

*Performing the King Divine: The Early Modern Spanish Aulic Festival.*

Lucas A. Marchante Aragón.

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Since the influential studies of John H. Helliott and Steven N. Orso, the highly theatricalized court of the Spanish Habsburgs has become one of the most interesting fields of research for early modern scholarship. The court itself and its complex rules of behavior, or etiquette, have been deeply analyzed by historians such as José Martínez Millán and Antonio Álvarez-Ossorio Alvariño or art historians such as Fernando Checa Cremades. Moreover, the study of the incredibly rich literary production linked to the kings of Spain has been researched by academics of the field such as María Teresa Chaves Montoya, María Luisa Lobato, Margaret R. Greer, and Teresa Ferrer Valls. Nevertheless, Lucas A. Marchante Aragón's approach to the Baroque aulic festivals in Spain is fresh and innovative. This book underlines the importance of Spanish drama for the sacralization of the royal family and the fabrication of the king's image. It explores, as well, through a well-documented reconstruction of not only the stage plays, but also the spaces, the actors, and even the arts involved in each play, the role of aulic theater in the construction of an institution, the Spanish monarchy, and the social structure of its empire.

*Performing the King Divine* establishes two premises. It begins with the assertion of the religious origin of the Spanish aulic festivals. This is a fundamental starting point as Marchante Aragón organizes his exposition around the very well-substantiated hypothesis that in both genres the limits between reality and performance disappear, and this dissolution demonstrates the capability of courtly theater to transform reality. Afterward, the author explores the inherited contents of the seventeenth-century Spanish plays and underlines the prevalence of the Habsburg imperial imagery that tended to transform the stage into a psychomachy. Genealogy, mythology, and religion were expertly used by playwrights such as Lope de Vega or Calderón de la Barca to construct the heroic image of the Spanish Habsburgs.

The chronological content of the book begins with the investigation of the royal masque celebrated in Valladolid in 1605, which Marchante Aragón considers the seminal spectacle of the century. The masque was organized by Philip III to impress the English diplomatic legacy of James Stuart and a real theater was constructed for the first time in a Spanish royal palace, the Salón de Saraos, which the author compares with the Banqueting House erected in 1622 in London. In Valladolid, for the first time, architecture, decoration, play, and costumes were designed carefully to set the king in the center of the universe, creating, accordingly, a new social and political order. The monarchy would repeat the ensemble years later in the theaters of the Alcázar (Royal Palace) and the Buen Retiro palace in Madrid.

The central chapters of the book analyze the development of theatrical practices in the Spanish court through the seventeenth century, pointing out the progressive professionalization of performances that run parallel to the increasing theatricalization of the king's life. Nevertheless, Marchante Aragón demonstrates that the king himself, even as a spectator, remained the central character of every *comedia* performed in the court. Recalling a dreamed-of Golden Age as in Calderón's *El golfo de las sirenas* (1657), transforming the royal court into a mythical geography as in Lope's *La selva sin amor* (1629), or metamorphosing the king into a god as in Calderón's *Hado y divisa de Leónido y Marfisa* (1680), the Spanish aulic theater performed the king divine.

*Performing the King Divine* offers a fascinating view of the seventeenth-century Spanish courtly festivals with a vibrant narration and a clear exposition that will be of interest for a wide audience. Marchante Aragón's multidisciplinary approach reconstructs carefully the intersection among ritual, theater, kingship, and the arts and reenacts convincingly the complex court of the Spanish Habsburgs. As he states at the end of the book, his new and polyphonic re-creation paves the way for a new interpretation of the early modern European and American courts.

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*Día y noche de Madrid*. Francisco Santos.

Ed. Enrique García Santo-Tomás. Letras Hispánicas. Madrid: Cátedra, 2017. 364 pp. €15.30.

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Francisco Santos was a rather prolific and popular author in late seventeenth-century Spain. We do not have many details of his personal life, but we do know that Santos was born in Madrid in 1623 from humble origins and raised in the historically vibrant and ever-changing Lavapiés neighborhood. As García Santo-Tomás keenly notes in his introduction to this edition, poverty, social difficulties, and sickness were common denominators of Santos's life that regularly filtered into his literary works.

The same sense of bitterness, disillusion, and despair that many of his contemporaries show in their prose is pointedly—and poignantly—present in several of his works, most notably in *Día y noche de Madrid* (1663) and *La Tarasca de parto en el Mesón del Infierno* (1671). Often characterized by the critics as a *costumbrista* writer and chastised for his tendency to steal ideas—and even complete sentences—from his illustrious precursors (most remarkably Baltasar Gracián, Diego de Saavedra Fajardo, and Luis Vélez de Guevara), Santos has frequently been misinterpreted and undervalued across the broad scope of his literary and imaginative endeavors. Being a late Baroque writer with an obvious indebtedness to his predecessors did not preclude him from being original or enticing in his accounts of the city and its cultural and social