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 ***Exorcism and Its Texts: Subjectivity in Early Modern
Literature of England and Spain (review)***

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

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Hilaire Kallendorf has written a very valuable book for scholars interested in the historical presence of exorcism during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe and its literary uses and configurations during the same period. The author decided to study this motif as a central element in a restricted corpus of works of dissimilar merit that belong to specific literary genres: the comic drama, the Picaresque, romance fiction, hagiographic drama, tragedy, and the *Quixote* as representative of the novel.

Spain and England are selected as appropriate examples of culturally powerful societies or "representative nations" (xvi) in the historical period between 1550 and 1700. I will restrict my commentary to the Spanish texts only.

Hilaire Kallendorf eliminated bewitchment from her study and concentrated her analysis on demonic possession that she curiously considers a *topos*, not a motif. Works by Lope de Vega, George Ruggle, Ben Johnson (*Volpone*), Shakespeare (*Twelfth Night*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*) John Jefferay, [End Page 667] Juan de Timoneda, Vélez de Guevara, Rojas Zorrilla y Mira de Amescua, Francisco de Quevedo, Cervantes's *Persiles* and *El rufián dichoso*, the *Lazarillo de Tormes*, and others are analyzed from the perspective of the literary importance and complexity of the presence of demonic possession in order to demonstrate that early modern writers in very different genres believed in the "real existence of angels and demons" (198).

If *prima facie* the study seems to be a traditional thematic one, Kallendorf uses, in order to develop it, an impressive array of modern and contemporary approaches to her analysis of the chosen corpus. Structuralism and semiotics guide Kallendorf's study in order to consider exorcism as a form of mythical thought; theologemes, in Greimas's usage, as constitutive units of myths with theological content are on the basis of the uses of exorcism according to the characteristics of different

literary genres. New Historicism and in particular Greenblatt's essays on Shakespeare receive a careful reading and sustained criticism. Ricoeur, Derrida, Bakhtin, and Foucault are also present to support concepts or general statements, sometimes with little contribution to clarification.

Insisting on the need of avoiding a reductionist view of the supernatural in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts, Kallendorf wants to see in the texts she studies a less skeptical or satirical purpose. In fact, the author finds in the motif selected a clear proof "that it is impossible for responsible literary critics to remove God completely from the early modern period" (198). Contemporary readers in this country might find statements like this (and they are abundant in the book) in strong accord (albeit not necessarily intended) with the dominant political discourse of our times. But satire and skepticism about the supernatural, exorcism, and demonic possessions were abundant in the times of the author of *Lazarillo*, Lope, Shakespeare, or Cervantes, and even before. Criticism of some vulgar forms of exorcism appeared frequently in treatises about superstitions and witchcraft that Kallendorf quotes. That of course does not mean that the authors selected for this study were skeptical about all forms of demonic possession. In fact, in all the Spanish authors selected, criticism and satire are always directed at the false forms that such practices acquired in popular religion. Kallendorf's readings of the *Quixote*'s passages more or less related to exorcism are extremely attractive. Yet they have to be received with some reservations. And such reservations may not have to do with "modern critics . . . living in an age of disbelief" (166) but rather with a different and legitimate critical approach to the same texts.

Some absences are surprising, although understandable. For example, the exclusion of "El coloquio de los perros," the last and most famous of the *Novelas ejemplares* by Cervantes, can be explained as an homage to the author's mentor, Alban Forcione. However, because the bibliographical richness of this volume is remarkable, it is surprising to find some omissions. As far as...

are at pains to refute the vision of war presented in popular movies, their Renaissance counterparts, for all their experience on the battlefield, generally do not debate or otherwise engage in dialogue with the exaggerated claims made by the authors of the most popular war fiction of the time, the romances of chivalry. The author argues convincingly that this was because the memoirists were concerned only with the facts of particular individuals, wars, and skirmishes and therefore had no cause to be offended by, or even interested in, fictitious accounts of warfare.

The book includes two appendices. Appendix A provides an overview of the military memoir genre. Appendix B contains short biographies of each of the memoirists mentioned in the book. The book concludes with extensive primary and secondary bibliographies, and an index. I note that the translations into English from foreign languages in the body of the text are accurate and, with the exception of what looks like a typesetting error in note 56 on page 38, the original texts are transcribed just as accurately in footnotes. I noticed two very minor typographical errors: "follow" (129) should read "fellow"; "cronichle" (134) should read "chronicle." Otherwise Boydell is to be commended for an impeccable job.

In conclusion, this book is written with clarity and wit, and is a "must-read" for all scholars with an interest in Renaissance warfare, literature, and aristocratic culture.

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Hilaire Kallendorf. *Exorcism and Its Texts: Subjectivity in Early Modern Literature of England and Spain*.

Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2003. xxii + 328 pp. + 7 b/w pls. index. illus. thls. bibl. \$65. ISBN: 0-8020-8817-1.

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LITERATURE, 1490—1700 (PROSE AND POETRY, equation the capillary is aware of the
indignant movement, as well as in other regions.
A Selective and Critical Bibliography of Studies in Prose Fiction for the Year 1948,
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