

Santiago Fernández Mosquera. *Calderón: texto, reescritura, significado y representación.*

IBEROAMERICANA / VERVUERT, 2015. 353 PP.

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THIS ENLIGHTENING BOOK by Santiago Fernández Mosquera, an eminent literary scholar with the sensibilities of a philologist, synthesizes and advances his studies on matters of textual integrity and literary value in Calderón. Among the author's many accomplishments is the 2007 edition of the *Segunda parte* of Calderón's comedias for the series in the Biblioteca Castro of the Fundación José Antonio de Castro. Therefore, he writes with intimate knowledge of the responsibilities of producing a trustworthy text, and this book is a *cri de coeur* for the primacy of the authenticated work. When established, it clears the way for genuine advances in our understanding of the *œuvre*. The author is refreshingly attached to careful close reading, and the riches of his commentary distinguish the volume. The tenor is at times polemical, but always backed by thoughtful study of appropriate works in the service of his positions.

One of his concerns is "la ola espectacular" (35), the current popularity in Spain of staged performance over respect for the word on the page. For Fernández Mosquera, the original plays "pueden y aun deben ser representadas siguiendo cada uno de los versos que escribió el poeta" (35). With the recent proliferation of theater festivals, most significantly at Almagro, too often professional directors indulge their own creative muses, assuming the mantle of co-author without regard for the poetry or the historical stature of the work. They slight the glories of these masterpieces in favor of an ephemeral show (36). Modern audiences, better at watching than reading, are overly susceptible to this trend (24), deprived of the pleasures of knowing their cultural heritage.

In order to make available to the public a culturally truer theatrical experience, it is crucial to work from authenticated versions. Unlike Shakespeare, Lope and Calderón achieved widespread celebrity and acclaim during their own times. Because their names had commercial value in the theatrical marketplace, they began to take care with publication; this was not so much the case with the Elizabethan dramatist—although argumentation on Shakespeare is evolving (33). However, some Calderón plays staged or read

today are based on flawed versions, whether due to reliance on Vera Tassis; to the mistranslations of German Romantics (38); or to other slings and arrows of fortune that philology can put right, particularly with Spain's comparatively robust autograph textual tradition. Since so many of these verified texts are available, there is no need to garble them for fleeting entertainment value.

Esteem for the original also bears on Fernández Mosquera's discomfort with the presentism in some current Calderón scholarship. In the 1970s José Antonio Maravall influentially expounded that the *comedia* was conformist propaganda for absolute monarchy. Arising from a healthy reaction against this totalizing view, following upon New Historicism, and propelled with Calderón's quadricentenary in 2000 (199), "el nuevo calderonismo" (212) has ventured too far in the other direction, finding subversive political messages lurking behind every portrayal of state power misused. Fernández Mosquera reminds us that Calderón was always professionally near to power and benefited from this proximity (189). It certainly would have been impolitic, to say the least, for him to pass negative judgment on his superiors, particularly in court entertainment. It is hard to believe that hidden *à-clef* criticisms would have gone over the heads of Philip IV and the prickly Olivares but be evident to others in attendance (213). Indeed, following highly acclaimed events such as the stagings of *El mayor encanto, amor* and *Los tres mayores prodigios* in the mid-1630s, Calderón was appointed director of palace performances and elevated to a knighthood. The poet could impart moral lessons without leveling at his powerful benefactors what would be taken as personal criticism (217): he was discreet and cautious without being servile (239).

Fernández Mosquera champions the text, with sensitivity to its cultural and historical contexts, but also with an understanding of the playwright's personal situation. The scholar addresses what may strike us today as political incorrectness in a seventeenth-century dramatist—for example, in his portrayal of the non-Christian world. To this notion, Fernández Mosquera analyzes Calderón's treatment of the character Europa in the *autos* and their *loas*. Considering the time and place of composition, Eurocentrism is to be expected, as is religious intolerance (Calderón locates the Jewish faith in Asia, atheism in Africa, and idolatry in the New World). Supreme over the other continents, Europa is "metonimia alegórica de España y su monarquía" (139), at the center of which is the *sol*—the king (147). And "en el centro de su centro, está su [Calderón's] teatro" (150).

