Spain, the superpower of the day in literary spheres as much as colonial ones. As such, this book is related to her previous body of work, which has, perhaps more than that of any other recent critic, enabled scholars to understand the reach and significance of the ways Spain was constructed and consumed within what was starting to be conceived of as a global economy. What is new though to this study, and persuasively argued, is Fuchs's account of the ways English writers transmitted and appropriated the new forms, plots, and genres taken from their Spanish counterparts, just as Elizabethan pirates looted the riches of the Spanish empire. By exploring the ways

English writers changed or adapted Spanish material, Fuchs seeks to restore “texts constructed in a transnational, ideologically complex setting to their original contexts” in order to address the important question of “what particular charge does that transformation carry?” (10). Her overall aim is a larger, and laudable, one: she wants “to produce a new kind of literary history, more attuned to the deliberate exclusions and erasures, as well as the appropriations, that make up the national” (10).

The five chapters that follow fall into two groups: the first three are on the use English Renaissance writers made of Spanish material for anti-Spanish purposes. Chapter 1 explores Elizabethan translations of Spanish militarily and strategically sensitive material, and finds that their rhetorical acts and appropriations match for pugnaciousness the physical skirmishes from a time when the nations were at war. Chapter 2 reads Francis Beaumont’s generically complex and thematically rich play *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (ca. 1607) in relation to its debts to Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* (1605), and sees it as responding to the end of the Anglo-Spanish hostilities. Fuchs catalogs a critical history that has only partially acknowledged Beaumont’s indebtedness, and relates this to a deliberate, self-conscious, and ideologically motivated repudiation of Spanish sources on the part of English writers by domesticating them to local and national concerns.

Chapter 3 turns to the ways that plays of the 1620s commented on James I’s plans for a Spanish match for Prince Charles from a range of political perspectives and, in John Fletcher’s little-studied 1624 play *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* in particular, “plunder[ed] Spanish materials to stage an allegorical victory over Spain” (78). The final two chapters change tack to explore the ways literary history has negotiated Shakespeare and Fletcher’s lost *Cardenio*’s absent presence in the canon. Chapter 4 concentrates on the reception of the play’s eighteenth-century redaction *The Double Falsehood*, and its 2010 Arden edition, as examples of bardolatry, where Shakespeare’s authorship is sought so insistently that it distorts the ways the play’s sources, particularly the influence of Shakespeare’s literary rival Cervantes, have been acknowledged. The final chapter, “*Cardenios* for Our Time,” brings the discussion right up-to-date, as it focuses on the contemporary cultural politics of staging Spain in the Royal Shakespeare Company’s 2011 production of *Cardenio*, directed by Gregory Doran, and on the issues of piracy, intellectual property, and cultural translation in the collaboration to reimagine the play between Stephen Greenblatt and the playwright Charles Mee.

The Poetics of Piracy is a stimulating read and, given its intervention in contemporary performance studies as well as Renaissance cultural history, it is essential reading to all those interested in the vicissitudes of Anglo-Spanish literary and political history over the *longue durée*. Fuchs is a critic of big ideas expressed through case histories: this is both the book’s major strength and weakness; *The Poetics of Piracy* invites further work to fill in the historical and textual gaps in coverage between her chosen examples, to enable a fuller understanding of England’s repeated turn to, and complex relationship with Spain.

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