

9-1-2009

Review of: Masculinidades En Obras: El Drama De La Hombría En La España Imperial by José Reinaldo Cartagena Calderón

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Citation

Vélez-Quiñones, Harry. 2009. "Masculinidades en obras: el drama de la hombría en la España imperial." *Hispanic Review* 77(4): 509-511.

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Masculinidades en obras: el drama de la hombría en la España imperial (review)

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Hispanic Review, Volume 77, Number 4, Autumn 2009, pp. 509-511 (Article)

Published by University of Pennsylvania Press
DOI: [10.1353/hir.0.0074](https://doi.org/10.1353/hir.0.0074)



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ante ella, cabe preguntarse qué es para la autora “la *imaginación del destino* y de la *identidad de la nación ibérica*”. Por último, circunscribir la performación de identidad nacional a las representaciones culturales producidas en España es una autolimitación cuestionable. *Disorientations* trata la “nación”, el “territorio” y la “identidad nacional” como si fueran entidades isomorfas. Dada la postura constructivista de la autora, resulta lógico pensar, sin embargo, que no solo los ciudadanos de una nación performan una identidad colectiva mediante sus representaciones; en esa tarea también participan sujetos de otras naciones que, como la propia Martin-Márquez, generan o reinterpretan imágenes y conceptos que consolidan, cuestionan o abren nuevas direcciones a lo que se entiende por “España”, lo cual significa que la identidad nacional es, paradójicamente, un constructo transnacional.

Estas críticas al aparato conceptual no pretenden disminuir el gran valor de este libro. La importancia de *Disorientations* no reside en su aportación a un mejor conocimiento de una supuesta identidad nacional homogénea, sino en el rigor de la investigación científica realizada por Martin-Márquez, en la profundidad, sofisticación y elegancia de sus análisis, en su solidez historiográfica, en la impresionante cantidad de documentos e instituciones estudiados, en su forma eficaz de relacionar hechos históricos y representaciones culturales. Martin-Márquez ha escrito, sin duda alguna, una obra indispensable.

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CARTAGENA CALDERÓN, JOSÉ R. *Masculinidades en obras: el drama de la hombría en la España imperial*. Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2008. 382 pp.

José R. Cartagena Calderón's *Masculinidades en obras: el drama de la hombría en la España imperial* is simply a beautiful book. Such lavish praise at the start of a book review may strike readers as excessive, yet they would be wrong. What makes this book beautiful is the conjunction of traits that rarely come together in scholarly works. Cartagena's Spanish academic prose is exactly devoid of rhetorical malformations, pedantic obfuscations, or imprecisions. *Masculinidades* reads like one wishes all articles and books would. It is clear, engaging, reassuring, yet challenging in the complexity of its argumentation. This is a rare case in scholarly monographs written in Spanish. *Masculinidades* is also a straightforward book. Cartagena's thesis regarding the crisis of masculinity that he and others have identified in countless cultural products in Imperial Spain cuts right to the point. “[A]

hablar sobre ‘crisis de masculinidad’ en el siglo XVII no queremos dar a entender que en otra época hubo ‘estabilidad’” (10 n. 1), he states; however, we should dare to read canonical and noncanonical Spanish literary texts against the profusion of pamphlets, books, and legal proclamations in this period in which the decadence of Spain is directly attributed to the relentless feminization of the Spanish male ruling elite. Doing so, of course yields exciting new perspectives on the texts themselves as well as on the scholarship of the period, and the period itself. In addition, *Masculinidades* is profusely documented, skillfully constructed, and methodically laid out. Intersecting fields such as masculinity studies, queer studies, early modern Spanish theater, and cultural studies, *Masculinidades* stands as a remarkably mature example of scholarship and a model for all those Hispanists working in these fields.

In the introduction to *Masculinidades*, Cartagena traces a thoughtful and highly complete overview of the principal arguments starting with the contributions made by Simone de Beauvoir and, later, second wave feminists, through Judith Butler’s performative theory of gender on to current scholarship in masculinity studies. These theorists enable Cartagena to explore texts in which the masculinity of its protagonists appears to be questioned. “[L]ejos de ser una constante universal que desafía tiempo y espacio,” Cartagena reminds us, “la masculinidad podría entenderse como una construcción social inestable y por ende ansiosa e insegura (Breitenberg) o frágil y vulnerable (Kaufman) que varía tanto histórica como culturalmente” (19). The masculinity crisis in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish culture that Cartagena and others help us understand is by no means a “unique” point in the history of Iberian masculinities; however, it is an undoubtedly fruitful space for critical inquiry. What emerges from studies such as this one is a salutary and long overdue antidote against traditional scholarship on Golden Age studies which has been for so long mired in debates surrounding *honor* and *honra* and philologically obsessed with polishing and preserving the texts. Focusing on the term *en obras*, Cartagena proposes that we attend to the cultural processes that both help to construct and simultaneously contribute to undermine early modern Spanish masculinities.

In the first two chapters, Cartagena grapples with texts by Lope de Vega (*Los hechos de Garcilaso y el moro Tarfe*, *El Nuevo Mundo descubierto por Cristóbal Colón*, and *Arauco domado*). In these he sees how the imperial orthodox views of a triumphant, prudent, and virtuous masculinity erects itself against subjected others (Spanish Muslims and Native Americans), who are portrayed as subaltern and feminized lesser men. In the final chapters, Cartagena turns his gaze to Cervantes, Tirso de Molina, and Moreto (*Don Quijote de la Mancha* and *El retablo de las maravillas*, *El vergonzoso en Palacio*, and *El lindo don Diego*). The texts studied in these chapters present, Cartagena argues, “virilidades que de una forma u otra

contravienen la construcción de masculinidades ortodoxas que, armándose de todo un arsenal simbólico, Lope había llevado a las tablas” (27).

In the above division, one regrets Cartagena’s reiteration of the long-standing commonplace in Spanish letters that opposes an orthodox Lope de Vega to a progressive Cervantes. After a very complete and positive overview of recent scholarship on Lope that resolutely questions the traditional view of Lope as a conservative, nationalist, and reactionary playwright, Cartagena asserts the following:

El hecho de que en las últimas décadas un sector cada vez más grande de la crítica haya descubierto y siga descubriendo a *otro* Lope; es decir a un dramaturgo revisionista e incluso subversivo . . . no invalida, sin embargo, el que sigamos llevando a cabo, como lo haremos en las páginas que siguen, lecturas que otorguen un puesto central a su ortodoxia, por más contradictoria que ésta sea. (65)

One wonders whether casting Lope once more in the role of the “bad guy” in comparison with the tolerant, ambiguous, and probing Cervantes was really necessary in order to study the plays selected in the context of the masculinity crisis being explored. A play like *Los hechos de Garcilaso y el moro Tarfe*, which ends with the Christian hero parading the head of the Muslim protagonist he has just beheaded in a pose that reminds us more of Judith or Salomé, may not be expounding such an orthodox view of Spanish masculinity. Such is the “contradictory” nature of Lope’s orthodoxy that it should already be enough to rethink and reject this long-accepted commonplace.

Aside from this minimal objection, *Masculinidades* is a formidable example of the type of scholarship that is slowly but surely transforming the field of early modern Spanish literature. Polished, meticulously researched, accessible, yet challenging, *Masculinidades* will delight all students and colleagues interested in novel interpretations of Golden Age texts and all those working on gender studies, queer studies, and masculinity studies.

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