

HENRY W. SULLIVAN. *Tragic Drama in the Golden Age of Spain. Seven Essays on the Definition of a Genre*. Kassel: Edition Reichenberger, 2018. 434 pp.

Henry Sullivan's study of Golden Age Spanish tragedy merits the attention of all those who engage with Spanish dramatic tragedy and its wider European context. Building on his earlier essays, he presents them as his final attempt to lay to rest a critical "ghost," the non-existence of early modern Spanish tragedy. Sullivan explains how Spanish tragedy functioned as an indigenous genre with its own aesthetic conventions, adapting categories of Aristotle's *Poetics* more flexibly than Italian and French practitioners do. He proposes its rules and reaches a definition, partly in consonance with a Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalytic lens. In the study and its Appendix A, Sullivan outlines a corpus of Spanish tragic works, defending them as part of the development of European drama between 1580 and 1680. The whole is beautifully written, with Sullivan's themes closely linked, albeit developed in separate essays.

The first chapter provides a succinct reception history of Spanish tragedy, emphasizing the negative effect of Franco-Italian classicism, the positive reception by German Enlightenment, Romantic and Hegelian critics, twentieth-century revived appreciation of the baroque, and British *calderonistas*. It also outlines some sixteenth-century Spanish experiments, Lope's *Arte nuevo*, Spanish reception of Aristotle, and Spanish understanding of *comedia* and tragedy, highlighting the Latin treatise of the Jesuit Juan Caramuel y Lobkowitz.

Chapter two centers on the masterpiece *El castigo sin venganza*, defined by Lope as a tragedy written in the Spanish style. Sullivan interprets Lope's remarks as shunning Greco-Latin severity for an Aristotelianism that is affective and substantive-oriented toward human interest conflicts, with the classical five acts reduced to three, separated by farcical interludes and enriched by great metrical variety. Through an extended analysis of the play's pervasive ambiguity and irony, its imagistic structure and critical disputes over the hero's identity, Sullivan argues against the prevailing interpretation in print and on stage of incestual sex between the Duke's wife and illegitimate son. However, he does not note Lope's significant rewriting of the first ending, visible in his autograph manuscript, in which the Duke proposes marrying his niece Aurora, an avunculate union with at least 25% biological incest. He does indicate in his preface that Stewart Atkins, whose article on Lope's *El castigo* Sullivan cites repeatedly, was a student in his Tulane seminar, where he presumably heard Sullivan's reading.

Sustaining that "All true tragedy has its origins in the bosom of the family" (167), in Chapter three Sullivan traces the recovery in early modern

European drama of Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and analyzes the development in Italy, France, England, and Holland of its themes of patricide and incest, which he sees changed to filicide and uxoricide in Golden Age tragedies. In various Spanish tragedies Sullivan surveys, the Oedipal father-son conflict is inverted with the father killing the son, in what Sullivan calls the "Kronos complex," by which the triumph of the mythical wife Gaia / Rhea over the destructive husband Uranus / Kronos, is also overturned and replaced by wife-murder. While incest may threaten, it is rarely consummated, with the exception of Tirso and Calderón's Biblical dramas, *La venganza de Tamar* and *Los cabellos de Absalón*, and Lope's *El castigo sin venganza*. This is an important insight into the particularity of early modern Spanish tragedy. His addendum to the chapter, however, which extends this analysis to the political future of Spain, is dubious. Unquestionably, the Spanish monarchy dedicated itself to the defense of Roman Catholicism, but the feudalism he invokes without defining was never as complete in Spain as in France; see, for example, *JMEMS* 30.2, 2000. Moreover, Spanish tragedy, whose existence and significance Sullivan rightly defends, was a tiny fraction of early modern Spanish dramatic production, and in its comedies, women and *graciosos* regularly circumvent patriarchal authority.

Sullivan devotes Chapter four to interrogating the definition of the key Aristotelian term *hamartia*, arguing that it should be understood not as a moral or inherent character flaw, but as an error of judgment, illustrating this with his interpretation of Vélez de Guevara's tragedy *Reinar después de morir*. With Alison Weber, he rightly rejects the importance Parker attributed to the role of poetic justice, an anachronistic critical import. He also supports George Peale's good reading of the socioeconomic conflict between the values of seigneurial Olmedo and mercantile, protocapitalistic Medina as underlying Lope's *El caballero de Olmedo*.

Sullivan traces the philosophical/religious debate over the balance of freedom and necessity in the human condition from animism and the Greek *Moirai* through Augustine's doctrine of original sin and predestination, and Pelagius's argument for sin as a product of will in Chapter five. He sees the free will versus predestination question as key in the Reformation as it moved across Europe, focused in Spain on the *De auxiliis* controversy between Jesuits and Dominicans which Sullivan sees dramatized in two masterpieces, *El condenado por desconfiado* and *El burlador de Sevilla*, as well as other Lope, Tirso, and Calderón plays. He concludes with a persuasive Lacanian analysis of "suture" masking insoluble conflict between the forces of law and desire in the *comedia*, complemented by its triune structure.

In Chapter six, Sullivan appraises the meaning of catharsis in Aristotle's *Poetics* and its translation by seventeenth-century Spanish commentators and dramatists as both cause and relief of pity and fear. He reviews arguments that Christian belief in heavenly reward makes tragedy impossible, then measures the possibility of Christian catharsis against plays of salvation and damnation, Jesuit school drama and martyr dramas, which he considers not truly tragic. Revenge or honor dramas, political tragedies and "eleventh-hour reversal tragedies" (354) are tragic, but secular rather than specifically Christian except as against their society's Catholicism. They could arouse emotional wonder and leave spectators "grappling to reinterpret the meaning of their changing world" (359).

In his conclusion, Sullivan lists 12 principles of Spanish tragedy, six applied to structure, comparing them to Wölfflin's principles of Baroque art, and another six to affective substance and briefly describes three types of anagnorisis in these tragedies.

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