MARGARET RICH GREER

The Play of Power

Mythological Court Dramas of Calderon de la Barca

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MYTHOLOGICAL COURT DRAMAS OF Calderón de la Barca

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To Jim and Emily

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THE PLAY OF POWER

ONE

Introduction

Critical Reception

What is the relationship between art and power? What should it be? Plato, as is well known, would have had all poets excluded from his ideal republic because their imitative fictions stimulate undesirable passions and undermine obedience to law and the authority of reason and truth. In contrast, Günther Grass maintains that only writers who critically engage the established powers can legitimately be included in the community of responsible intellectuals. Edward Said extends the question to include critical practice, maintaining that literary critics cannot escape implication in political discourse by avoiding the subject or denying its importance because such silence functions as an acquiescence in the prevailing political system.

Whether or not a critic subscribes to Said's position, an understanding of the complex symbiosis between art and power is essential to any critical evaluation of the court plays that Pedro Calderón de la Barca wrote for the Spanish Hapsburg courts of Felipe IV and Carlos II between 1635 and 1680. These dramas were part of—and in important senses a culmination of—the great vogue of spectacular court entertainments that spread throughout Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, accompanying the advance of absolutism on the European political stage. Their expulsion from the canon of viable dramatic works in the course of the eighteenth century resulted from the combined effects of the change in aesthetic taste—the advent of neoclassicism—and the dynastic change in Spain that brought in Bourbon kings and their Italian wives, who preferred Italian-style opera for their court spectaculars.[1] Furthermore, their continued exclusion from critical attention until recent years has been the result of aesthetic judgments strongly influenced by political considerations.

Menéndez y Pelayo represented the majority opinion of past critics when he called the mythological drama an "inferior genre" and said of the plays:

> En estas comedias mitológicas, como en toda especie de drama de espectáculo, el poeta queda siempre en grado y en categoría inferior al maquinista y al pintor escenógrafo. Eran obras que se destinaban al solaz de los Reyes y de la corte, . . . y en las cuales más se atendía al prestigio de los ojos que a la lucha de los afectos y los caracteres, ni a la verdad de la expresión (*Calderón* 365–366).

> Hoy no tienen más interés que el histórico y el de algunos buenos versos acá y allá esparcidos y casi ahogados en un mar de enfática y culterana palabrería. Juzgar a Calderón por tales dramas sería evidente injusticia. Buscar en ellos pasión, interés, caracteres y color de las respectivas épocas, fuera necedad y desvarío (*Teatro* lxiii–lxiv).

For Menéndez y Pelayo, then, the mythological court play is a "play of power" in the sense of a frivolous pastime of the powerful—a game having neither artistic merit nor meaningful relationship to society—either in the days of Calderón or in succeeding ages.[2] A contemporary critic (Maraniss 87) echoes Menéndez y Pelayo's condemnation of Calderón's court mythological plays in even harsher terms: "Lacking any serious mimetic or intellectual substance, they have no religious, moral, political, social or metaphysical content; they have only a style."

Even as attentive a reader of Calderón as Cascardi comes to essentially the same conclusion, praising plays such as *Eco y Narciso* as brilliant crystallizations of Calderón's theatrical showmanship but then continuing: "For all their outward energy and exuberance, they are static. Because there are no deep motives for the action of these plays, it would be a mistake to consider them as truly dramatic. Their only dynamism is that of the self-contained, motionless lyric" (130). Cascardi's evaluation, he makes clear, is based on the judgment that art has in these plays become totally subservient to the interests of power. He finds in them Calderón's technical mastery "turned to wholly uncritical ends," because from the date of his "appointment as court dramatist" he dedicated himself not only to shoring up collective social values felt to be threatened but also to expressing those values "filtered through the royal optic" in order to congratulate the ineffective kings Felipe IV and Carlos II (xi–xii). In sum, the plays have been condemned as at best, extravagant baubles to entertain the court, and at worst, servile and mendacious flattery of a decadent monarchy.

