

sentimental and chivalric romances, and upon Dorotea's playing the role of Micomicona. While Luscinda imitates romance literature and Dorotea parodies it, they come to support one another, forging a form of sorority that affords them a sense of independence from the male-dominated milieu. In her reading of part 2, Triplette observes that the Duchess and her handmaidens' pranks on Don Quijote and Sancho, inspired by the romances they have read, expose chivalric books as inadequate literature. In Cervantes's view, Triplette suggests, women should shy away from chivalric romances and turn their attention to the more edifying literature of authors such as Dante, Ariosto, and Virgil.

The chapter on Beatriz Bernal's *Cristalián de España* succeeds in conveying the exceptional originality of this text. Triplette explains how Bernal, in her "Proemio," "establishes writing as a masculine activity women can usurp" (85) and how she eloquently asserts that women should, by rights, be allowed to gain prominence in public life. The many female characters in *Cristalián de España* transport the reader to a world wherein women share their common determination to fulfill their intellectual ambitions. It is, in Triplette's words, a "gender-neutral world in which female characters frequently go on adventure" (115). Much of the complexity construing *Cristalián de España* lies in the severity of the punishments some of these women are inflicted on the grounds of their independence; this is a romance, Triplette concludes, written for women by a woman "offering a message of both hope and caution" (115).

*Chivalry, Reading, and Women's Culture in Early Modern Spain* succeeds not only in examining the female characters in *Amadís* and *Don Quijote* but also in cogently and brilliantly bringing Beatriz Bernal and her *Cristalián de España* to the fore in Spanish Golden Age studies.

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*Tragic Drama in the Golden Age of Spain: Seven Essays on the Definition of a Genre.* Henry W. Sullivan.

Teatro del Siglo de Oro: Estudios de literatura 133. Kassel: Edition Reichenberger, 2018. viii + 436 pp. €78.

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In 1609, the Spanish dramatist Lope de Vega published *The New Art of Writing Plays*, a tongue-in-cheek apologia for his wildly successful and unorthodox playwriting style. The most striking novelty he championed was replacing classical formulas, in particular the distinction between tragedy and comedy, with the tragicomic *comedia nueva*, which became the dominant theatrical form of what is known today as Spain's Golden Age of drama (ca. 1580–1680). Yet Lope did not practice what he preached: like many of his

contemporaries, he also wrote a number of memorable tragedies, even if modern readers rarely treat them as such. This is partly because Golden Age Spanish tragedy has eluded clear definition. In his new book, Henry W. Sullivan seeks to banish this “stubborn ghost” (1) once and for all by thoroughly exploring the principles and practices of Spanish tragedy in the age of Lope and Calderón de la Barca.

This work features seven chapters and opens with its crown jewel: a hundred-page-long survey outlining the numerous debates surrounding early modern Spanish tragedy from Aristotelian dramatic theory’s arrival in Iberia in the early fifteenth century until the present. Written in the elegant, discursive prose that marks Sullivan’s scholarship, this prolegomena vividly reconstructs the myriad of ways in which scholars have confronted the concept of Golden Age Spanish tragedy (or lack thereof) during the last five hundred years, offering insights not only to newcomers to the plays of Lope, Calderón, and their contemporaries but also to readers already well versed in these works. Thereafter follow five lengthy essays in which the author reframes his long-standing interest in “reconstruct[ing] a poetics of tragedy as actually exercised by the Spanish playwrights of the Golden Age” (361); each chapter approaches the notion of tragedy through a different conceptual prism, and probes a broad spectrum of questions ranging from theological and philosophical controversies to the influence of classical tradition on early modern literature. The closing *epilogos* recapitulates the book’s main ideas, including a list of key features that early modern Spanish tragedies shared, and closes with a helpful catalogue of plays that have, over time, been classified as tragedies of Spain’s Golden Age.

In his own words, Sullivan’s aspiration in *Tragic Drama* is to put forth “a clear articulation of what Spanish tragedy was and the dramaturgical methods and aesthetic techniques used by the playwrights—the special conventions they refined over the decades—in order to achieve their tragic ends” (361–62). But does he succeed in his definition of the genre? The short answer is yes: by the end of the book, the reader certainly understands what makes a Spanish Golden Age play a tragedy.

Yet the longer answer includes at least two qualifiers. The first is that, in tackling the question whether Spanish tragedy exists, Sullivan constructs his definition of the genre in opposition to the tragedies written elsewhere in early modern Europe, especially in Shakespearean England, and not as much in relation with other genres within the Spanish tradition. Scholars of early modern theater will undoubtedly welcome this fresh approach, since a common shortcoming among students of the Golden Age has been “to study the blossoming of popular verse-drama in Spain in splendid isolation and quite distinct from the overall rise and triumph of European drama” (2). Still, it is not always clear what distinguishes a Spanish *tragedia* from a tragicomic *comedia*.

The second is that the author explores the definition of Spanish tragedy in particular relation with the Aristotelian understanding of the genre, what he describes as “true tragedy” (167) as opposed to plays with unquestionably tragic elements that do not warrant the label from a formal point of view. Clearly more remains to be said about

tragedy in the Spanish Golden Age, and future scholars will find numerous ways to build upon and complement the erudition and theoretical contributions of *Tragic Drama*; in the meantime, we can celebrate Sullivan's indisputable achievement of providing a thought-provoking answer to the centuries-old question of how to recognize a Spanish tragedy when we see one.

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*El teatro barroco como campo de juego: Estudios sobre Lope de Vega y Tirso de Molina.* Wolfram Nitsch.

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In this monograph, Wolfram Nitsch explores the structure, function, and impact of games in the Spanish Golden Age *comedia* through the analysis of plot, characters, and dialogues. The book was first published in German as *Barocktheater als Spielraum: Studien zu Lope de Vega und Tirso de Molina* (2000), and it has been recently translated into Spanish by Elvira Gómez Hernández. This edition provides Spanish-speaking readers an opportunity to be acquainted with an earlier work without losing the intellectual rigor and academic precision that characterizes the original study.

The author claims that the notion of play is central to early modern Spanish theater. Due to the popularity of public spectacles, commentaries on games flourished hand in hand with disquisitions on theater during the period. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, writings on theater focused on the dangers of performances to social order and public morality, such as Juan de Mariana's *Tratado contra los juegos públicos* (Treatise against public games, 1609) or the anonymous *Diálogos de las comedias* (Dialogues on comedies, 1620). In the same venue, publications on games shared the same concerns, such as Fray Pedro de Covarrubias's *Remedio de jugadores* (Remedy of game players, 1543), Fray Francisco de Alcocer's *Tratado del juego* (Treatise on play, 1599), and Fray Francisco de Luque Fajardo's *Fiel desengaño contra la ociosidad y los juegos* (Faithful disillusion against idleness and games, 1603). In regulating theater and games, these writers departed from the concept of *eutrapelia*. Drawing on Thomas Aquinas's perspective, *eutrapelia* posits that ludic activities must be adapted to temporal and spatial limits refraining from sinful excess.

Although Wolfram Nitsch takes into consideration views of thinkers who have reflected on games, the critic pays special attention to the four categories proposed by Roger Caillois: *agôn* (the player has an active role in a competition), *chance* or *alea* (the player has a passive role due to the randomness of the game), *mimesis* or