

Book Review

Wade, Jonathan William. *Being Portuguese in Spanish: Reimagining Early Modern Iberian Literature, 1580–1640.* Purdue UP, 2020.

As its title clearly shows, this 2020 study by Meredith College (North Carolina) professor Jonathan William Wade deals with a number of texts written in Spanish by Portuguese authors during the sixty-year period that encompasses Spain's annexation of Portugal. Although some scholarship about this era has been produced in the last hundred-odd years within the field of Iberian Studies, these types of texts, written by bilingual authors, have not garnered as much critical attention as they deserve, so this volume constitutes a more than welcome step in that direction. But as the book's subtitle, "Reimagining Early Modern Iberian Literature," also implies, the focus is not placed solely on the texts themselves, but on a new reading of early modern Iberian literature at large, as well as on revisiting the period's hitherto accepted literary canon. "This study," reflects Wade, "was always more about an idea than any specific authors," and indeed the book considers the often difficult position of maintaining allegiance to one's homeland while writing in a language other than one's mother tongue (196).

In this specific case, Wade looks at certain works by a variety of authors from the so-called Dual Monarchy period—Jacinto Cordeiro, Ângela de Azevedo, Francisco Manuel de Melo, and Manuel de Faria e Sousa, among others—in an attempt to determine how these texts written in Spanish celebrate Portugal and the writers' Portuguese heritage. As Wade points out, "rather than a disjointed view of Portugal, many of these texts establish a common vision of the 'nation' consisting of linguistic, geographic, historical, religious, and ethnic characteristics" (17). Moreover, they "lay bare the roots of early modern Portuguese national consciousness and contextualize the fundamental, yet problematic, relationship between language, identity, literature, and politics" (17). Of primary importance to these writers, then, is the concept of *portugalidade*, to which Wade devotes a sizable part of the first chapter.

While these texts by far predate the ideas of nationhood and nationality brought about by Romanticism and nineteenth-century German Idealism—not to mention the later writings of Ernest Renan or Benedict Anderson—the representation of Portuguese national identity that we find in these early modern works did not appear in a void, nor did the use of Spanish by Portuguese-born authors. Camões’s poetry is the object of study of one of the most important works that Wade considers in this volume: *Lusiadas de Luís de Camões, príncipe de los poetas de España* (*The Lusiads of Luís de Camões, prince of Iberian poets, 1639*), a critical approach to Camões’s masterpiece by Faria e Sousa, whom Wade dubs the “epitome of an era” for being arguably the most relevant author of the annexation period (79). Though Faria e Sousa excelled in many genres (poetry, historiography, philosophy, and several others), Wade chooses to concentrate on this work of literary criticism primarily because in it “the Portuguese nation consistently emerges as the protagonist,” and his commentary on Camões’s famous poem offers him the chance “to promote a patriotic agenda in the language of the Empire and spread the glories of his native land across the globe” (80).

As Wade successfully shows, Faria e Sousa is the perfect example of how a language may be understood as a tool for communication and literary creation rather than merely as a symbol of national identity. However, he was not the only one, just as literary criticism was not the only genre that would see Spanish-language texts penned by Portuguese authors. The theater stage, where *comedias* had become an extremely popular source of mass entertainment, was fertile ground for the flourishing of Portuguese playwrights such as Jacinto Cordeiro and Ângela de Azevedo. As Wade rightly argues, plays like Cordeiro’s *La entrada del Rey en Portugal* (*The entrance of the king in Portugal, 1621*) or Azevedo’s *El muerto disimulado* (*The hidden corpse*) constantly feature explicit glorifications of Portugal and all things Portuguese, the latter even using words such as *saudade* in the original Portuguese, something that is clearly reminiscent of Gil Vicente’s practice of mixing Portuguese and Spanish in his own plays and farces. In Wade’s words, though they have long been overlooked by critics, “these plays affirm the past, present, and future worth of their native Portugal, and highlight the important contribution of Portuguese dramatists to the *comedia* tradition” (139).

It is precisely the future that will become the focus of many authors, including António de Sousa de Macedo, Violante do Céu, and Francisco Manuel de Melo, as the Dual Monarchy nears its end by 1640 and Portugal regains its independence from Spain. Even in the context of this so-called *Restauração da Independência*, Spanish remained for several years the linguistic vehicle chosen by several Portuguese authors for their works, even when these texts were conceived as incensed exaltations of Portuguese national identity. As a case in point, Wade cites Sousa de Macedo's *Flores de Espanha, Excelencias de Portugal* (Flowers of Iberia, excellences of Portugal, 1631), a book in which the author answers Camões's rhetorical question of whether it would be preferable to rule over the entire world—except for Portugal—or be king of Portugal alone: “Y podemos responder que mejor es ser Rey de Portugal solamente” ‘And we can respond that it is better to King of Portugal alone’ (182). This focus on the future of Portugal after the *Restauração* inevitably will spell the end of Portuguese-authored texts in Spanish, but as Wade shows, the practice would dwindle but not disappear immediately.

In conclusion, the contributions of this study to the field of Iberian Studies and to a renewed understanding of Portuguese authors who chose to write in Spanish during the sixty years of the Dual Monarchy are manifold and extremely relevant. Not only does *Being Portuguese in Spanish* shed new light on a valuable corpus of lesser-known works in need of being (re)discovered, but it also makes a very compelling case for the reappraisal of the concept of national literary canon, both Spanish and Portuguese, within the context of Iberian early modern literature. It calls into question whether the construction of a literary canon should be determined merely by linguistic issues or whether language choice should be understood in relation with concerns over readership, audience, and dissemination. As Wade rightly concludes, “a Portuguese writer in a Spanish costume . . . is only a contradiction for those unwilling to give the texts and contexts of early modern Iberia a serious reading” (191). Wade's readings in this study are serious, engaging, illuminating, and, it is hoped, merely the first of many more such readings to come.

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