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PAUL JOSEPH LENNON. Love in the Poetry of Francisco de Aldana: Beyond Neoplatonism. London: Tamesis, 2019. 203 pp.

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knowing that comes about through this poetic process is not a knowledge based on reason, but rather an acceptance of nature's knowledge, "la sabiduría de la naturaleza en todo lo complejo de su elementalidad" and with the realization that nature "tiene un lenguaje oculto, silencioso, el de una savia que se propaga en medio de la diversidad" (185).

Gala's work offers intriguing insights about Janés's philosophical approach and the power of poetic integrations of scientific thought. There are a few areas of the study that are somewhat less successful, particularly the absence at times of pertinent secondary bibliography on Janés's work, as well as less clearly structured or convincing argumentation in certain theoretical sections. For example, the theoretical grounding includes many intriguing scientific theorists, but at times it lacks engagement with current literary thought, such as not referencing the affective turn in literary theory when discussing Janés's interrogation of the emotional/logical divide, or citing descriptions like "acercamiento 'apropiacionista'" and "nómada estético" (14) in an effort to praise and theorize Janés's work without acknowledging the critiques of these ideas within contemporary literary theory. Nonetheless, Gala's work offers a timely and helpful approach to an incredibly important part of this very underrepresented author's work. Janés has published a vast and intriguing corpus, and has been recognized by international literary bodies including the Real Academia Española, and continues to publish at a rapid pace. However, this is only the second monograph focused on her oeuvre, and the first to look specifically at her integration of scientific thought. Specialists will find this a helpful and intriguing approach to the important insights offered in Janés's poetry.

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PAUL JOSEPH LENNON. *Love in the Poetry of Francisco de Aldana: Beyond Neoplatonism*. London: Tamesis, 2019. 203 pp.

In this volume on the topic of love in the verse works of Francisco de Aldana, Paul Joseph Lennon analyzes those poems against a complex backdrop of earlier literary expressions of love, incorporating multiple poetic examples from classical through early modern times. The result is a fine literary-historical contextualization of the selected poems.

In a solid introduction, Lennon details the history of the publication, study and reception of Aldana's poetry, then maps out the purpose and structure of his own volume. Given that Aldana's verse has been studied for its poetic adaptations of Neoplatonic themes and imagery, Lennon proposes

to broaden that approach by going, as he states in his title, “beyond” that aspect.

Chapter 1 (“The Complexities of Love”) begins with a review of theoretical treatises on love written during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, starting with Marsilio Ficino’s *De amore* and incorporating further selections from Pietro Bembo, Baldassare Castiglione, Tullia D’Aragona, Agostino Nifo, and Leo the Hebrew. This broad comparison allows Lennon to contextualize innovative developments in Aldana’s verse on the topic of physical love. The choice to read Ficino and Neoplatonism through just one text (*De amore*) is understandable but it does, unfortunately, distort certain conclusions regarding the binary opposition studied: whether a thought system (philosophical or poetic) is friendly or averse to physical love. Even in *De amore*, the discussion offers more subtlety than Lennon claims, as physical (vulgar) love is not wholly rejected as he suggests, but rather seen as imperfect, a stepping stone to what Ficino considers a better, transcendent love. This is confirmed in Ficino’s masterwork, the *Platonic Theology*, a text with which Aldana and most of the listed authors of theoretical treatises on love would have been familiar.

In Chapter 2 (“The Temerity to Love”), Lennon focuses on Aldana’s “Pues tan piadosa luz de estrella amiga” in a context of ideas on love, “philosophical and *consolatio* material” and other poems of the time (49), to conclude that Aldana was a poet both spiritual and physical. One principal focus is Amor and Fortuna, with Lennon pulling together threads from various verse works to elaborate and strengthen his arguments. The depth in this chapter comes from Lennon’s broad approach to the verses studied and used as comparators: he includes seminal texts by Petrarch as well as similar imagery in the works of other contemporaries of Aldana, to demonstrate convincingly how the Spanish poet maintains the “pathos and drama” of Petrarch while moving away from the “hopeless and despairing nature” of the Italian author’s “Passa la nave mia...” (83). This chapter’s analysis of poetic tropes, along with lexical and syntactic choices, is keen and well-focused.

Chapter 3 (“The Nature of Love”) is a study of the pastoral theme in Aldana’s verse. Taking Sannazaro’s *Arcadia* and Garcilaso’s eclogues as base texts for the genre, Lennon provides good background on the form, with classical referents (Lucretius, Virgil, Catullus, Propertius), thirteenth- to fourteenth-century Italian *sonetto dialogato*, troubador lyric, and the *Libro de buen amor* as well as earlier erotic sonnets (93). In both sonnets studied by Lennon here, even the protagonists’ names (Filis and Damón, Galatea and Tirsis) strengthen his argument for the pastoral connection: they are stock characters in Spanish pastoral of the day. Lennon’s conclusion to this chapter, that Aldana’s pastoral “is a hybrid space that leans less on the

figures and tropes of nature than on the characters' experiences within it" (122), is an astute read of Aldana's use of the form.

