

Calderón de la Barca. Fausta Antonucci.

Sestante 47. Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2020. 362 pp. €25.

This book is a noteworthy contribution to scholarship on Pedro Calderón de la Barca's drama. Antonucci explores this large theatrical corpus through a literary approach based on genre which seeks to introduce Calderón's fascinating and variegated production to an Italian audience, although any specialist working on early modern Spanish literature can benefit from Antonucci's insightful analysis.

The content is divided into twelve chapters organized in five main parts. Part 1, "Il drammaturgo e i suoi committenti," provides a context for Calderón's work and life. After describing the characteristics and performance of Spanish theater, Antonucci outlines the author's biography, emphasizing its connection with different stages of his work and his complex family situation.

Part 2, "Calderón e la tragedia," is a compelling survey of his tragic plays. Antonucci studies this vast production in thematic sections and analyzes different plays jointly in a critical, not merely descriptive, manner. This allows the reader to recognize recurring topics and outstanding narrative features in Calderón's tragic style and its development. Antonucci interprets *El príncipe constante* as a tragedy, in spite of critical views that classify it as a hagiographical drama. The author dwells particularly, as can be expected, on *La vida es sueño*. Her analysis of the figure of Segismundo is attractive: the stoicism that underlies his considerations on dream and reality has political connotations; Segismundo's heroism (she eloquently describes him as a Baroque hero) and his adequacy as a monarch rely on his renunciation of pleasure and his regard for honor (a key concept throughout Calderón's theater, tragic and non-tragic). Antonucci closes this chapter with an interesting discussion of a group of plays that have in common the treatment of honor in different modalities.

Part 3, "La tragedia disattivata," deals with dramas: theatrical oeuvres in a serious tone that lack tragic elements or patterns. The commentary on *La aurora en Copacabana* (the only extant Calderonian play with an American setting) as an illustration of religious drama ignores issues of race and colonization. The sensitivity shown previously in the analysis of the depiction of Muslims in Calderón's tragedy (part 2, chapter 6), which highlights the playwright's criticism of Christian ideas of racial and religious superiority, is greatly missed on this occasion.

Part 4, "L'universo della commedia," focuses on Calderón's rich comic corpus. The author opens every chapter with a discussion on generic difficulties and typologies that will be exemplified through chosen texts. Antonucci underlines the comic quality of the *comedia de capa y espada* and applies these readings to *La dama duende*, where, as she argues, the interaction between spatial and temporal elements provides dramatic and comic efficiency.

Finally, part 5, “Il teatro breve, tra cielo e terra,” studies the playwright’s short theater: *autos sacramentales*, burlesque comedy, and short compositions staged in commercial performances (special emphasis is set on the *entremés*). Antonucci concludes by expressing that these theatrical productions, though short or scarce (*Céfalo y Procris* is the only preserved burlesque comedy by Calderón), should not be viewed as marginal, since they complete our understanding of a versatile writer who mastered a wide range of genres, themes, and dramatic techniques.

The literary analysis is followed by a few useful appendixes: a metrical glossary, a chronologically arranged list of the Calderonian works cited, a critically annotated essential bibliography, and finally an *index nominum*.

One of Antonucci’s main objectives is to portray Calderón’s modernity and the human complexity of his theater, which she successfully achieves by paying attention to certain topics that are relevant in current debates, such as his portrait of feminine figures and his criticism of male violence. Antonucci highlights the role of women and their interaction with men from the beginning to the end, first in Calderón’s family and then throughout his work, where Antonucci traces the frequent vindications of feminine dignity and the condemnation of predatory love and behavior. This adds novelty, relevance, and a distinct perspective among the ample literature on Calderonian drama to this book.

The Spanish texts, when cited, are accompanied by successful Italian translations which communicate the general sense without sacrificing their poetic ambience, although, in a few cases, the wit of Calderón’s phrasing and concepts can be lost in this challenging task (as the author herself acknowledges).

Leonor Hernández Oñate, *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*
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Faraway Settings: Spanish and Chinese Theaters of the 16th and 17th Centuries.
Juan Pablo Gil-Osle and Frederick A. de Armas, eds.
Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2019. 264 pp. €29.80.

The twelve essays that comprise this volume explore the fascination held by early modern Spanish writers for the marvel of all things Chinese. No reader of *Don Quijote* can forget the astonishing (and perhaps apocryphal) claim that Cervantes made in the dedication to the Conde de Lemos in the 1615 continuation that the emperor of China sent a letter via a special envoy, begging the author to be the founding rector of a new college where the Spanish language would be taught through a reading of Cervantes’s novel. China and the Far East in general in early modern Spain, and perhaps up until today, represented the epitome of the exotic. The book’s preface, penned by the editors, Juan Pablo Gil-Osle and Frederick A. de Armas, establishes that the musical