Contrary to this traditional current, an increasing number of critics in recent years are reconsidering Calderón's court plays and finding them dramatic works of continuing vitality, containing profound explorations of human life and social organization.[3] However, the majority of the favorable critics read the plays as allegories of general human experience, divorced from the spectacular form in which they were presented and the political setting in which they took shape. In so doing, they overlook Calderón's greatest achievements in these spectacles: (1) the coherent use of the newest dramatic techniques, combining music, dance, perspective scenery, and complex stage machinery to enhance rather than overpower his poetic text, exploiting to the full the inherent polyphony of the theatrical idiom to produce masterpieces of dramatic illusion; (2) the achievement of a complex discourse of power that combined celebration of the monarch with a tactful critique of his policy.

The discomfort of succeeding generations with the apparent subservience of the creative mind to the uses and pleasures of absolute monarchs has been a primary factor in the neglect of the mythological plays. It is in the reconsideration of this relationship of art and power that we can fully appreciate Calderón's achievement. To achieve such an understanding of the myth plays requires, I believe, a prior reflection on what Gadamer (xxii) calls our "effective-historical consciousness." We must become aware of certain prejudices that mediate our reading of Calderón and distance our interpretation of his works from the conditions of their reception in his day, as best we can reconstruct them.[4] To that end, we should first recognize that discomfort with the close relationship between art and power is a modern phenomenon, arising with the ideal of the self-supporting writer and the advent of political liberalism, which considers individual (and artistic) integrity to depend on a position of critical independence from the established order and all totalizing systems of thought. Lope de Vega could claim to be the first writer who lived by the fruits of his pen, but the prevailing pattern was still the dependence of artists on the patronage of the wealthy and powerful.[5] As terHorst points out, Golden Age Spanish drama began and ended at court, in the *églogas* of Juan del Encina and the court plays of Calderón. Although there were contemporary critics of the court spectaculars, their criticisms were directed against the extravagance of the events in times of war and popular privation or their distraction of rulers from more important tasks, not against the dedication of artistic creativity to political ends.[6]

Secondly, it should be noted that the persistence of this prejudice in the case of Calderón's work has been encouraged by the predominant conservativism of Golden Age drama criticism. As Goodman and Elgin observe, "That a text has a single right interpretation that is determined by and entirely in accord with the author's intentions has been, and perhaps still is, like absolute realism, the most popular view" (568). With notable exceptions, this has been the prevailing critical practice among students of Golden Age drama, probably reinforced in Calderón's case by what Boris Tomashevskii describes as the weight of an author's "ideal biography," or the legend of his life, in shaping the subsequent reception of his works.[7] Calderón was not only Catholic but also became a priest at fifty-one years of age, after which he stopped writing works for the public theatres and wrote only *autos sacramentales* (allegorical religious pieces staged open-air as part of the Corpus Christi celebrations) and court dramas. Although he was never appointed "court dramatist," as Cascardi states, he did enjoy immense stature at court and was even granted a modest royal pension in his later years. These facts, combined with the weight of his "ideal biography" and the fact that many, if not most, readers of the court plays bring to their first reading a previous familiarity with Calderón's autos sacramentales, have encouraged the reading of the myth plays as similarly orthodox allegories, either philosophical or specifically religious in content. For example, Aubrun says, "Calderón fit de cette

classe d'opéras à grand spectacle le support de quelques thèmes théologiques" (ix), while Wilson and Moir describe the plays as "a kind of secular *autos*, which hint at philosophical or religious truths" (113–114), and Paul Mooney (175) goes to the extreme of saying that Calderón's principal concern in *La estatua de Prometeo* is the presentation of religious dogma.

To go beyond this mediated reading of the myth plays will require the examination of (1) the basic codes of the court spectacular; (2) the feasibility of critical discourse in the Hapsburg court; and (3) the hermeneutical practices traditionally applied to classical myth. Without calling into question Calderón's orthodox Catholicism—nor his fundamental support of the Hapsburg monarchy—attention to these elements should permit an appreciation of the complex discourse of power operant in these works.