Fernández Mosquera therefore opposes two current strands of Calderón scholarship. One democratizes the poet: our egalitarian impulses may move some of us to imagine insubordination in his theater. Or, also anachronistically, we condemn the plays' ethnocentrism. Either way, this book takes issue with ideologically tinged readings. Especially popular among American and English *calderonistas*, "multicultural" (115) approaches potentially de-universalize this theater and individual pieces, demoting them from *monumentos* to (historical) *documentos* (273) that are vulnerable to over-reading.

Of course, one could argue that there are different ways to process and comprehend a text, and that advocating against interpreting through ideology is itself an ideological stance. It would make sense for Calderón generally to support his status quo, which advantaged himself and his artistic pursuits.

It might be sustained that the dramatist “performed” what one could call a conservative ideology. If we know a play’s provenance in time and place, do our homework, and are cognizant of our own positionality, I would contend that the work can convincingly be argued from more than one angle, beyond what may have been the artist’s original conscious intentions. A diversity of scholars brings diverse perspectives to the theater, as perhaps did then-contemporary audiences and actors.

Much valuable recent study examines aspects of the plays that until recently had been so naturalized as to have gone without notice in academia. Considering treatment of the disempowered (by reason of gender, ethnicity, class, religion, etc.), if undertaken judiciously, can alert us to nuances that with close reading can further our insight into not just the texts, but also the dramatist, and the culture that produced them. “Ante todo,” Fernández Mosquera writes, Calderón was a poet, “y no un historiador o un político” (187), as opposed to Quevedo, for example, a judgment this scholar is in an excellent position to make. My own sense is that, with care and with a sound edition, it is possible to consider the plays as both monuments *and* documents, and that our understanding and enjoyment of them can take on fuller dimensions for an openness to such approaches.

This is in no way to diminish the fine work in this book, from which I learned a great deal. For example, exploring the playwright’s rewriting practices, the author distinguishes what is uniquely Calderonian from rewriting by others: Cervantes, Góngora, Lope, and most notably, Quevedo (87, 98). Fernández Mosquera considers Calderón’s *refundiciones* of other poets’ pieces, and of his own tropes and wording, including the witty self-parody at which the poet was so adept (110–11). The scholar contemplates the difficulties Calderón must have faced in composing *autos*: given the genre’s parameters, how many ways could there be to theatricalize the same doctrinal content (112)? And how to explain the contract showing that Cosme Pérez was hired for the cast of one of these religious dramas (154), when the autograph text has no comic scenes (161)? The answer offered here is the result of the sterling detective work at which Fernández Mosquera is a master. His admirable textual sleuthing shows that the integrity of a text can not only have an impact on an understanding of the individual play, but can affect the fortunes of an entire genre (169).

Because of space limitations, this review can hardly touch on the book’s many other virtues and revelations, ranging from how the dramatist may choose the appropriate occasions for sonnets, as opposed to simple soliloquies; ways that *ticoscopia* combining with spectacle can make for a more engaging text; the significance of the tricky coexistence of comic and tragic scenes in *Los tres mayores prodigios*; and noteworthy treatment of cross-dressing and gender identity in *Las manos blancas no ofenden*. Fernández Mosquera believes that these chapters will give a good sense of Calderón’s dramaturgy as a whole by analyzing “los ejes fundamentales de su escritura” (21). The same could be said of this book and its author, giving the focal points of his scholarship on Calderón from roughly 2002 until 2015. Precision, close and original reading, and a strong case for philology grace the pages and raise matters deserving reflection in these times when postmodernity informs so much of

our approaches to literary and dramatic texts, their authors, and their times. This book also offers a dose of caution against exaggerating the playwright's modern sensibilities: we would do well to be aware of the prejudices and ideologies that we ourselves bring to his texts.