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Reviews

Rodrigo Calderón: La sombra del valido: Privanza, favor y corrupción en la corte de Felipe III. By SANTIAGO MARTÍNEZ HERNÁNDEZ. Pp. 399. Madrid: Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica & Marcial Pons Historia. 2009. ISBN: 978-84-92820-03-0

Sixteenth-century Spanish history — monarchy, government, the machinery of state, and leading figures — has been well served by historians both inside and outside of Spain. Philip II has been the subject of numerous biographies and there cannot have been a part of his long reign that has not been subjected to the closest scrutiny. The same cannot be said at all for the seventeenth century, the century of the so-called minor Austrian Habsburgs: Philip III, Philip IV, and Charles II. Until Patrick William's recent biography, we had no full-length study of Philip III's favourite the Duke of Lerma (Manchester, 2006); a proper biography of Philip IV still eludes us, and, although there has been some progress in terms of government and politics under both Philip III and Philip IV, a comprehensive account of their reigns and the principal figures that dominated the politics of the day awaits study. Fortunately, of course, the larger-than-life figure of the Count-Duke of Olivares found the perfect biographer in Sir John Elliott and his study still remains the most compelling account of the period. But what about all the other figures who played their part in Habsburg politics in the first half of the seventeenth century?

Santiago Martínez Hernández's excellent portrait of Rodrigo Calderón, subtitled *La sombra del valido: privanza, favor y corrupción en la corte de Felipe III*, is a move in the right direction. Following on from his recent in-depth study of the Marquis of Velada (Junta de Castilla-León, 2004), Martínez Hernández gives us the first modern, detailed biography of one of the most emblematic figures of the first twenty years of the seventeenth century, emblematic, it should be said, for all the wrong reasons. Born in Flanders in 1576 and coming from relatively humble, probably *converso*, origins, Rodrigo Calderón attached himself early on to the Marquis of Denia and soon-to-be Duke of Lerma, Francisco Gómez de Sandoval y Rojas, and rose to be his right-hand man, the shadow (*sombra*) behind the favourite, just as Lerma would be the shadow or *eminence grise* behind Philip III. With no attempt at self restraint or even a modicum of effort at covering up his scandalous behaviour, Calderón set out, quite deliberately, to amass the greatest fortune possible in the shortest time possible. In this he was remarkably successful, and at the time of his fall from grace and power, in 1619, it was calculated that he had accumulated over two million ducats in property, goods, and assets. This was by any standards a fabulous fortune for someone who had begun life with almost nothing. In this, of course, he was but imitating his master, the Duke of Lerma, but whereas Lerma, in case fortune should turn against him (as it did after 1619), had taken out the best insurance policy available at the time — a cardinal's hat — Calderón had no such protection and he quickly fell victim to the purges of the anti-Lerma clique that began in 1619 and carried on into the reign of Philip IV.

Although Lerma did try to help his erstwhile collaborator, his own star was too much on the wane for it to have any effect, and in any case he was too busy protecting his own interests by that stage to be of much help to the cast-aside Calderón. Others distanced themselves quickly from the fallen Phaeton, as Martínez Hernández aptly calls him. Arrested in Valladolid in February 1619, Rodrigo Calderón was taken to various prisons before being held under house arrest in Madrid where he was questioned at length and tortured to make him confess to all the charges brought against him: corruption, bribery, sorcery, poisoning, and murder.

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There is no doubt that he was guilty of practically all the charges, but so were others who were not arrested and so cruelly treated. His was to be a show trial, indeed, *the* show trial of the age, a warning to others it was hoped. Unfortunately for those who wanted to make an example of him, he showed in his trial and execution a courage, steadfastness, and serenity that shifted the balance in his favour, and his death by having his throat cut in the Plaza Mayor of Madrid on Thursday 21 October 1621 made him something of a popular hero. Ballads celebrating his fortitude in death appeared immediately after the execution and his name soon became a byword for courage in adversity: 'Tener más orgullo que don Rodrigo en la horca' is still a popular saying in Spain. Interestingly, Olivares and Philip IV, who had been determined to put Calderón to death, did not make martyrs of any more of Lerma's men, although the Dukes of Osuna and Uceda were both imprisoned.

This biography is based largely on original archival material and Martínez Hernández seems not to have left a library or archive unturned in his efforts to track down all the documentation he can relating to Rodrigo Calderón and his times. The result is a compelling narrative that begins to fill in some of the numerous gaps in our knowledge of the government of Philip III and his favourite the Duke of Lerma.

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The Spanish Ballad in the Golden Age: Essays for David Pattison. Edited by NIGEL GRIFFIN, CLIVE GRIFFIN, ERIC SOUTHWORTH, and COLIN THOMPSON. Pp. xviii + 263. Woodbridge: Tamesis. 2008. ISBN: 978-1-85566-172-1

In the Preface to this book we read the following statement of intent: 'The present volume is not a representative anthology of the Spanish ballad in the Early Modern period, nor is it meant to be [. . .]. Rather, our purpose is to introduce the reader to some of the problems encountered by Anglophone readers of poetry from this period, even poetry cast in a popular mode, and to offer informed guidance towards the resolution of some of them' (p. xvii). The reader might react negatively to the somewhat presumptuous tone of 'informed guidance', since at this stage he or she has no basis on which to agree with that view, and also wonder at the confidence expressed by the authors in their ability to offer a 'resolution' of the problems the modern reader of Early Modern poetry might encounter.

The Spanish Ballad in the Golden Age consists of detailed, line-by-line, readings, or rather explanations, of one ballad by Lope de Vega, three by Góngora, four by Quevedo, and finally a burlesque ballad by the little-known Murcian poet Salvador Jacinto Polo de Medina. To be fair to the authors and editors, they do say that this is not a representative selection, but what they do not offer is any rationale for their choice of ballad. Why only one by the most prolific ballad writer of the time — Lope — and even then, not one of his better known? Why the three by Góngora, and, even more puzzling, the particular four chosen for Quevedo? And what to say of the choice of the ballad 'A Vulcano, Venus y Marte' by Polo de Medina? If these are not representative of the Spanish ballad as a whole, then why have they been chosen? Are they representative of the range of each author or of a particular type of poem? We simply do not know, and the treatment given to each offers no clues either.

The problem with the selection is that it makes the volume of limited use for other teachers of the ballad. Is there anyone in the UK actually teaching the burlesque poetry of Polo de Medina? Apart from Góngora's wonderful ballad 'En un pastoral albergue', are any other of the ballads here on any student reading list? The choice would only be of use if the analysis served a more general purpose: to acquaint the reader with the style, form, and content of the Spanish ballad in the Golden Age, but it does not. Indeed, it would be difficult to argue that there is any real analysis here. There is explanation, lots of it, mostly offering the potential meaning or meanings of words and phrases with reference to Covarrubias and *Autoridades*, but the reader does not get a sense of why or how a particular ballad works as a poem, what its qualities are, what makes it worth reading, how any of its features might be extrapolated