If we are to rescue these plays from undeserved neglect, however, the first problem is delimiting the corpus of Calderonian court spectaculars. The classic form was a three-act drama whose plot derived from classical mythology, performed with elaborate perspective scenery and stage machinery, rich costuming, music and dance, in celebration of an occasion of state such as a royal birthday, wedding, or the birth of a prince. We have eleven extant Calderonian plays that clearly fit this description: *El mayor encanto, amor* (1635); *Los tres mayores prodigios* (1636); *La fiera, el rayo y la piedra* (1652); *Fortunas de Andrómeda y Perseo* (1653); *Celos aun del aire matan* (1660);[8] *Apolo y Climene* (1661); *El hijo del sol, Faetón* (1661); *Eco y Narciso* (1661); *Ni Amor se libra de amor* (1662); *Fieras afemina Amor* (1672);[9] and *La estatua de Prometeo* (1670–1674).[10] Three other works clearly belong in the same category, differing only in their shorter length: *El golfo de las sirenas* (1657), which Calderón christened an "égloga piscatoria"; *El laurel de Apolo* (1657–1658); and *La púrpura de la rosa* (1660), his first experiment with a work sung in its entirety.

But a neat line cannot be drawn around the corpus at this point. Calderón wrote other plays not based on classical myths for court performance. He drew the plots of *El jardín de Falerina* (1648–1649?)[11] and *Hado y divisa de Leonido y Marfisa* (1680) from chivalric materials, that of *El monstruo de los jardines* (1661) from legends of Achilles' childhood and adolescence. In others, such as *Amado y aborrecido* (1650–1656) and *Fineza contra fineza* (1671), mythic gods and goddesses (Venus and Diana, Venus and Cupid, respectively) intervene only at the end to assure a happy resolution of the plot.

Only in the case of *Hado y divisa de Leonido y Marfisa*, for which detailed records of the performance survive, can we be certain these plays began as full-fledged court spectacles. Although *Fineza contra fineza* was performed for the birthday of the Queen Mother, Mariana of Austria, normally the occasion for a spectacular play, that text contains no stage directions that would seem to indicate an elaborate court production. However, the absence of such stage directions is not proof of a simple original design, for it was common practice, after the first spectacular production at court, to repeat the play in a simpler form in

the public theatres or for private performances before the royalty, and the surviving texts may derive from those simplified performances. Such was clearly the case with *La estatua de Prometeo* (see Greer introduction 208–214).

As the dates above indicate, Calderón composed the great majority of his court plays after his entry to the priesthood in 1650. Although he then gave up writing for the public theatres, this involved less of a change in the overall nature of his production than has generally been supposed (Cruickshank and Page xiii).[12] The mythological court plays did become a much more substantial part of his total output, but he also continued to write cape-and-sword plays and plays of royal intrigue akin to *La vida es sueño*, albeit for the court rather than the public theatres. Therefore, a chronological boundary does exist within Calderón's production, as do demarcations between mythic and nonmythic, spectacular and nonspectacular, and courtly and noncourtly plays, but these boundaries are impossible to mark with consistency and precision.

Rather than attempting a precise definition of this Calderonian genre, I will focus on its prototypical form, the mythological court-spectacle play; I will, however, conclude with a study of one nonmythological court spectacle, *Hado y divisa de Leonido y Marfisa*, because its use of chivalric figures rather than gods is illustrative, by indirection, of the purpose of the mythic material and the subtlety with which Calderón suited the subject to the royal occasion.

Development of the Court Spectacle

Calderón's mythological court plays, while a genre unique to Spain, were also part of an explosion of spectacular court entertainment throughout Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such spectacles were, in a general sense, both a tool and an expression of absolutist rule. They focused attention, within the state and in rival courts, on the importance of the prince, serving the Machiavellian end of dazzling potential internal and external opponents with their displays of wealth and power, and, at least in their earlier formulations, the Platonic end of providing an image of an ideal state that was to serve as a model for ruler and subjects. The monarch was central to this image, as Strong points out, because

> in a Europe dominated by the problem of rival religious creeds and the breakdown of the Universal Church, the monarch not only established himself as the arbiter in religious matters but gradually became adulated as the sole guarantor of peace and order within the State. Before the invention of the mechanical mass media of today, the creation of monarchs as an "image" to draw people's allegiance was the task of humanists, poets, writers and artists. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the most profound alliance therefore occurred between the new art forms of the Renaissance and the concept of the prince (*Splendour* 19).

