

Carolina Erdocia Castillejo. *La loa sacramental de Calderón de la Barca*. Autos Sacramentales Completos 78; Teatro del Siglo de Oro: Estudios de literatura 118. Kassel: Edition Reichenberger, 2012. 306 pp. €58. ISBN: 978-3-944244-00-6.

Pedro Calderón de la Barca. *La vida es sueño: Edición crítica de las dos versiones del auto y de la loa*.

Ed. Fernando Plata Parga. Autos Sacramentales Completos 79; Teatro del Siglo de Oro: Ediciones críticas 184. Kassel: Edition Reichenberger, 2012. 288 pp. €58. ISBN: 978-3-944244-01-3.

Consecutive titles in the series Autos Sacramentales Completos (Edition Reichenberger), these two volumes form a nicely complementary pair, one being an extensive study of the *loa sacramental* as practiced by Calderón and the other a critical edition of the sacramental versions (*loa* and two *autos*) of *La vida es sueño*. Erdocia's study, a revision of her doctoral thesis (95n), begins with the salutary premise that the *loa* is neither a miniature *auto* nor simply its preface (7). It is instead a discrete art form, deserving of its own history, taxonomy, and analysis, in short, a comprehensive study that responds to the *loa's* dual nature as dramatic literature and prologue.

Chapter 1 traces the rise of the *loa* from the Latin prologues of Plautus and Terence to the *introito* of Torres Naharro to the *loa religiosa*. Once audiences become familiar with the conventions of the secular theater in the sixteenth century, Erdocia argues, the need for the *introito* declines, whereas the serious tone of the *loa*, whose origins are not entirely clear, makes it ideal for religious pieces such as those contained in the *Códice de Autos Viejos*. From there the *loa* is developed by Lope de Vega (39), who introduces, among other innovations, a musical element that will become so closely identified with Calderón's *loas*. What all these forms have in common, Erdocia maintains, is their intermediate position between fiction and reality.

Chapter 2 analyzes each element of the basic structure of Calderón's *loas*: the call to silence and attention, the development of conflict, the resolution of conflict, the transition to the *auto*, and, finally, the plea for benevolence and praise of the monarchy. Erdocia rightly emphasizes the sophistication of Calderón's formula, the conflict between good and evil as key to dramatic tension, and the socializing effect of the *loa*.

Chapter 3 examines the relationship and interdependence between *loa* and *auto*, providing two useful distinctions. First, while both attend to the mystery of the Eucharist, the *loa* concentrates on the process of transubstantiation and the *auto* on the act of Communion. Secondly, the *loa* tends to represent the argument of the *auto* in abstract or symbolic form.

Chapter 4, the longest and most original of the study, offers an analysis of the performative aspects of Calderón's *loas*. Marshaling a wealth of evidence from a wide range of *loas*, Erdocia studies choreographed entrances, exits, and vertical movements; the gender of allegorical figures and dancers; the connection with Corpus Christi processions; wardrobe, props, and set design; and, most intriguingly, music. With respect to the latter, Erdocia suggests that the *loa*'s musical component draws the audience into participating in the spectacle in a way that counteracts the distancing effect of the Mass's Latin liturgy.

Of much shorter length but almost equally original, chapter 5 offers an ingenious reading of the Catholic sacraments of penance and Communion along with various theories of catharsis to suggest that the *loa* fulfills the function of penance insofar as it purges the spectator's soul in preparation for the act of Communion symbolized in the *auto*. The sixth and final chapter offers a survey of the historical context of the Corpus Christi processions of which the *loa* (and *auto*) took part, detailing how the dramatic spectacle — deemed impertinent even when its content was sacred — was gradually expelled from the hallowed space of the church and into the street. Calderón, without directly engaging the debate over the propriety of the theater, clearly cultivates the *loa* with the intention of showing that pleasure and devotion are not mutually exclusive, thus resuscitating the original spirit of the Corpus Christi celebration. In this the *loa* again distinguishes itself from the *auto*, tending toward a ritual function rather than entertainment. The study concludes with an epilogue that briefly summarizes the arguments.

Erdocia's book represents a solid contribution to Calderonian studies, a must read for anyone interested in either the *loa* or the *auto*. The author's command of her material — over seventy-five *loas* in addition to abundant secondary sources — is admirable, and the argument is generally compelling. The most provocative chapters are 4 and 5, each of which adds significantly to the critical dialogue on Calderonian performance studies.

The book's problems are of a mostly secondary nature: inadequate copyediting resulting in frequent typos, grammatical errors, and missing bibliographical references (e.g., González Ruiz in 56n17); lack of an index; repetitive arguments (the same distinction between *baile* and *danza* is made on pages 118 and 166); vague references to "la crítica" or "los estudios críticos" (23, 53, etc.); and lengthy, often-gratuitous footnotes. Additionally, given the large number of *loas* referred to, it becomes impossible to follow the abbreviations used; surely it would have been easier on the reader to spell out the titles (which is done, inexplicably, on pages 158–59 but nowhere else). Finally, the book could benefit from better prefacing of the different paths the argument takes, especially with baffling chapter titles such as "La loa y el rito de transición: Función marco" (chapter 6).

Fernando Plata's edition includes a fifty-four-page introduction that offers an interpretation of the *auto* divided into three "movements": Creation, Fall, and Redemption; an analysis of the relationship between the *auto* and the more famous *comedia*; a comparison of the two versions of the *auto*; additional critical interpretations; textual analyses of the first and second versions of the *auto*; a performance history of both *auto* and *loa*; and a metrical analysis. The preliminary materials are rounded out with a bibliography and list of abbreviations. The main portion of the book assembles the texts of the *loa* and second *auto*, with the first *auto* appearing in an appendix. The book concludes with an exhaustive list of variants and a minimal index.

The strength of Plata's contribution lies in the three texts themselves, established through careful textual criticism and replete with helpful explanatory notes. Calderón specialists will certainly find it useful to have the *loa* and both versions of the *auto* in one volume. Weaknesses include Plata's interpretations (especially 11–24), almost entirely derivative of other critics (notably Valbuena and Rull); a lack of clarity about which version of the *auto* those interpretations refer to (they begin with a reference only to "el auto" [11]); a failure to explain the general organization of the book and why, in particular, version 1 of the *auto* is relegated to an appendix; and, finally, in view of Erdocia's study, a lack of systematic awareness of the substantive structural differences between *loa* and *auto* (and, incidentally, a confusion of the terms *baile* and *danza* [50]).

Both these books make solid contributions to Calderonian scholarship and textual criticism. While Erdocia's argument-driven monograph will appeal to specialists and graduate students, Plata's edition establishes a reliable text for anyone interested in the sacramental versions of Calderon's most famous *comedia*.

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