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Review of *La Bella España: El Teatro de Lope de Vega en la Rusia Soviética y Postsoviética* by Veronika Ryjik

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Ryjik, Veronika. *La Bella España: El Teatro de Lope de Vega en la Rusia Soviética y Postsoviética*. Iberoamericana, 2019. 313 pp. ISBN 9-788491-920045.

There are certain writers whose importance only grows with time, and the longer the distance that separates us from them, the more facets of their genius they demonstrate to us, readers of the 21st century. One of these authors is Lope de Vega.

The new book of Veronika Ryjik now makes another major contribution to the scholarship of a great master who was well-known and admired in the Soviet Russia. It is indeed a serious study that fermented in the mind of the scholar for more than ten years – the true symbol of a truly remarkable book.

The introduction offers us a concise overview of the entire book that divided into seven chapters. The author starts with explaining the so-called Russian canon – tradition to represent works of Lope de Vega on Russian scene, and enormous popularity of all his works. The second chapter beautifully explains the development of the “Spanish theatre” – from its origins up to the moment of a real Lope-mania in the 1940s in the Soviet Union.

Of course, the popularity of the great Spaniard owes a great deal to the mastery of Russian translators – Lozinsky, Schepkina-Kupernik, and Donskoy – who were able to transmit the very essence of Lope’s humor and sarcasm, as well as the authenticity of his characters. The fourth chapter offers us an extensive analysis of the Soviet scholarship that, despite the oppressive regime, managed to reveal the real image of the master and true meaning of his best works. The next chapter is looking for roots of the oblivion that became a destiny for Lope’s major work – *Fuenteovejuna*: the author tries to find the answer to why this play was ever put on stage in the Soviet Russia. Chapter seven presents to us a change in the tradition of presenting Lope in the 1970s, and talks extensively about, perhaps, the most successful Soviet cinematographic representation of *El perro de hortelano*. The final chapter offers us a panoramic view of the actual state of representation of Lope’s plays in the post-Soviet Russia. Especially interesting is the

discussion of the *re-accentuation* that some modern directors try to use; in the author's opinion, they sometimes offer very original interpretations of his plays.

The extensive bibliography that is included in the book would, without a doubt, be a valuable resource for any scholar who is interested in further studying the topic – representation of Lope de Vega on the Russian stage. Considering the enormous size of the audience, and the cultural renaissance that Russia experiences today, despite all its difficulties, economic and political, this field of study certainly has a great potential.

Ryjik's book is a perfectly constructed circumference, where all major dots are connected in an intrinsic manner by a scholar who thoroughly examined all major works of the master and did so through the magnifying optic of the effects of *re-accentuation* – the Bakhtinian term - applied toward their present life on the Russian stage. I am delighted to see such a book published; in our constant efforts to think transnationally while rethinking and reevaluating Lope's works, this new book is certainly a true scholarly success.

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