At the same time, the spectacles often expressed specific political goals of the rulers, whether it be the full political union of England and Scotland under James, the desire to achieve peace between warring religious factions in the Valois court festivals, or the affirmation of absolute personal rule in the Caroline masques.[13]

Rulers saw in these brilliant shows of wealth not only a tool for forging internal unity but also a useful instrument in foreign policy that could impress rival monarchs with a show of power. Two years after the 1635 renewal of war between Spain and France, some 300,000 ducats were spent on public festivities in Madrid to celebrate the election of Felipe IV's cousin Ferdinand III as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, and some voices were raised in protest at the expense, but the contemporary chronicle *Noticias de Madrid* commented: "Dicen los discursistas que tan grande acción ha tenido otro fin que el de recreación y pasatiempo, y que fue también ostentación para que el Cardenal Richelieu, nuestro amigo, sepa que aún hay dinero en el mundo que gastar y con que castigar a su Rey . . ." (qtd in Deleito y Piñuela 215). Since a lasting peace with France was not secured until 1659, Cardinal Richelieu, himself a master in the political value of theatre, appears not to have been unduly intimidated by the display.[14]

Precisely the ostentation of the display, the dominant role played by the visual spectacle, has, however, repelled two centuries of readers, both in Spain and other European traditions. The same condemnation of the spectacles as empty show long predominated with respect to the English masque, but as Ewbank points out, such criticism comes primarily from eighteenth- to twentieth-century literary scholars, who have an inherent bias in favor of language over visual codes. For the literate Renaissance and baroque theatregoer, well versed in reading emblems and heraldic devices, however, meaning might be conveyed with equal if not greater effect by visual images. As Strong says: "Fêtes speak to the visual sense in a lost vocabulary of strange attributes which we can no longer easily read but which, by the close of the sixteenth century, was a perfectly valid silent language within the make-up of the educated Roman mind" (*Splendour* 56).[15] From royal entries to court ballets and masques, meaning was conveyed less by reasoned discourse than a succession of allegorical images, generally kings or gods bearing the attire or devices associated with ideal princely virtues. We can still find guides to the vocabulary of these devices in the emblems of Alciati; the *imprese*, or personal devices, symbolizing the royal houses, and the mythological manuals that codified and interpreted classical myths for the Renaissance reader (Strong, *Splendour* 56–58).

Gombrich even maintains that for such a man, visual images carried not a lesser but a greater weight of meaning For the inheritor of the hermetic tradition and one who sees the universe as a unified, hierarchical whole, "the image not only *represents*, but captures something of, or participates in the nature of, what

is represented" (Gordon 17). In Gombrich's words, "For them a truth condensed into a visual image was somehow nearer the realm of absolute truth than one explained in words. It was not what these images said that made them important, but the fact that what was said was also 'represented' " (qtd in Gordon 17).

The spectacles served the interests not only of the Renaissance prince but also of humanists interested in reviving the lost dramatic forms of classical antiquity. Inspired by reading the *De architectura* of the Roman architect-engineer Vitruvius on Greek theatre construction, stage scenery, and machinery, they developed the proscenium arch, perspective stage scenery, and machinery for increasingly elaborate stage effects.[16] A similar humanistic preoccupation with the nature and use of music and dance in ancient Greece resulted in new modes of performance for theatrical music and stage dancing that are the forebears of modern opera and ballet.[17]

The overwhelming choice for the subject matter of the spectacles, the figures and stories of classical mythology, satisfied the humanists' desire to revive a classical world and the rulers' interest in the legitimizing power of association with divine forebears. The terrain for such association had long been prepared, particularly by the Sicilian writer Euhemerus of the third century B.C., whose theory of mythological interpretation was essentially that the gods were originally kings who had been idealized to the status of gods by their societies.[18] Euhemerism reappeared in Renaissance mythographies, along with a variety of allegorical and analogical forms of mythological interpretation.