In Chapter 4 ("(De)mythologising love"), Lennon notes the Renaissance synthesis of myth with an earlier medieval "moralising tradition" (126) and provides very good background review of related developments in allegory, erotics, and humor in Spanish letters. His fine close reading of Aldana's "Medoro and Angélica" demonstrates how the poet not only transformed Petrarchan imagery, but also re-read Ariosto's reading of Ovid. Lennon highlights that Aldana challenges readers' expectations by employing known imagery in unexpected ways, as he neatly details the importance of the mythological texts for Aldana.

A brief ending chapter titled "Coda" offers a critical reading of Aldana's "Entre el Asia y Europa es repartido," itself a gloss on Garcilaso de la Vega's sonnet "Pasando el mar Leandro el animoso." Again, Lennon contextualizes the original myth along with subsequent poetic versions, while also amplifying his own arguments and conclusions from earlier chapters, finding in Aldana's verse a "testament to the intrepid nature of human love" (174) as the poet "rewrites the underlying message through his elaboration of Leandro's struggles" (172).

My only quibble with this otherwise fruitful study is Lennon's strangely conflicted approach to Neoplatonism and, particularly, to Ficino. Of *De amore*, we read: "Plato's text was ravaged and contorted to permit the issue-ridden synthesis of Platonism and Christianity as part of his [Ficino] establishing a syncretistic hybrid theology" (16). The hyperbole of "ravaged and contorted" aside, one of the celebrated hallmarks of Renaissance thought is its hybrid, eclectic nature. Lennon himself celebrates that eclecticism in Aldana's verse and offers wonderful close readings that explicate multiple threads of those ideologically heterogeneous verses. The straw man arguments (also in my opinion mistaken) about Ficino as draconian (35) or rigid (29) are easily glossed over by a knowledgeable reader, although they would mislead one not so well-informed. Similarly, in Chapter 4, Lennon alleges that his reading of Aldana's "Medoro and Angélica" demonstrates "an indictment" of Ficino on the part of Aldana: "the artificially spiritual bent of Ficino leads to his rejection" (165). The statement is surprisingly personal as a reading of the poet's intentionality, and the preceding analysis does not necessarily lead to such a conclusion.

With that one caveat, Lennon does indeed go "beyond Neoplatonism" in the verse works of Francisco de Aldana, and with very good results. The

poet's enigmatic verse is explored with a fine eye for detail, and the multiple points of contact and adaptation are quite revelatory.

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BLANCA SANTOS DE LA MORENA. *'Aunque es el cielo de la tierra': Lo religioso en el Persiles en diálogo con la obra cervantina*. Vigo: Editorial Academia del Hispanismo, 2019. 111 pp.

Its erstwhile neglect and discredit long past, Miguel de Cervantes's *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* has in the last few decades generated remarkable scholarly interest, culminating with the 400th anniversary of its publication in 2017. Blanca Santos de la Morena reminds us with her short monograph that there yet remains much critical work to be done in order to thoroughly understand such a central theme as religion in Cervantes's last work. By parsing various confessional strands of the text, and their relationship to Counter-Reformation Spain and post-Tridentine doctrine, Santos de la Morena charts a useful roadmap for future studies.

The introductory chapter begins by rehearsing the perennial question of whether Cervantes's ideological worldview was heterodox or orthodox, vexing descriptors that early interpretations often ascribed, respectively, to *Don Quijote* and *Persiles y Sigismunda*. Yet even the latter work has polarized critics who have found it, with respect to doctrinal concerns, either apologetic or iconoclastic. Much of Santos de la Morena's labor here and throughout the book consists of reviewing this interpretative legacy bequeathed by such figures as Castro, Casaldueiro, Forcione, and Avallé-Arce, as well as that of more recent critics like de Armas Wilson, Nerlich, Lozano Renieblas, and Armstrong-Roche. The proposed originality of Santos de la Morena's study lies in mobilizing not biographical conjecture but intertextual evidence: placing the religious thematics of *Persiles y Sigismunda* into dialogue with Cervantes's other works while eschewing entirely hypothetical figments of a Cervantes whose deathbed embrace of orthodoxy, as some critics fantasized, might have imbued his last work with similar dogma.

Elementary historical background is furnished in the second chapter, such as how the Council of Trent affected the representation of certain topics by fictional authors and, especially, in sacred genres like hagiographies, saints' lives, and *autos sacramentales*. Cervantes's writing also betrays Tridentine influence, particularly in its treatment of themes like death, suicide, duels, and marriage. As Santos de la Morena is quick to note,