While the creators of court entertainment may have used mythology allegorically, their purpose was not that of Christianizing or spiritualizing myths, either in Hapsburg Spain or other European courts. As Orgel rightly points out: "Modern historians of the subject regularly claim that Renaissance mythographers spiritualized and internalized their fables. In fact, the truth more often seems to me just the opposite. The pressure is not toward spiritualizing the physical, but toward embodying and sensualizing the moral and abstract. The increasing tendency in the Renaissance to illustrate mythographies, and to treat them as iconologies—systems of images—is clear evidence of this" ("Royal Theatre" 264).

The roots of the dramatic techniques used in the court spectacles can be traced back to the late fifteenth century when a group of short dramatic pieces, usually called *favole pastorali*, were presented in the courts of northern Italy, in Mantua, Ferrara, and Milan.[19] The plays have in common pastoral elements, mythological themes, classical inspiration, and music. Of the six favole pastorali extant today, the most famous are *Favola d'Orfeo* by Angelo Poliziano, *Cefalo* by Niccolò da Correggio, *Pasithea* by Gaspare Visconti, and *Danae*, composed by Baldassare Taccone, with sets designed by Leonardo da Vinci. These short pieces, written as distractions by scholars and men of politics, were presented at

gala occasions to members of the court, or sometimes to the residents of the city. Poliziano's *Orfeo* was a kind of *intermedio*, or "entre-mets," apparently staged at a banquet given by Cardinal Gonzaga in Mantua during Carnival of 1480 (Pyle 1–3, 53, 198).

The mythological and allegorical *intermedi* that evolved from these first pieces were presented not between the courses at a banquet but between the acts of comedies, those of Plautus and Terence in the vernacular and their Renaissance descendants. A great variety of intermedi existed, suited to the means available and the occasion celebrated, from simple instrumental interludes peformed by hidden musicians to extremely elaborate and spectacular productions such as those for the 1589 celebration of the marriage of Christina of Lorraine and Ferdinand de'Medici.[20] Their greatest development took place in Florence, where the infant Medici dynasty employed art in general, and court spectaculars in particular, to legitimize its rule and discourage any lingering republican instincts in its domain. The complex of artistic codes displayed in the courtly intermedi—elaborate scenery, stage machinery, music, dance, and mythological subject matter—spread from Italy throughout the courts of Europe, evolving into different forms in response to local traditions and preferences of the monarchs. While in Italy and Vienna this complex gave birth to opera, in France the *ballet de cour* became the form of choice, as had the court masque in England. In Spain, which possessed a vigorous dramatic tradition, permanent theatres in several cities, and a number of professional troupes by the last two decades of the sixteenth century, the spectacle play became the predominant form after the theatre-loving Felipe IV ascended the throne in 1621.[21]

Of this complex of artistic elements, however, it was the visually spectacular ingredients—illusionistic perspective scenery and stage machinery—that aroused most admiration from the majority of contemporary viewers and gave such great importance to the role of stage architects that in Italy, France, and England, and in non-Calderonian Spanish court plays, they often overshadowed the creative role played by authors of their poetic texts. Although the ancient authors Vitruvius and Pollux mentioned the use of scenery and machinery only briefly, this classical "authorization" set off an immense activity in Renaissance and baroque theatre development (Lawrenson 20–21).

If the inspiration came from classical sources, the details for these theatrical "reconstructions" and innovations had to be worked out by Renaissance scholar-artists. With respect to scenery, the crucial developments were Filippo Brunelleschi's discovery of the mathematical laws of perspective in the early fifteenth century, the codification of techniques for giving painting the illusion of spatial depth by Leon Battista Alberti in his *Della pittura* (1436), and explanation of techniques for constructing perspective scenery and the use of the angled stage in *De Architettura* (1545) of Sebastiano Serlio. On this technical foundation, theatre design moved from an architectural background to a painted illusionistic

backdrop, and finally to the sort of perspective scenery used by Bernardo Buontalenti for the 1589 intermedi: a stage framed by a proscenium arch with ranks of side wings receding behind it to the back of the stage where a back shutter closed off the view.[22]

In the one set of Spanish drawings we have that clearly shows these slanted side wings, or *bastidores* (those from the 1690 production in Valencia of Calderón's *La fiera, el rayo y la piedra*) four sets of wings were used. This was not the premiere of the work, however, and although Valencia was an important theatre center, it probably lacked the resources to stage a production comparable to those in the Buen Retiro in Madrid. The larger the number of bastidores, the more precision could be achieved in the perfection of the illusion, and by the early eighteenth century, a plan of the royal theatre in the Buen Retiro Palace shows eleven pairs of slots for bastidores.

Not all the impetus for theatrical innovation came from secular humanists, however; stage architects could also draw on the tradition of mechanical devices and stage effects employed in medieval mystery plays, which by the fifteenth century could include lightning, thunder, rain, conflagrations, and such miracles as the resurrections of saints. Perhaps their most impressive contribution was the "glory," the clouds on which the gods descended from heaven, a technique transferred from religious painting to sacred theatre and thence to the court stages (Lawrenson 44). Again, Brunelleschi's name occupies a primary position. The mechanical principles he used to build vast structures he also applied to enrich the visual splendour of the Florentine *sacre rappresentazioni*, with machinery such as that which brought down the Angel of Annunciation, escorted by a circle of boys dressed as angels, as he delivered his message to the Virgin. Leonardo da Vinci clearly understood Brunelleschi's devices, which he applied in his designs for a number of court spectaculars, including those for Taccone's *Danae*. One of his drawings for this favola pastorale depicts the cloudborne appearance of a deity, and the text calls for numerous other ascents and descents.

The other effect much loved by spectators was frequent and rapid changes of scenery. Vitruvius mentioned the use of revolving scenery, known as *periaktoi*, and Vasari introduced this in a 1569 Medici spectacle. But the real advances in this field depended on great sixteenth-century progress by hydraulic engineers, some of whom doubled as scenographers. This advance derived from the rediscovery of the mechanical principles of Hero of Alexander (first century A.D.), disseminated and elaborated by Giovanni Battista Aleotti. Still there were complaints that the scene changes were done awkwardly and often constituted more of a distraction than an enchancement. With the 1638 publication of Nicolà Sabbattini's *Practica di fabricar scene e machine ne'teatri*, stage designers in all European courts had available an illustrated textbook explaining the methods for rapid scene changes.

Another factor important in the dissemination of new developments in stage scenery and machinery was the Accademia del disegno founded in Florence by the noted scenographer Giuglio Parigi. Here both scientists and artists learned civil and military architecture, mathematics, Euclidean geometry, as well as the design of stage machinery and the application of the new science of perspective to stage scenery. It was a graduate of Parigi's academy, Cosimo Lotti, who brought the latest techniques to Spain (Amadei de Pulice 38).[23]

Court Spectacles in Hapsburg Spain

Although a variety of court entertainments had been staged under previous Spanish kings, Carlos I and Felipe II were not interested in theatre; royal patronage of the theatre began under Felipe III and quickly intensified on his son's accession to the throne. Even as a child, Felipe IV had demonstrated a great predilection for the theatre. In the restricted sphere of palace life, one of the few pleasures permitted the young prince was the performance of *comedias*, "a lo que se aplicaba el joven príncipe con el mayor gozo, recitando o representando él mismo, incluso en fiestas preparadas *ad hoc* ante la real familia, con otros jóvenes de las más nobles casas" (Deleito y Piñuela 12). As a young adult, he added to this natural inclination a taste for the attractive actresses of the *corrales*, the public theatres. In order to ingratiate himself with the Felipe and secure his position as favorite, the count-duke of Olivares encouraged his appetite in both these areas.

Furthermore, once Felipe was on the throne, Olivares employed theatrical events (in a strict sense and in more general terms) to enhance the power of the king's image for domestic and foreign consumption. As Brown and Elliott's apt metaphor puts it, the entire Spanish Hapsburg court, with its exceptionally elaborate and formal etiquette and protocol, was a sort of theatre production in itself:

> The court of the King of Spain resembled a magnificent theater in which the principal actor was permanently on stage. The stage instructions were meticulously detailed; the scenery was imposing, if a little antiquated; and the supporting cast was impressively large. All that was needed was a director of genius to orchestrate the action and make the necessary dispositions to secure the most brilliant scenic effects. In the Count-Duke of Olivares, who had learned his craft in Seville, that most theatrical of cities, the perfect direction was ready to hand (31).
>
> In Olivares's scheme of things, the king was to be the focal point of Spain's cultural and artistic life. Shining in the reflected splendor of his patronage, the leading poets, playwrights and artists of the age would all revolve around him, magnifying his glory and giving luster to his reign (40).

To that end, this "director" quickly sent to Italy to get the best stage manager available, one who could make that "antiquated scenery" the rival of any in Europe. Olivares sent orders to the Spanish ambassador to the papal court to bring back a *fontanero*—an engineer specializing in the construction of fountains and garden waterworks. The ambassador returned in 1626 with Cosimo Lotti, who made an immediate impression as Shergold reports: "Lope de Vega compares him to Hero of Alexandria in his skill in constructing mechanical figures, and on his arrival in Spain he is reported to have made a satyr's head which moved its eyes, ears, and hair, and opened its mouth to make such ferocious cries that it terrified all those who were not forewarned against it" (275–276). With the arrival of Lotti, a new era began in court theatre in Spain. Lotti worked in Spain for a number of years, and after his death in 1643 (Whitaker 44 n.2), he was succeeded by another Italian engineer, Baccio del Bianco, who designed court plays until his death in 1657.[24]

Neither the use of illusionist stage scenery nor machine-produced stage effects were new to Spain in the seventeenth century. It was the sophistication and scale of their use that was novel. Spanish painters had long been fully cognizant of scientific perspective and had applied it to the creation of scenery for a court play as early as 1570 when an Amadís representation in Burgos was said to have scenery "puesta en muy buen perspectiua" (Shergold, *History* 296). This was probably a correct use of perspective on a two-dimensional sheet of canvas used as a backdrop, however. Lotti created a three-dimensional perspective scene in 1627 for Lope de Vega's "opera" *La selva sin amor,* with cutout figures to heighten the effect (Shergold, *History* 296). He also greatly extended the use of machinery to change scenes rapidly, so that the stage could be quickly and repeatedly transformed from a sumptuous palace to a humble village or fearsome cavern. All the machinery necessary for this *trompe-l'oeil* theatre was incorporated in the Coliseo of the Buen Retiro Palace, the new royal theatre inaugurated in 1640.

Mechanical devices were also being used to produce striking stage effects before the arrival of Lotti, both in court entertainments and, to a more limited extent, in the public theatres, but again, he multiplied their use in a variety of ways. A system of pulleys and winches could make actors ascend or descend rapidly, pull chariots through the "heavens" above the stage, and even transport whole temples. For the climactic final scene of Calderón's *Fortunas de Andrómeda y Perseo* (stage designs by Baccio del Bianco), a temple appears in the air and descends to the stage; twenty-six actors emerge from it, play out the final scene, and then return to the temple, which is wafted into the heavens again. Clouds or other celestial apparitions could be made to appear to grow or diminish, thanks to a series of mechanical arms that folded in and out. Trapdoors made mountains or palaces rise into view or sink suddenly from sight as if destroyed.

A mechanism called a *bofetón* either rotated or sprang open to make characters seem to appear or disappear as if by magic. Sea scenes were often created, with sea monsters or ships appearing or disappearing and fish moving up and down with the illusionistic water, creating effects so realistic that on one occasion they were reported to have caused seasickness among the ladies of the court (Shergold, *History* 222–223, 276).

Such effects were attainable only because of the staggering development of mechanics in the sixteenth century. The pleasure they afforded was therefore double, residing not only in wonder and delight in the effects achieved but also in the triumph of apparent total human control of the physical world. Serlio, commenting on the theoretical value of spectacle in his influential book *De Architettura*, highlights both the pleasures to man's eyes and the wonder of their manufacture by "mens hands":

> Among all the things that may bee made by mens hands, thereby to yeeld admiration, pleasure to sight, and to content the fantasies of men; I think it is placing of a Scene, as it is shewed to your sight, where a man in a small place may see built by Carpinters or Masons, skilful in Perspective work, great Palaces, large Temples, and diverse Houses, both neere and farre off. . . . In some other Scenes you may see the rising of the Sunne with his course about the world: and at the ending of the Comedie, you may see it goe downe most artificially, where at many beholders have been abasht. And when occasion serveth, you shall by Arte see a God descending downe from Heaven; you also see some Comets and Stars shoot in the skyes . . . which things, as occasion serveth, are so pleasant to mens eyes, that a man could not see fairer with mens hands (qtd in Srong, *Splendour* 192).

Another observer bypassed amazement at the effects to marvel at the machines. Federigo Zuccaro, a Roman mannerist painter, described his delight at these mechanical triumphs of human organization and engineering on seeing the backstage machinery in Mantua in 1608:

> It was delightful to see the windlasses mounted over the machines, the cables of optimum strength, the ropes and lines by which the machines were moved and guided, and the many stagehands who were needed to keep the apparatus in operation. Every man was at his station, and at a signal the machinery could be raised, lowered, moved, or held in a particular position. More than 300 workers were engaged and had to be directed, which required no less experience and skill than it did foresight and reason (qtd in Strong, *Splendour* 193).

Whether a number of workers as large as three hundred were ever needed in Spain we do not know, but production records for Calderón's last court play,

Hado y divisa de Leonido y Marfisa, list the names of sixty-nine men needed to handle the machinery for scene changes and another thirty-six who worked in the wings (Shergold and Varey, *Representaciones* 34).

The wonder of many of the stage effects was heightened by the introduction of artificial lighting, which made it possible to stage the spectacles at night. The flickering light of candles or wax torches, suggests Varey, may also have softened the artificiality of the painted bastidores and thus heightened the illusion of reality (Varey, "Scenes" 61). The amount of wax required to light the stage and theatre for such productions was astounding. For the premiere of Calderón's *Fortunas de Andrómeda y Perseo,* the royal waxworks had to supply 695 pounds of wax (Shergold and Varey, *Representaciones* 18, 58).

The enthusiasm of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century princes and less exalted spectators for these spectacular effects usually worked to the detriment of the play as a dramatic text, for the power and glory afforded to the architect exceeded the control of the playwright. Ben Jonson's prolonged and ultimately losing battle with the English stage architect Inigo Jones for control of the court masque is well known, and of the French ballet de cour, Christout says: "Il n'y a pas lieu de s'étonner . . . de la minceur des 'livrets' que n'étaient que le support du spectacle, fussent-ils signés de Molière ou de Corneille" (3). In describing his court spectacle, *La selva sin amor,* Lope de Vega pointed out the subordination of his dramatic verse (which he calls an "eclogue") to Lotti's effects: "lo menos que en ella hubo fueron mis versos. . . . El bajar de los dioses, y las demás transformaciones requería más discurso que la égloga, que, aunque era el alma, la hermosura de aquel cuerpo hacía que los oídos se rindiesen a los ojos (300)."[25]

A primary reason for Calderón's success in achieving a unique level of dramatic integrity in his mythological court plays was precisely his refusal to surrender control of the production to the engineers, whether Cosimo Lotti, Baccio del Bianco, or their Spanish successors. The history of Calderón's first complete spectacle play, *El mayor encanto, amor,* gives us evidence of his insistence on the priority of dramatic coherence over spectacle.[26] The original idea for the play was that of Cosimo Lotti, who in a memorandum to Calderón described a long list of devices to be included in the event. Calderón replied with a firm statement of rejection: "Avnque está trazada con mucho ynjenio, la traza de ella no es representable por mirar más a la ynbención de las tramoyas que al gusto de la representación" (qtd in Rouanet). He continued that if he were to write the play, he could not follow Lotti's list but that he was willing to select a number of the devices suggested. He did use a substantial number and even introduced one or two new effects. In effect, Calderón used Lotti's memorandum much as he often used works of other playwrights—as an idea to be reworked for maximum dramatic effectiveness.